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Stella Katsarou, Lina Kormazopoulou, Sabine Neumann, Ioanna Zygouri, Eric Laufer, Katja Sporn

## Surveying the caves above Tithorea in 2016

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Katja Sporn | Alexandre Farnoux |  
Eric Laufer  
ANCIENT PHOKIS

Athenaia 13  
Études méditerranéennes 4

DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT  
Abteilung Athen

**ATHENAIA 13**

ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'ATHÈNES

**ÉTUDES  
MÉDITERRANÉENNES 4**

DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT  
Abteilung Athen

Katja Sporn | Alexandre Farnoux | Eric Laufer (eds.)

# ANCIENT PHOKIS

New approaches to its history, archaeology  
and topography

International Conference, DAI Athens, 30 March – 1 April 2017

REICHERT VERLAG

**Autor/Author:**

Katja Sporn (ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1845-5113>, ROR ID: <https://ror.org/05nqsnd28>)

Alexandre Farnoux (IdRef: <http://www.idref.fr/032145993/id>, ROR ID: <https://ror.org/02fzvr850>)

Eric Laufer (ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8758-6854>, ROR ID: <https://ror.org/05nqsnd28>)

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# Inhaltsverzeichnis

Vorwort .....	IX
Phocis, Delphoi, and the amphictyony .....	1
<i>Peter Londey</i>	
Living on a rock. The cities of ancient Phocis and the importance of place .....	11
<i>Hans Beck</i>	
Borders and identity in ancient Phocis: some reflections .....	23
<i>Giovanna Daverio Rocchi</i>	
Phocis in the Aetolian League. Self-abandonment or self-assertion? .....	33
<i>Peter Funke</i>	
The institutions of the Phocian League .....	45
<i>Denis Rousset</i>	
Phocis in Roman times: beyond the shadow of Delphi .....	67
<i>Georgios A. Zachos</i>	
Das phokische Koinon zwischen Bötien, Delphi, Athen und Rom .....	85
<i>Christoph Begass</i>	
Delphes et Kalapodi au début de l'âge du fer ancien (11 <sup>e</sup> –9 <sup>e</sup> siècles av. J.-C.) .....	101
<i>Jean-Marc Luce</i>	
Zur Selbstdarstellung der Phoker in Delphi .....	121
<i>Anne Jacquemin</i>	
Athena. A gateway to Delphi .....	133
<i>Sandrine Huber – Anne Jacquemin – Didier Laroche</i>	

Terres cuites figurées du dépôt votif de Kirrha: de l'établissement du matériel à son exploitation .....	147
<i>Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi</i>	
The sanctuary of Athena in Phocian Antikyra .....	165
<i>Athanasios Sideris</i>	
The fortifications of ancient Phocis	
Results and prospects .....	185
<i>Nicolas Kyriakidis</i>	
Δρόμος με παρελθόν .....	195
<i>Φανούρια Δακορώνια (†) – Πέτρος Κουνούκλας</i>	
Παναγίτσα Ελάτειας 1979–1981	
Κτερίσματα και ταφικά έθιμα σε κλασσικό νεκροταφείο της Ελατείας .....	209
<i>Πάντος Α. Πάντος</i>	
Spanning two oracles. The sanctuary of Demeter at Erochos, between Delphi and Abae .....	219
<i>Elena Partida – Anthoula Tsaroucha</i>	
The rediscovery of a manuscript by Erich Gose and Friedrich Schober on the Kephissos valley from 1926 .....	237
<i>Katja Sporn</i>	
Ο κρίσιμος 4ος αιώνας π.Χ.: παλαιές και νέες οχυρώσεις, παλαιοί και νέοι οικισμοί στην κοιλάδα του φωκικού Κηφισού .....	249
<i>Φώτης Ντάσιος</i>	
Panopeus .....	271
<i>Elena Kountouri – Ioannis Mavrommatidis – Nikolaos Petrochilos</i>	
New research on the fortification of Tithorea. A preliminary report of fieldwork 2016–2017 .....	287
<i>Petros Kounouklas – Eric Laufer</i>	
Surveying the caves above Tithorea in 2016 .....	307
<i>Stella Katsarou – Lina Kormazopoulou – Eric Laufer – Sabine Neumann – Katja Sporn – Ioanna Zygouri</i>	

