

# **Nemea Valley Archaeological Project. Vol. 1, The Early Bronze Age Village on Tsoungiza Hill**

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By Daniel J. Pullen. Pp. xl + 1047, figs. 421, tables 171. The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Princeton 2011. \$150. ISBN 978-0-87661-922-3 (cloth).

Reviewed by

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This book, which is the inaugural volume of a series of publications of the Nemea Valley Archaeological Project (NVAP), presents the Early Bronze Age (EBA) settlement on the Tsoungiza Hill at ancient Nemea, which was first excavated by Carl Blegen and James Penrose Harland from 1924 until 1927. The University of California at Berkeley restarted excavations in 1982, which were followed by fieldwork of the NVAP under the direction of James C. Wright. The EBA contexts were excavated from 1984 until 1986 by Pullen, and he was also responsible for the recording and processing of the finds. This monograph by Pullen combines a reexamination of the documentation of Harland's excavations with the publication of results from the excavations of 1982 and 1984–1986 by the NVAP. Based on his dissertation for Indiana University in 1984 ("Social Organization in Early Bronze Age Greece: A Multi-Dimensional Approach"), Pullen has worked on the finds from Tsoungiza for many years, and he has already presented the most important results in various articles. This volume of the Nemea Valley publication is therefore based on an intensive investigation of the EBA of southern Greece.

The book is arranged in two major parts: The first part contains an analysis of the excavations and the pottery sequence, while the second part focuses on the small finds (chapters on the lithics, by Karabatsoli and Krattenmaker), the chemical analyses of the metal finds (by Kayafa, Stos-Gale, and Gale), and the publication of the faunal (Halstead) and archaeobotanical remains (Hansen and Allen).

The earliest finds presented in this publication date to the Final Neolithic period and, according to pottery development, probably fall into the later portion of this period, which would overlap with the Early Cycladic Pelos phase. The subsequent Early Helladic (EH) I period is characterized by a large pottery assemblage of the regional Talioti style, which is the first to be published to such an extent. Pullen demonstrates that its characteristic shape, the fruitstand, was used for the communal sharing of food and drink, and

archaeozoology adds further proof of local consumption in the course of such feasting. By the use of Talioti Ware, Tsoungiza was part of a local network closely connected to the Argolid. Furthermore, the appearance of Cycladic frying pans synchronizes the Talioti assemblage with the Cycladic Kampos Group. However, the Tsoungiza material gives no evidence that the Talioti ceramic set stretches over the entire EH I period. As Pullen has pointed out, an EH I dagger made of arsenic copper from Laurion has to be seen in context with a group of daggers known from the Kampos horizon. It should be added that such daggers, known as weapons of the warlike EH II society, even have Final Neolithic prototypes. Good evidence of mat impressions on the bases of pots come from the same settlement level.

The EH II sequence compares well with Lerna. Therefore, the classification of the pottery is based on the publication by Wiencke (*Lerna: A Preclassical Site in the Argolid*. Vol. 4, *The Architecture, Stratification and Pottery of Lerna III* [Princeton 2000]). However, the presentation of the pottery according to classes and forms was arranged by an individual system of classification that takes into account the long use of the settlement documented in this volume as well as the local differences between Tsoungiza and the EH “type site” of Lerna.

Furthermore, Pullen was able to distinguish contexts of an EH II initial period, which is poorly attested in Lerna and shows major changes in the use of shape, clay recipes, and decoration techniques. Now for the first time, Urfinis painted pottery—as well as the EH II eating/drinking set, consisting of sauceboat, small bowls, and basins—is attested. The most important assemblage comes from a small house (1982 House A), which, according to the pottery and abundance of large animal carcasses, may have been a storage room of equipment for food consumption. Interesting in this context is the abundance of spindle whorls, which Pullen interprets as evidence for the involvement of women in feasting preparation.

For the EH II developed period, which through radiocarbon data also synchronizes mainly with EH IIA (i.e., with Lerna IIIA late to IIIC early), Pullen was able to distinguish three periods of construction. The earliest phase is represented by House A, excavated by Harland and extensively restudied by Pullen. Based on the results of Shaw (“Sequencing the EH II ‘Corridor Houses,’” *BSA* 102 [2007] 137–51), Pullen argues that this house actually may be an early form of the so-called corridor-house type, which is known from several southern Greek settlements. A second settlement phase is represented by the Burnt Room, which produced an interesting floor assemblage pointing to food preparation and drinking. The last phase of the settlement, dating to the EH II developed period, is represented by House B, also excavated by Harland. A comparison of the pottery with Lerna and Tiryns shows clear differences in the production and use of shapes. A petrographic analysis of the pottery by the University of Sheffield is underway and aims at characterizing local pottery production as well as interaction with the Argolid, Corinth, and Aegina.

An important find to be connected with the EH II settlement is a lead stamp seal. A mold for the casting of metal tools points to local production of metal objects, while according to lead isotope analysis, copper objects from Tsoungiza were made of metal from Laurion as well as from Cyprus. The few terracotta figurines include human male and bull figurines. One of them represents a yoked bull probably pulling a plow, and therefore proves that the

use of bulls for plowing must have already been common during EH II. To this information should be added that according to the analysis of animal bones from Knossos, cows were already used as draft animals or even for plowing during the Neolithic period (V. Isaakidou, "Ploughing with Cows: Knossos and the Secondary Products Revolution," in D. Serjeantson and D. Field, eds., *Animals in the Neolithic of Britain and Europe* [Oxford 2006] 95–112); therefore, plowing may have been introduced at an even earlier date. A number of so-called clay anchors, formerly thought to be introduced during the EH III period, which may have been used in textile production, were found in EH II layers.

The EH III settlement remains were already excavated by Harland, and the excavation by NVAP did not produce much further information. In addition to two settlement levels consisting of densely packed two-roomed rectangular houses separated by alleys, another apsidal house was identified on a lower level. Furthermore, evidence suggests that a water supply was provided from a cistern, which cannot be attributed to a certain settlement phase. Pullen shows clearly that these house remains point to a flat social hierarchy, as has been proposed as characteristic of EH III. Pottery shapes and decoration are similar to Lerna, fitting well into Rutter's system of pottery classes (*Lerna: A Preclassical Site in the Argolid*. Vol. 3, *The Pottery of Lerna IV* [Princeton 1995]). This fact may indicate a great social cohesiveness of EH III society. According to shapes and decoration, the settlement duration is synchronous to Lerna IV, phases 1–2 and 3. Accordingly, the excavated area shows a settlement gap between EH II developed and EH III, phase 1–2.

In summary, this book is a profound and detailed work that successfully combines the analysis of old excavation records and publication of new finds. Although Tsoungiza is not a major site, it covers all aspects and poses all questions relevant for such material from any EH site. Furthermore, the pottery material is presented in such a comprehensive and careful manner as to make this publication valuable even as a handbook for any fieldworker dealing with this period in southern Greece. Therefore, the only point of contention would be the bulkiness of this volume, which could have been avoided if its contents had been divided into two volumes. In any case, through his analysis of finds, Pullen augments our knowledge of the EBA sequence from its very beginnings as well as of EBA society in general. The volume thus brings us several steps forward in gaining a better understanding of the EBA not only on the Greek mainland but generally in the greater region of the Aegean.

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