

THE HEROON OF ODYSSEUS IN ITHACA RECONSIDERED

Abstract*

The aim of this paper is to reconsider the view expressed by the late Prof. H.G.Buchholz in the honorary volume *Δώρον* for Prof. S.Iakovidis in 2009, that the Heroon of Odysseus or *Οδυσεείον* is situated at the site of the School of Homer in North Ithaca. My suggestion is, however, based on earlier archaeological data (of the British School at Athens from the 1930's) and my recent excavations on the island (1994-2011), is that this heroon was not at this place but most probably near the well-known cave at Polis. At the site of the School of Homer, where a prehistoric acropolis, architectural remains and a Mycenaean underground spring and workshops were recognized, I suggest that it was the place of the Homeric palace of Odysseus.

It was Professor H.-G.Buchholz who published in 2009 a paper in the honorary volume “*Δώρον*» for Professor S.Iakovidis¹ suggesting that the Heroon of Odysseus (*Οδυσεείον*), the existence of which is known only from an inscription of the Hellenistic period (208 B.C.) cannot have been the cave on the shore at the Polis bay (Louizos cave), but most probably at the site of the

School of Homer, a site which “seems to be a promising candidate”² At the same time he maintained that the admittedly rare Bronze Age finds (Early Helladic and Middle Helladic pottery) in this area, “are no argument in favour of Homer!”

It must be stressed that the aim of this paper is not to underestimate in any way the valuable work and great contribution to Aegean archaeology of the eminent scholar and my close friend Buchholz nor to deny the possibility that his hypothesis and theory may be to some extent right, but to reconsider his suggestion in the light of and on the basis of the archaeological data already known to him from the pre-War British excavations and those deriving from our recent excavation project in the island of Ithaca (**Pl. 1a**) and especially at the site of the School of Homer. It is worth noting that some of the most important came to light during the three last digging seasons (2009-2011) and therefore after Buchholz's paper was written

Before entering into the main discussion, it seems advisable to remind ourselves that there is a general agreement about the use of the Polis cave as a sanctuary,

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¹ Buchholz 2009, 127-142

² Buchholz 2009,133; See also, Heurtley 1935, 410 n. 1

a cult place for offerings³ The problem is the location and identification of the Heroon of Odysseus or *Odysseion* Most scholars suggest that most probably was at the sea-shore sanctuary at Polis bay (**Pl. 1b-c**) connected with performances called *Οδύσσεια* the only dissidents being so far Rigsby “ it was certainly not the cave at Polis”⁴ and more recently Buchholz, whose theory that it lay at the site of School of Homer has some weaknesses.

What I intend to do is to present briefly the main points of the available archaeological evidence **first** from the Polis cave and **second** from the School of Homer. Before considering the evidence of the Polis cave a brief description of it is desirable. The cave, known as “Cave of the Tripods”, or “cave of the Nymphs” or “Louizos cave” is a Karstic formation just at the edge of the sea and on the western side of the bay, which is the natural access by sea from the west to the northern Ithaca The coastal plain around it was until recently a marshy land but may have been drier in prehistoric times, as the sea level was lower. Excavation by

Benton produced a rich stratified deposit of pottery and votive offerings ranging from the Bronze Age to the 1st century A.D.. Of exceptional interest and importance are Late Mycenaean pottery of local style (**Fig. 2a**), the well-known fragment of a terracotta mask of the 1st or 2nd century B.C., inscribed *EYXHN OΔΥΣΣΕΙ*, (**Pl. 2b**) showing an association with Odysseus, and the most remarkable of all the votive objects, the twelve bronze tripods (**Pl. 2c-d**) of the 9th-8th cent. B.C. , their number, together with one found previously by Louizos, corresponding to those given to Odysseus by Alkinoos and his fellow-rulers (Od. Θ 387ff.)

For the Polis cave used as a sanctuary and its probable identification with the Heroon of Odysseus-*Οδυσσεῖον* , it is worth mentioning and quoting the late Sylvia Benton, excavator of the cave (1930 and 1932) acknowledged expert and leading authority for the archaeology of Ithaca:“ The most imposing dedications are the bronze tripod-cauldrons.... There are pieces of at least twelve tripods and there is the tripod said to have been found by Louizos. How can we account for the presence of all these elaborate tripods in a little sea-side shrine? I suggest that they may be dedications to Odysseus possibly by victors at the *Odysseia*, like the tripods found at Olympia,