Doric capitals and column drums from Modi in Phocis.....	339
<i>Nils Hellner – David Scahill</i>	
Ταφές των Πρώιμων Αυτοκρατορικών Χρόνων από την Υάμπολη στην ανατολική Φωκίδα.....	349
<i>Μαρία Παπαγεωργίου – Δημήτρης Γρηγορόπουλος</i>	
Sites of memory in ancient Phocis	
The Thessalian-Phocian battles, the Persian Wars, and the changing religious landscape.....	371
<i>Elena Franchi</i>	
A transfer of sacred lands from eastern Phocis, IG IX1, 87.....	383
<i>Jeremy McInerney</i>	
Kalapodi 2014–2016: Investigating the surroundings, limits and infrastructure of the sanctuary.....	397
<i>Katja Sporn</i>	
Ritual burials of temples and ritual depositions accompanying building activities in the oracle sanctuary of Apollon at Abai/ Kalapodi.....	409
<i>Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier</i>	
The bronze finds from the Late Geometric ›South Temple 6‹ at Kalapodi	
Cult practices and local craft traditions in eastern Phocis.....	421
<i>Gudrun Klebinder-Gauß</i>	
The significance of the sanctuary of Kalapodi during the Archaic period based on the pottery finds.....	439
<i>Michaela Stark</i>	
A palette of bronze and silver: the monetary perspective of the archaeological site at Kalapodi.....	455
<i>Hristina Ivanova-Anaplioti</i>	
New iron finds from the 2016 campaign in Kalapodi – Contexts and compositions.....	469
<i>Sandra Zipprich</i>	



A bronze foundry of Classical times in the sanctuary at Kalapodi .....	479
<i>Johanna Fuchs</i>	

Pagan twilight at Kalapodi: Two pottery assemblages of the third and fourth centuries A.D. ....	491
<i>Dimitris Grigoropoulos</i>	



# Surveying the caves above Tithorea in 2016

*Stella Katsarou – Lina Kormazopoulou – Eric Laufer – Sabine Neumann  
– Katja Sporn – Ioanna Zygouri*

The steep mountain south of ancient (and modern) Tithorea, a northeast foothill of the Parnassos massif, features numerous caves, spread all over the slope. The mountain's limestone composition – partly limestone breccia – formed some deep caves, a large number of rather small rock chambers as well as wide rock shelters of little depth. Most of them are likely the result of mechanical causes such as erosion from wind or water, a view supported by the repeated oval morphology<sup>1</sup>.

On the north side of the slope, several of these caves are situated along the base of a huge limestone cliff (*figs. 1. 2*). These caves are mostly oriented to the north, they offer an open view of the wide Kephissos river plain. Some are easily visible from afar, the plain and the village. This area was investigated in 2016, during a one-week campaign of survey and limited excavation fieldwork undertaken by the Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology supported by a

team from the German Archaeological Institute, Athens (DAI)<sup>2</sup>. The results of this 2016 research are summarised in the present paper. During the limited duration of the fieldwork, we were able to explore a total of 16 caves in this area, of which we documented 12 (see ›catalogue‹ below)<sup>3</sup>. Working conditions were difficult due to the dense vegetation throughout the area and the exposed topographic location of many caves (requiring climbing equipment and trained personnel). The majority of the investigated caves are situated close to the modern footpath which starts from the village, passes the forest above and ascends to the plateau of the cave chapels (see below). Most of these caves show traces of human activity which has been documented in plans, photographs, photogrammetry, and descriptions. The purpose of the study was to make this hitherto largely unknown culturally rich landscape with its natural elements accessible to research. Many of the surveyed caves were frequented

<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with Dr. Vassilis Giannopoulos, geologist of the Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology, whom we thank for his observations on geomorphological issues.

<sup>2</sup> Duration of the field campaign: 20.6.–25.6.2016. – Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology: A. Darlas – S. Katsarou – L. Kormazopoulou and J. Zygouri. We are also indebted to E. Karantzali and P. Kounouklas (Ephorate of Antiquities of Phthiotida and Evrytania). The work of the Ephorate's team was concentrated on the excavation in Cave 10 and the study of the survey finds. The

DAI team (K. Sporn – E. Laufer – S. Neumann – J. Ries – S. Zipprich) focused on the environment survey of other caves around and the search for the ›Cave of Gose and Schober‹ (*cat. 05*). The geodetic survey work was conducted by the topographer H. Birk and S. Biernath. We would like to thank the *koinotarchis* of Tithorea, G. Zarouchas, for supporting the archaeological fieldwork in Tithorea, and the workman Ch. Kaperonis.

<sup>3</sup> Four caves lacking any evidence of human occupancy are omitted from the catalogue and the map on *fig 2*.



1 Tithorea, Survey area of caves, view from the north

in modern times by shepherds, therefore many structures and finds from earlier periods may be lost or hidden under debris.

The wider area of the surveyed zone, and especially the east flank of the same mountain (rising above the deep Velitza Gorge) bears a number of further caves<sup>4</sup> which were not included in the survey. Among them is the cave of the 19<sup>th</sup> century prominent military commander of the Greek Revolution Odysseas An-

droutsos<sup>5</sup> with no signs of antique use whatsoever, as well as a hardly accessible cave close to the Prof. Ilias area, ca. 85 m east of the ›Cave of Pan‹<sup>6</sup>.

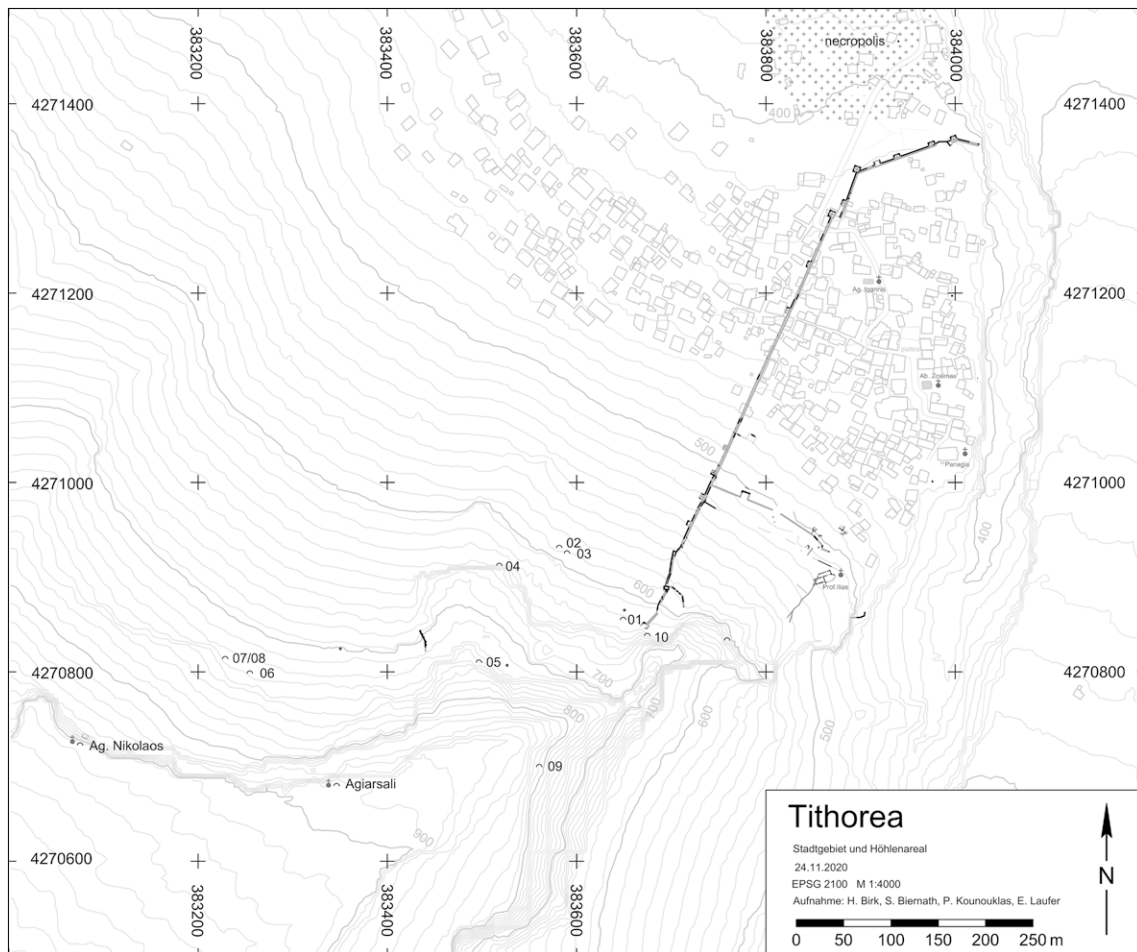
Below we give a more detailed description and interpretation of the surveyed caves, and their significant cultural context from the Neolithic to the modern period. A catalog of caves investigated during the archaeological survey is included at the end of this contribution.