³ Benton 1934,45ff., 1938, 1ff, 44 (1949) 307ff., .Heurtley 1943, 11.; .Stubblings 1962, 418-19.; Cook 1953, 113; Lorimer 1950, 499;.Desborough 1964, 108, idem 1972, 88; Hägg 1968, 51; .Hope Simpson &.Dickinson 1979,186; .Rutkowski 1986, 210; .Μαζαράκης-Αινιάν 2000, 58-60, 193; Αλεξίου 2009, 25

⁴ .Rigsby 1996, 215 n.61

Argos, Delphi and Delos The masks denote a period of popularity of the shrine , and an indirect commentary is supplied by the Magnesian inscription , which records the answer of the Ithacesians to an invitation to the games of Artemis Leukophryene instituted in 206 B.C. They invite the Magnesians to their games, the *Odysseia*, and order that the inscription be set up in the *Odysseion* , perhaps this very shrine the games no doubt held in the small plain outside.” , and “The shrine at Polis was of at least local importance in Mycenaean, Geometric Archaic and Hellenistic times and it is reasonable to connect this importance with the Odyssey”⁵. Her view is supported and strengthened by the words of Prof, Heurtley, also a well-known excavator and specialist on the Ithacesian archaeology : “The existence of a small town in Mycenaean times stretching round the head of the (Polis) bay is thus sufficiently well attested” and “ There is some reason for thinking that the long hollow that lies at the foot of the slopes overlooking the bay of Polis is the site of a stadium”⁶

⁵ Benton 1934, 45ff. ; 39 idem 1938,1ff.; idem 1949, 307ff. For possible connection of the tripods found at Polis with those given as gifts to Odysseus by Alkinoos and his fellow-rulers mentioned by Homer in the Odyssey ((0 387ff, and v 13-14) see also, Stubbings 1962, 419 and Mazarakis-Ainian 2000, 58; .Luce, 1998, 226-7.

⁶ Heurtley 1939—1940 10, 11.

Buchholz maintains that there is not enough space for a stadium at Polis or “we may well expect a place of limited space where contests could be performed”⁷ and believes, based only on Vollgraff,’s report for a “tessère de theater”⁸ that the only suitable place “is a very small theatre within the area of the School of Homer, cut in the natural rock”⁹. Without excluding the possibility that he is right, I must note that the morphology of the site is not suitable for a civic assembly and athletic or other performances (*αγώνες*), being rather steep and sloping downhill. Furthermore, no such a theatre has been recognized during our excavations at this site nor did Buchholz ever show or suggest it to us during his two years participation and personal help and advice in the project. Therefore, its drawing and location in fig. 4 of his paper is hypothetical and not yet archaeologically documented. On the other hand Benton’s¹⁰ suggestion that “the games no doubt (were) held in the small plain outside” the Polis cave-sanctuary, seems to be , in my opinion and on the basis of the already mentioned associated cultic and votive finds, most probable and persuasive.

⁷ Buchholz 2009,131

⁸ Vollgaff, 1905, 168 no. 19

⁹ Buchholz 2009,131

¹⁰ Benton 1934-35, 54

Turning to the second place, that at School of Homer (**Pl. 3a**), which according to Buchholz “seems to be a promising candidate”¹¹ for the Heroon of Odysseus, the archaeological facts appear as follows. First, we were able to recognize there a prehistoric acropolis with partly preserved walls the construction of which typifies the Cyclopean technique. i.e. large boulders, hammer dressed and stacked in irregular courses, with smaller stones inserted into the interstices for stability, and a complex of buildings arranged on two terraces and dating from the Bronze Age to Late Hellenistic and Roman periods. During the final Mycenaean building phase the acropolis was enlarged by the addition of a roughly rectangular eastern extension, small in size but of crucial importance, i.e. to include and protect the Mycenaean underground spring that provided the inhabitants of the acropolis in difficult times with water and which will be discussed below.

On the lower terrace or *άνδηρον* the foundations of a three-roomed rectangular building in the form of a megaron - omitted in Buchholz's fig.3, but mentioned in the text p. 136 (nos. 16,18,5, 30,7, 11- and supposed by him to be a vestibule or lounge of his main building (nos

3, 9, 6, 8, 23) (**Pl. 3b**) - dated from late Middle Helladic to LH IIC periods were revealed east of the architectural remains shown in fig.3b of the Buchholz paper. It is rather similar in type construction and dimensions (ca.21.50X11,20m). to those of Mycenae, Tiryns and Pylos (**Pl.3c-d**). However, one would not expect anything on the scale, luxury and finds of the metropolitan Mycenaean centres. The primitive simplicity of construction of this megaron, most probably corresponding to Odysseus palace, would explain the wonder of Telemachos when he beheld the magnificence of the palace of Menelaos at Sparta (δ 44-47). One can approach the megaron from the south through a partly destroyed stone staircase and an entrance. Before reaching it, a heavy retaining wall supports the terrace on which it stands and its construction is characteristically Mycenaean (**Pl. 4a**), giving an appearance of strength and stability. At least two main phases of construction may be distinguished, although their date cannot be definitely established. Near the east side of the first room (aithousa) and before the opening leading to the next room (prodomos) a relief of a rough, irregular “oxhide ingot” (*τάλαντον*) cut into the surface of the rock bed has been recognized (**Pl. 4b**). Referring to this find Buchholz notes “ If she (Prof. Papadopoulou) will find more

¹¹ Buchholz 2009, 133

metallurgical evidence at the site and can explain the use of it as a workshop, she could argue with a date about 1200 B.C.”¹² It is important to note that in 2009 the much sought after metallurgical workshop was found in the upper terrace together with some of its products described below. Whether or not the discovered “oxhide ingot” was used as an altar I cannot say.

In the northern room (domos) the floor with the hearth (εστία)(diam. 3m.) was sinking. It was built of a ring of big poros stones (**Pl.5a-d**) filled in the centre with fragments of Middle and Late Bronze Age pottery(**Pl. 5e**), animal bones in greasy soil mixed with traces of burning. West of the megaron there are auxiliary rooms (Buchholz’s fig. 3, nos 3,9, 6, 8, 23, where a broken Mycenaean IIC kylix and sherds from others, prehistoric handmade sherds , big broken pithoi of later times (**Pl.6**), a circular destroyed bothros, remains of prehistoric walls and an underground cave-like storeroom –not a cleft- (Buchholz’s fig. 3, no. 10) were found. At the end of a small destroyed staircase leading from Buchholz’s room 23 (fig.3b) to the interior of this underground storeroom, there is a door with apsidal lintel, the upper half of which is closed with stones and

the lower half is decorated with a clay (αναθύρωσις). Unfortunately most of the contents had been looted ,but we were able to find one at least prehistoric pithos broken and standing upright *in situ* and traces (visible hollows on the floor) of three others in a series along the western side of the cave fragments of which were thrown out by illicit intruders.

At this point it must be noted that no bones of any kind was found in this underground cave and that the osteological material given by us to Prof. Nobis for examination comes exclusively from the so-called “*kykloteres*” (Buchholz’s fig. 4E) which will be discussed below. So, I think that the underground cave must be taken as a storeroom of the adjacent Mycenaean megaron and not as Buchholz wrongly suggests “the main bothros for keeping what was left of meals”¹³ in later times.

An opening of a large door in the northern wall of the megaron, leads to a second door of the nearby three-roomed building, orientated E-W, with a round stone structure (0.72 m. high and 1.23 m.) diam.) in the middle room (**Pl. 7a**) . Judging from its style of architecture, its adjacency to the megaron, the round structure (altar?) and the few, but very important finds

¹² Buchholz 2009,137

¹³ Buchholz 2009, 136

(two triton shells¹⁴, one Minoan-type leaden votive idol of worshipper¹⁵, a stone altar-shaped seal¹⁶, two stone feet¹⁷ and

¹⁴ As triton or *charonia* shell is a well known cult object in the East Mediterranean, Cyprus and the Aegean and such objects made into trumpets, like our examples are known only in sanctuary sites. Cf. Evans 1936, 344, fig. 288, Nilsson 1950, 153-4, fig. 61, Foster 1979, 137-140, Warren 1969, 91, 167. For a recent discussion, references and catalogue of all known examples, see Aström & Reese 1990, 5-15, Lloyd 1994, 75-88 and Buchholz 1999, 601-602. Also, Papadopoulos 1997, 172-184, Pelon et al. 1996, 92, Aström 2001, 151-58, Demakopoulou 1990, 276-8 (she suggests that they had some special religious significance, are connected with marine deities and occur mainly in palaces and sanctuaries), Baltzinger 2002, 72; Wedde 2003, 285-296, fig. 2, Dumas 1992, pl. 66b; Rutkowski 1986, 146 (...triton shells must have been used for sacred purposes.). Karali 1999, 59, pl. 4, Renfrew 1985, 327, 383., Betankourt & Davaras 1999, 136; Platon 1974, 204, figs. 117-8, Dumas 2016, 196a