<sup>4</sup> Only a few caves of this eastern side were inspected during a later ascent in 2019.

<sup>5</sup> This cave and the popular stories connected to it are mentioned several times in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as modern travelers' reports dedicated to Tithorea, cf. Lolling 1989, 173; Lewis 1987, 123–132; van Rookhuijzen 2019, 176; Amandry 1981, 49 f.

About Odysseas Androutsos and his part in the Greek War of Independence see Kitromilides 2021 and Mazower 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Due to its inaccessible location, we could not further investigate it during the survey. It was surveyed by drone during later fieldwork in Tithorea in 2019.



2 Tithorea, area of the city (fortification line) and the area of surveyed caves (scale 1:8.000)

## The ›Cave of Pan‹

In the immediate vicinity of the uppermost tower of the city wall there is a rock shelter (*cat. 10*) with reliefs artificially carved into the rock. This cave was rediscovered during a post-doctoral field trip of the German Archaeological Institute, Athens to Phokis in November 2015. The identification of a Pan relief on the rock surface of this cave gave rise to the survey campaign carried out in 2016.

The cave has been mentioned in the older research literature but has not been studied in any detail to date. In 1805 the English traveller Edward Daniel Clarke published a note which refers to a cave at the upper end of ancient Tithorea's city wall. The locals told him »marvellous stories« about it, while

Clarke suggested identifying it as the famous sanctuary of Isis well known from Pausanias<sup>7</sup>. About the same time also Edward Dodwell must have seen the same cave from a distance – it is shown on his illustration<sup>8</sup> – but he did not mention it. None of the later travellers and researchers seems to have paid attention to this cave again. During the 2016 survey, the cave was examined for the first time and documented. An excavation of the cave was carried out by the Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology.

The rock shelter is formed at the base of a limestone cliff on the mountain slope, inside the ancient city and behind the uppermost tower of the city wall<sup>9</sup> (figs. 3, 4). It consists of a shallow single space

<sup>7</sup> Paus. 10, 32, 13. Clarke 1805, 152 f. and Clarke 1818, 274; he did not ascend to the cave.

<sup>8</sup> Dodwell 1834, pls. 42, 43; Dodwell 1819, 137–139.

<sup>9</sup> For the city wall see Kounouklas – Laufer in this volume, with a very probable dating to the late classical-early Hellenistic period; the exact dating of the building is still the subject of current research.





3 Cave 10

with the following measurements: width 13.7 m, depth 9.8 m and a maximum height of 3.7 m, covering a surface area of ca. 82 m<sup>2</sup>. On the eastern wall some rock-cut reliefs and carvings were spotted, the most important depicting the god Pan standing in ponderation en face (*fig. 5*). The weathered figure of Pan is 26 cm in height (relief ground: max. 3 cm). It is presented with long, upright horns, his left arm akimbo, originally holding an indiscernible object in front of his belly. The lowered right arm holds a round or sack-shaped item. While the legs are human-shaped, the feet seem to be pointed, which might indicate goat-hooves. The figure seems to wear a short chiton with short sleeves. It does not correspond to a clear statue-type of Pan, but with the long horns and the human body with human legs and hooves, rather resembles the earlier figural type known mainly in the Classical/Late Classical period than the later ones with the goat-shaped legs and short horns<sup>10</sup>. It may be compared with a rock cut relief of Pan on the wall of a partly natural – partly artificial cave by the church of Agia Foteini of

Ilissos in Athens, which can be dated no earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., although the precise date is difficult to determine. This is the closest parallel to our Pan in relief. Another parallel is a recently discovered rock engraving of the god Pan equally depicted with hooves together with a hoplite at Faskomelia Hill in Vouliagmeni, Attica, which has been dated to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>11</sup> Rock cut reliefs in general are occasionally met in cave shrines but are not very common in Greece<sup>12</sup>.