¹⁵ Human idols made of lead are rarely found in the Aegean Bronze Age and are used as offerings by poor people. No exact parallel is known to me but it seems quite possible that it belongs to the type of human statuettes of worshipers, frequently found in Minoan Crete and Kythera and only rarely in Mycenaean Greece. Date. LM/LH II-III A?. Cf. Buchholz 1972, 13-15, 22 cat.no. 79, 81 (Kampos-Laconia and Knossos); Verlinden 1984; Pilali-Papasteriou 1992; Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1995, Sakellarakis 2012, 1-212; Sakellarakis 1997, 122, euk. 95; Karetsou 1981, 150, fig. 25 (sanctuary of Mt Juktas); Rethymniotakis 2001, 4, 6, 13, figs. 5, 9, 18 (MH 15146 and MH 21809 from Gortyna-Messaras and Kalou-Pediados

¹⁶ It belongs to a very typical Minoan and Mycenaean form with incurved sides, known from different sites. Cf. e.g. Evans 1921, figs. 166H (Knossos); 167 (Idean cave), Nilsson 1950, 169, fig. 69 (Psychro cave); Iakovidis 1983, pl. 26 (Mycenae, lion gate relief), Blegen et al. 1973, 89, fig. 172: 6 (glass beads), Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985, pl. 41: 2495 (13)

¹⁷ Cf. Gessel 1985, Tzedakis & Hallager 1983, 3-17, fig. 14 (Kastelli-Chania), Caskey 1986,

a model column in ivory¹⁸) (Pl. 7b-f), it is tempting to think of it being a Late Bronze Age sanctuary. I would not claim that it is proved beyond all reasonable doubt, but on the balance of probabilities I think it is may well be correct.

Another point of Buchholz's paper is of exceptional interest and needs to be reconsidered. I quote: "If the place was identical with the heroon of Odysseus, mentioned in the inscription discussed before, it was chosen because the site was understood by the late classic-hellenistic Ithacians

as a mythical locus and must have had to do for them with their most prominent hero. It is possible that they looked for the palace as described by Homer". For the modern excavator, i.e. for us there are signs of prehistoric occupation like handmade sherds of Early and Middle Bronze Age types and wares. Some of the stones in the fundamentals of walls seem to go back to that age, centuries before the Trojan war, long before the lifetime of the

106-7, pl. 65, Tsipopoulou 1992, 147, fig. 154 (clay foot), Rutkowski 1986, 234-5, fig. 312 Anemospilia, pair of clay feet

¹⁸ Model columns of ivory or bone are known mainly from Mainland Greece and only rarely from Crete. Our example is closely similar to those from Mycenae (Poursat 1977, pl. XIII, 153/7591) and Archanes Tholos tomb B, (Sakellakis 1997, fig. 864) which belong to the LH/LM IIIA (Mycenaean) period, a date to which could be also assigned, on the basis of its context, our specimen.

mythical hero Odysseus”¹⁹. Indeed the modern excavator found not only Early and Middle bronze Age pottery but also, as was already mentioned above, Mycenaean pottery (a LH IIC kylix and sherds from other shapes) while the preserved foundations of the megaron, cavities for the base of columns (**Pl.8a-c**) and parts of the wall dividing the two terraces have exact parallels at Mycenae²⁰. Otherwise I agree with Buchholz that “it is possible that the Ithacesians of later times looked for the palace as described by Homer at this important and strategic place”, where I suggest the palace of Odysseus most probably existed. My suggestion is strengthened by the opinions of Tsountas, Nilsson, Lorimer, Pausanias, Iakovidis, Camp, Immerwahr, and O.Komninou-Kakridi²¹, i.e. that later constructions covered the prehistoric residence after the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial centres and that sanctuaries or temples (but not heroa!) dedicated to local deities were constructed in the place of the palaces²².

¹⁹ Buchholz 2009,136

²⁰ Mylonas 1962, 1965, 62, 64, figs. 36-37

²¹ Tsountas 1893, 35; Nilsson 1950, 488; Lorimer 1950, 447; Pausanias Book IX, 16.5; Iakovidis 1983, 24, 56; Camp 2009, 37; Immerwahr 1971,155; Komninou-Kakridi 1989, 324

²² Cf. Temples of Athena at the Mycenaean acropolises at Mycenae and Athens, the temple of Hera at Tiryns, Pelopion at Olympia and that of Apollo at Thermon

As regards the *krene* or underground spring to the east of the megaron, it was carefully examined and safely dated to the second half of the 13th century B.C.(LH IIIB2) by J. Knauss, Professor of the Technical University of Munich and leading authority and specialist on ancient hydraulic techniques and works (**Pl. 9**), who concluded that “the underground well-house is a sophisticated example of Mycenaean architecture and engineering and an impressive example of urban technical infrastructure of the Mycenaean world”. He compared it with those known from other palatial and prehistoric sites (Mycenae, Tiryns, Ayia Eirini-Keas and Hatusa) and the results of his study were presented in two recent international congresses²³. The Ithaca spring like those of the others from elsewhere, provided water to the residents of the Mycenaean acropolis in the times of droughts or of war and its position protected it from disclosure to the enemy making it safe from attack.