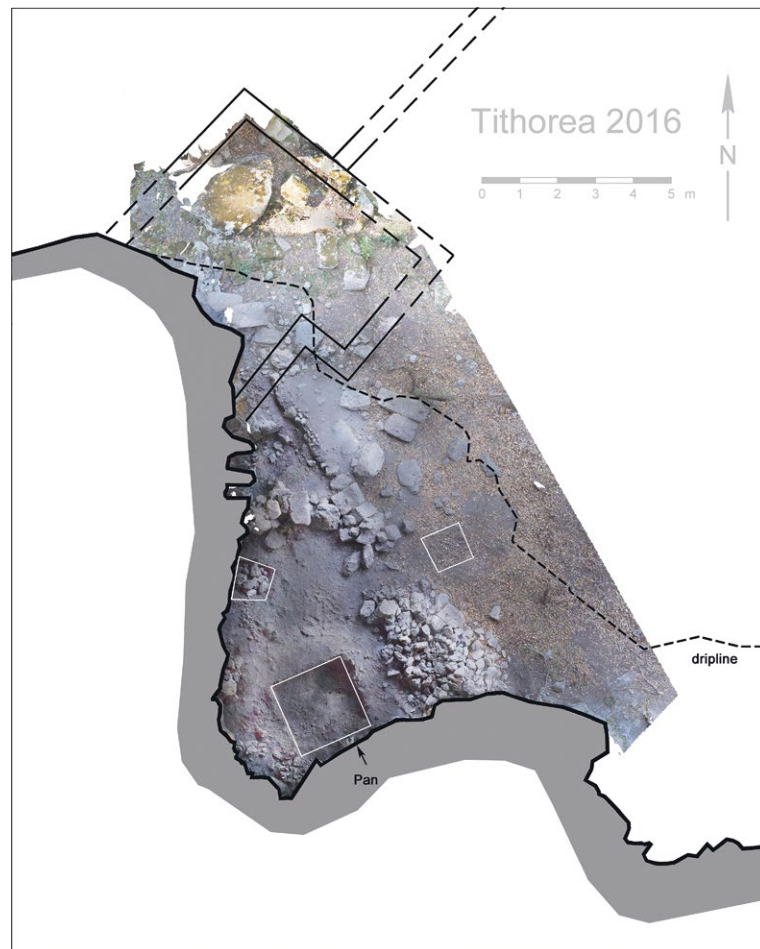
Quite peculiar are the other three figures carved next to Pan on his right (*fig. 6*). The outer figures are very schematic, the left one being quite clear with up-raised arms and an elongated head (H 22 cm), while the right one has an hourglass shape (H 30 cm). These figures are in shallow relief (1.5 cm) and seem to date much later than our Pan figure. They are probably related to the recent use of the cave as a pen for animals or even a shelter for humans<sup>13</sup>. A rock formation on the left of the figure Pan resembles a bearded male protome turning towards the Pan figure to the right, but it seems to be natural. Some triangular cuttings

<sup>10</sup> See most recently Giamalidi – Tzovara 2021, 35 for representations of the god with hooves in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

<sup>11</sup> Giamalidi – Tzovara 2021.

<sup>12</sup> On Agia Foteini see Rodenwaldt 1912; Wickens 1986, 313–319 no. 58. With a height of 0.96 m this figure of Pan is larger than the one at Tithorea. Further reliefs e.g.: At the Pan shrine of the Pnyx in Athens a relief representing Pan sitting on a rock and stretching his arm towards a dancing female figure who transforms into a tree, most probably a nymph (Δακουρά-Βογιατζόγλου 2004, 26). A relief is known in an artificial cave on the acropolis of Thasos, southwest of the shrine of Athena, with an inscription dedicated to Pan and Aphrodite (Owen 2000, 139–143). At a site by the name of Kamari between the towns of Argos and Nemea, a small cave shrine is reported, close to a water source and accessible through some stairs. In it there are votive reliefs on the wall and an inscription dedicated to Artemis dating between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century, see Mitsos 1949, 75 pl. 2, 4. Γιαννουλίδου 1974, 28 f. mentions a kind of rock-cut protome in a cave called ›Pherektydes‹ on Syros – today nothing is visible in the form of a protome or relief (Archive of Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology). Another relief is on the wall of the so-called ›Cave of nymphs‹, the marble quarry at Marathi in Paros, which depicts Pan within a large group of figures including major male and female deities as well as some minor ones and the dedicating inscription ΑΔΑΜΑΣ ΟΔΡΥΣΗΣ ΝΥΜΦΑΙΣ, dated to 350–325 B.C. (about the relief, see Αλιπράντης 2017, 214–217, with older references; about the inscription, see IG XII 5, 245). A. Blouet reported on the oracular ›Cave of Hercules‹ at Voura (Achaia): »au-dessus de l'ouverture supérieure de la grotte le rocher est grossièrement taillé en forme de tête« (Blouet 1838, 43 pl. 84, 1). On rock cut carvings in Greek caves in general, see Sporn 2020, 165–168 with references.

<sup>13</sup> Their schematic and naive rendering may imply an iconography prototype in the context of Greek folk art of the Ottoman period, perhaps the apotropaic symbols. Roughly carved figures, mostly undatable, are sometimes found in caves, such as the human head recently located on the wall of the anonymous cave of Schisto, a site with diachronic use in western Attica. The relief is unpublished. About the excavated cave site, see Μαυρίδης – Κορμαζοπούλου 2007/2008 and Zampiti 2013.



4 Map of Cave 10 including orthophoto (trenches are marked in white), with the adjacent tower (scale 1:200)

especially in the southern surface of the wall might have been used rather for setting up lamps than for holding installations.

The archaeological investigation included the excavation of three trenches at the cave floor (see *fig. 4*) approximately 50 cm deep, which did not yield any stratigraphic sequence; the soil consisted mainly of debris – dirt, stones, and dung. Following this layer bedrock was quickly reached. A very roughly built dry wall was revealed in the innermost part of the shelter, defining a space of  $2 \times 4$  m and two further ones to the north; they were at least partly constructed from ancient stone material, obviously spolia from the ancient fortification wall nearby. There is no safe chronological clue as to their construction, but since they used the fortification wall material, we may assume that they date from a period when the wall was dissolved, therefore during more recent times which may also correlate with the age of the schematic carvings. Most of the surface archaeological material scattered on the surrounding narrow plateau was also collected.

The finds from the three excavated trenches and the surface collection included a moderate number of

sherds from various chronological periods and several tile fragments.

A handful of ceramic fragments provided evidence of prehistoric use, nonetheless stratigraphically contextless since they were found randomly mixed with later material throughout the cave's fill. A large quernstone more likely also represents the prehistoric stage of use, considering that its raw material and form recall usual stone grinding implements at Neolithic/Bronze Age mainland sites: macroscopically from a volcanic rock, the quern is sizeable (L 34.5 cm) and of the saddle type, featuring a sloping side profile and an oval working surface ending irregularly at one side (*fig. 25, 1*). The prehistoric ceramic material comprises few fragments from deep open jars with slipped or plain coarse surfaces most of which were eroded except from a large base slipped brown on both sides and were more likely of Neolithic date (*fig. 25, 2*). There is also a fragment of a Late Neolithic black-on-red painted and fine-textured closed pot, as well as a couple of fine, black-slipped pieces, one from a bowl with an everted rim and the other one from the body of a closed vessel, that can be dated Neolithic or Early Helladic.



5 Cave 10, relief of Pan

The retrieved material is very fragmentary and too heavily displaced to enable any insight into the activities took place during the cave in prehistory. Structures of prehistoric date were absent. Considering the width of the cavity's opening and the direct exposure of its fill to the steep hill slope, the original prehistoric deposits were more probably heavily affected by natural erosion, together with disturbance and reworking by the occupants of the historical and recent periods.