It is surprising therefore, that Buchholz although following and accepting Knauss’s dating, ignores however the Mycenaean finds (stems of two kylikes and of one stemmed bowl) and based only on the small amount of pre-Mycenaean pottery from the

²³ .Knauss 2006, 4-18; Idem 2008, 471-86

vicinity suggests that “They , of course , are no argument in favour of Homer!”²⁴ indirectly doubting the importance and the connexion of the spring with a Mycenaean residence at the School of Homer. But in such a case, we must also doubt the Mycenaean character and connexion with Homer of all others springs mentioned above from elsewhere. So, in view of the general similarity with the other known Mycenaean springs and taking into account the careful study of Knauss I find it difficult to dissociate the Ithaca spring from the adjacent Mycenaean megaron.

One further impressive prehistoric(?) monument deserves brief discussion, and that is the so-called *kykloteres or tholos* (Buchholz, fig. 4.E) **(Pl. 10a-b)**. It lies to the east of the underground spring and was badly destroyed and looted . It produced, however, many interesting finds, among which the most important were one clay tablet bearing incised figures of a ship and a man tied on its mast (Odysseus?) accompanied by mythical creatures and possible symbol(s) of Linear A or B (AB09 “SE”)²⁵ **(Pl. 10d)**, pottery

sherds and a great number of animal bones (400) already examined by the late Professor G.Nobis, archaeozoologist and Director of the Zoological Research Institute and the Alexander König-Museum in Bonn. It is worthy of special note that among these bones the most important were two *bucrania* (oxen crania)**(Pl.10c)**, which may be related with bull sacrifices²⁶ and bones of *bos primigenius*²⁷

Buchholz therefore is mistaken when he says that this osteological material comes from a cleft-bothros used for keeping the remains of meals at the Odysseus Heroon. His suggestion therefore must be reconsidered as the bones examined come from the *kykloteres* and a great part of them is dated to the prehistoric times. On the basis of this material I am inclined to believe that part of these bones mixed with others of later date not yet examined²⁸, most probably comes from cultic dinners and sacrifices that took place in the Bronze Age residence or its adjacent sanctuary, following a Minoan tradition²⁹ and on the basis of presence of some other bones

²⁴ Buchholz 2009,137

²⁵ .Kontorli-Papadopoulou et al. 2005, 183-186 The absence of more clay tablets, may be accidental or may be due to the catastrophe and abandonment of the palace, as is the case with the Mycenaean palace of Athens, where no such tablets have been found (See, Camp 2009, 33-38)

²⁶ Bucrania as remains of bull sacrifices, have been found in cult places in the Aegean and Cyprus and have been associated with the cult of the bull-god. For a recent discussion and references see, Papadopoulos 1995, 176-178; Nobis 2000, 121-134, Tafel 32-33.

²⁷ Recognised as such by Prof. Nobis.

²⁸ Dr Argyro Nafplioti, osteoarchaeologist, has undertaken the study of this material

²⁹ Cf.Buchholz 2009, 136 and n. 56.

probably coming from Buchholz's heroon provisionally dated to later periods, that this custom continued in historical times.

The next stage to consider is the situation and the new finds in the upper terrace.. But before I do so it may be noted that three stone staircases (**Pl. 10e-f**), partly cut in the rock and partly built were used to facilitate communication between the residences of the upper and lower terraces, the difference in height of which is more than 5m. Homer clearly imagined his characters as going up and down stairs (α 362, τ 602) . "The palaces and houses excavated at Mycenae , Tiryns and Pylos all had staircases and upper floors. A staircase is an essential feature of a Homeric house"³⁰.Parts of the steep vertical face of the rock dividing upper and lower terraces were partly embellished with large blocks of stone in pseudo-ashlar style ,exactly similar to those used in the Cyclopean wall of Mycenae at the east side of the approach to the Lion Gate, and partly with completely unworked irregular or roughly polygonal stones (**Pl. 11a-b**)

West of the megaron and on the vertical surface of the rock a rectangular recessed niche (1.35-1.50m high, 0.75-0.80m.wide and 1.35deep)was elaborately cut (**Pl. 11c**). As no

exact parallel is recorded in any other site its purpose remains problematic. At first we suggest, on the basis of a somewhat similar cut in the throne room of the Pylos palace ³¹,that it was made to provide a place for the throne of the local ruler Other possible uses can no doubt be imagined e.g. for the vertical part of a timber frame, of the vertical wall, rather similar to that from the South House at Mycenae³² Prof. Aström , who saw it, suggested it could have been to support a mechanism of unknown type.

A return may now be made to the Buchholz 's ³³ question concerning the new architectural remains and finds on the upper terrace discovered by our excavation there. Leaving aside the remains of historical times, I shall concentrate on the presentation and discussion of the prehistoric ones, i.e. the metallurgical installation and workshop and the bathroom.

As regards the metallurgical workshop, recognised as such by Professor G.Papademetriou and Dr N. Georgakellos of the National Metsoveion Technical University of Athens³⁴ it was

³¹ Blegen &Rawson 1966, 88, fig. 70

³² Iakovidis S.E.- French E.B, 2003, 17, fig. 12

³³ Buchholz 2009, 135

³⁴ " Το υλικό λόγω της μεγάλης του καθαρότητας (απουσίας σιδήρου) και της απουσίας μολύβδου ως κραμάτωσης ή ακαθαρσίας είναι απολύτως συμβατό με τις συνθέσεις προ»ιστορικών αντικειμένων, που παράγονται ως σφυρήλατα ...Με βάση τα προηγούμενα συμπεράσματα , η

³⁰ Wace 1962, 493

found, as mentioned above, during the 2009 excavation season at a distance of ca. 50 m. NW of the Hellenistic tower. Its construction consists of tubular pouring channels cut out on the rock and ending in small uneven cavities (**Pl.12a**), while clear remains of a roughly circular melting hearth or furnace (**Pl.12b**) were recognized nearby to the east of the channels. The workshop was bordered by a platform of slabs and supported at the east by a well-built and strong retaining wall (**Pl. 12c-d**). Relevant products were bronze pins and nails³⁵, fish-hooks³⁶, an

περιεκτικότητα σε κασίτερο περί το 9%, η απουσία αρσενικού και η υψηλή καθαρότητα (απουσία σιδήρου και μολύβδου), το τοποθετούν με μεγάλη πιθανότητα στην μυκηναϊκή περίοδο» (personal communication and official written opinion of Prof. Papademetriou)

³⁵ For refs. and discussion see. Jacobstal 1956, 1ff.; Sandars 1958-59, 236; Higgins 1961, 86; Desborough 1964, 53-54; Iakovides 1970, 289-290; Hood 1968, 214ff.; Hammond 1967, 350-361; Papanthimou 1979, 206-9; Blegen et al. 1973, 160, fig. 230: 11-14; Papadopoulos 1978-79, 139-140; Vlachopoulos 2006, 272-3 (pins). and. see (for nails), e.g. Iakovides 1989, 23, 66, pls. 10^a, 28^β; Wace 1921-1922; 1922-1923, 350 (As is well known there are parallel horizontal rows in the walls of the dome, which according to the usually accepted belief, attached gilt bronze rosettes or some other form of decoration to the walls”); Idem, 1964, 32 (Treasury of Atreus)

³⁶ Cf. Keramopoulos 1917, 178-180; Iakovidis 1970, 354-5; Buchholz et al. 1973, J170-3, Abb. 55h-w; Papadopoulos 1978-79, 158-9. Cf. also, Catling 1974, 246, Benzi 1992, 180

awl³⁷, a needle³⁸, a flat (or ½ of double axe?)³⁹ and most importantly one broken low-stemmed monochrome LH III early kylix⁴⁰, two lamps - one of bronze (Catling’s Form 27b) the other of lead with skillet handle, broken and badly corroded. (**Pls. 12e-f, 13-14**)

Catling says that “lamps with skillet handles (Form 27b) were for long represented in Crete only by a single piece from Zafer Papoura, Tomb 14, while at least six were known on the Mainland.

³⁷ Cf. for refs. and discussion, Catling 1964, 65, 97-98 (Eutresis, Mycenae, Mallia, Rhodes, Lapithos, Ayios Iakovos, Enkomi, Kouklia). See also, Deshayes 1960, 39ff; II, 3 n. 58; Blegen et al. 1973, 158, fig. 230: 8, Iakovidis 1970, 339, fig. 145, pl. 128γ; Benzi 1992, 180, pl. 181.l-m

³⁸ The type is well known throughout the Bronze Age, especially in Early Bronze Age II-III deposits. Our example belongs to Branigan’s Type III with parallels from elsewhere (Chalandriani, Zygyouries and Troy).. Cf. Branigan 1974, 30, pl.15 nos. 1230-34 (EBA II-III)

³⁹ Flat axes, most probably inserted in a slot cut in the long axis of the haft, are known from several Aegean and Cypriot sites since EBA times and have been discussed in detail by Branigan and Catling The possibility that our small example is a chisel cannot be ruled out, as Catling suggests that “possibly some of the smallest, were mounted for use as chisels in a bone or horn slieve”. Another possibility is to be half of a double axe (Buchholz’s Type I/III), but this is to be more fully considered. Cf. Branigan 1974, 24; Catling 1964, 63-64, 85-86; Buchholz 1989, 48, Taf. X.b. Also, Buchholz & Karageorghis V., 1971, 278: 737 (Agrinion)

(MBA or LBA?)

⁴⁰ FS. 264. Cf. Frödin & Persson 1938, 405, fig. 265; BMA, NT48: 10,11; Mountjoy 1986, 90, fig. 108

But the two Sellopoulo finds plus fragments of two more from tomb 3 and another in the Archanes tholos⁴¹ have shown that the type was equally common in both areas. This form seems to be no earlier than LM IIIA1/LH IIIA1. The lamp from an LH II group in Dendra Tomb 8 stands apart from these with its separately attached handle⁴².

The Ithaki bronze lamp was safely dated on the basis of its context and parallels from other sites (Dendra, Mycenae, Archanes, Zafer Papoura, Sellopoulo and Cyprus) to the Late Mycenaean /Minoan period (14th cent. B.C.)⁴³

Leaden lamps are generally rare and in their typical form ("shallow bowl with one pinched nozzle"⁴⁴) are known from few prehistoric (Bronze Age) sites⁴⁵, but we cannot find any parallel to our skillet lamp elsewhere in the Aegean or Cyprus. Our example is dated, on the basis of its context, to LH IIIA1 period.

The bathroom, SE of the metallurgical workshop, has an

entrance to the east and a low inner dividing wall. Immediately after the entrance part of a slab-paved floor is preserved, while several sherds of Late Mycenaean pottery and parts of a broken clay bath-tub (*ασάμινθος*), somewhat similar to that found in the Palace of Nestor⁴⁶ have been scattered on it. One cannot exclude the possibility that the bath-tub has been transferred to this room after its primary use elsewhere in order to be used in the workshop. The metallurgical workshop remind us the reference of Odysseia Σ 328 (*χαλκήιον ες δόμον*) and the bathroom the reference P 85-90 (*ες δ' ασαμίνθους βάντες*).

Other prehistoric finds from the excavation at the site include coarse handmade (*barbaric ware*), Middle (Grey and yellow Minyan) and Late Bronze age (Mycenaean) pottery (mainly sherds of: 1 jar, 1 jug, 4 kylikes, 1 stirrup-jar, 2 deep bowls, 1 stemmed bowl, 2 kraters, a bronze spearhead, leaden rivets of the "double rivet" type, broken stone vases, a clay seal, and objects of ivory/bone (a small spoon, fragments of an ivory pyxis and a pin) (**Pls. 15-16**).

It must be noticed that the relative scarcity of Prehistoric/Mycenaean finds is most likely due to the continuous habitation of the site and, as has

⁴¹ Sakellarakis 1970, 152, fig. 5.10)

⁴² Catling 1974, 251

⁴³ For refs. and discussion see, Catling 1964, 182-3, fig. 21: 8,9; Idem 1974, 238-9, fig. 24: 35-36, and p. 251

Also, Matthäus 1980, 302-4, Taf. 52-54; Demakopoulou K. (ed.), 1988, 228 no. 221; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985, 206, pl. 92.V (Xλ. 3045); Immerwahr, *Agora*, 167-8, pl. 33.

⁴⁴ Cf. Aström 1972, 474, fig. 60.9

⁴⁵ Aström 1972, 474; Buchholz 1972, 12, 41 nos 20a-b; Dikaios 1969, 100, 278, 463, 519, 813, pl. 163: 64, 65; Matthäus 1980, 267-8, Taf. 163, nos. 586-588

⁴⁶ Blegen & Rawson 1966, 187-8, figs. 37, 139-40, 422

been rightly observed by Hope - Simpson and Dickinson⁴⁷ “later (Hellenistic and Roman) remains on the hill above the spring may have removed much of the LH (Mycenaean) level”. It is also worth mentioning that many more prehistoric finds and of later periods of habitation at the site have been unearthed and are housed in the storerooms of the local archaeological museums, awaiting preservation and detailed study.

Finally an answer may be permitted to the Buchholz’s last statement “I have argued that we have to expect ancient “heroic” evidence at a site, where a heroon was placed afterwards. Who ever will do more archaeological investigation at the “School of Homer” is well advised to look for more prehistoric finds in that area.”⁴⁸ After doing more archaeological investigation and discovering more and, to my opinion, very important prehistoric finds from the area presented here, I shall continue , following the opinion of the British excavators and other scholars , as well as, my experience and knowledge of Ithaca, to believe that the “heroon of Odysseus” or *Odysse;ion* is to

be sought at the Polis bay and to my mind it cannot be elsewhere than this site. On the other hand , I still consider, based on the presented above archaeological evidence, and until more significant remains and objects are found in an equally suitable place elsewhere, that “School of Homer” covers an important and strategic prehistoric residence, commanding the whole undulating plateau which constitutes the most fertile area of the rocky island with easy access to the harbours of Polis, Aphales and Frikes, and seems to be a promising and strong candidate for the political centre of the island and the Homeric palace of Odysseus (**Pls.17-18**).

In conclusion, it is tempting to suggest a correlation of the archaeological record with the Homeric tradition.

⁴⁷ Hope Simpson & Dickinson 1979, 185-6 .
Cf. also, Camp 2009, 37 (...η μεταγενέστερη οικοδομική δραστηριότητα και η εκτεταμένη χρήση της Ακρόπολης (των Αθηνών) ως ιερού, κατά την Αρχαϊκή και την Κλασική περίοδο, έχουν εξαλείψει σχεδόν κάθε ίχνος του (μυκηναϊκού) ανακτόρου”).

⁴⁸ Buchholz 2009, 138

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List of plates

Plate 1. a. Map of Ithaca. b- c. Polis bay from NE.,

Plate 2. a. Mycenaean pottery from Tris Langades –Polis (Benton-Waterhouse, *BSA* 68, 1973, fig. 3), b. Inscribed mask “ΕΥΧΗΝ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙ» (Benton, *BSA* 35, 1934-35, fig. 7, c. Tripods *in situ* , d. Reconstruction of tripod , (Benton, op.cit.. figs. 6,15

Plate 3. a. School of Homer (air photo), b. Retaining wall and south gate leading to megaron, c.-d. Air photo of the lower terrace and provisional reconstruction of the megaron

Plate 4. a. School of Homer (Buchholz, *Δώρον*, 2009, fig. 3b), b. Lower terrace-megaron , c. “oxhide ingot” cut on the rock

Plate 5. a. School of Homer, Megaron, b-c. Hearth and provisional reconstruction of the domos, d. cavity on the rock for the base of a column, e, Handmade and Mycenaean pottery from the hearth

Plate 6. a-e. School of Homer, Prehistoric pottery from the megaron, f. Pottery of historical times

Plate 7. a. School of Homer, Sanctuary(?) north of the megaron, b-f. Finds from the sanctuary (?)

Plate 8. School of Homer, lower terrace, Mycenaean architectural remains

Plate 9. a- e. School of Homer, Underground spring (Knauss, 2006, figs. 2, 5, table, 2008, figs. 1-2,6, d. Provisional reconstruction

Plate 10. a,c-d. School of Homer , The so-called “Κυκλοτερές» monument and finds, e-f. Staircases cut on the rock

Plate 11. a-d School of Homer, remains of Mycenaean walls and parallel from the acropolis of Mycenae,e. Recessed niche west of the megaron

Plate 12. School of Homer, upper terrace. Metallurgical workshop, provisional reconstruction and finds

Plate 13. School of Homer. Metallurgical workshop, bronze and lead lamps

Plate 14. School of Homer. Several prehistoric finds (bronze and bonepins, nails, fish-hooks)

Plate 15. School of Homer, a-c. Prehistoric finds (handmade and Mycenaean pottery, d. broken stone vases, e-f. bronze spearhead and leaden rivet

Plate 16. School of Homer. a-f. Bone prehistoric objects, g. clay seal and Minoan parallel

Plate 17. School of Homer.

Topographical plans of the Mycenaean
acropolis

Plate 18. School of Homer.

Provisional reconstruction of the
palace of Odysseus