A preliminary examination of the material belonging to the historical periods did not reveal any-

thing dating earlier than the Hellenistic period. Reference can be made to a few sherds from small black-glazed plates and mould-made bowls, one bearing long petals and the other fern motives, dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> centuries B.C., a glazed plate rim and a number of handles and rims from plain wares dating from the Late Hellenistic to the Early Roman period (1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C. to 1<sup>st</sup> cent. A.D.; *fig. 7*), some broken roof tiles of no specific chronological definition<sup>14</sup>, and finally a few glazed post-medieval sherds dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to early modern times as well as some hardly datable plain potsherds. This post-medieval material provides a confirmation for the chronocultural origin of the schematic carvings.

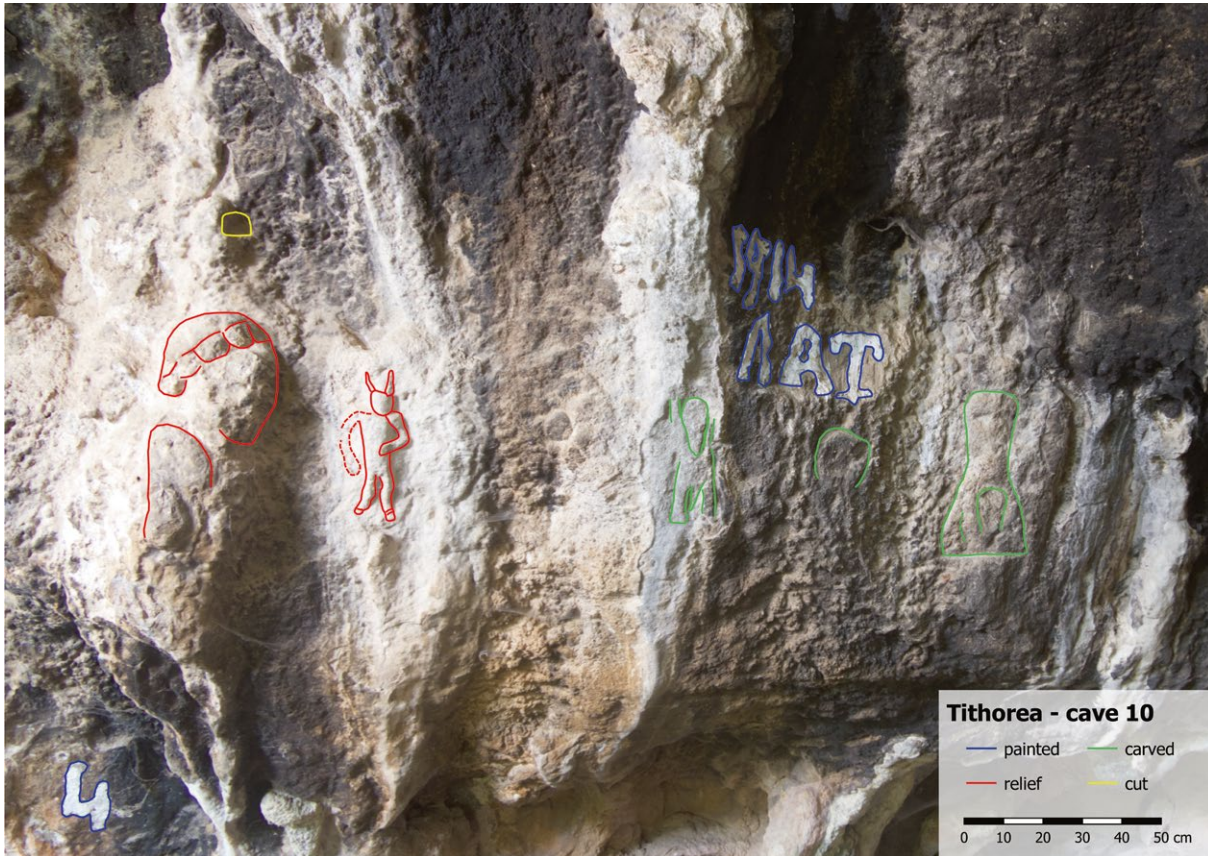
The results of the excavation show that human activity at the ›Cave of Pan‹ had gone on through different periods but the overall lack of stratified evidence and the scarcity of material do not allow detailed conclusions on the nature of space use and the character of the activities performed at this rock shelter<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, it is quite reasonable to take into consideration the probability of erosion of the cave deposit as a result of its exposed location and the steepness of the terrain. Excavation data does not provide enough evidence supporting a systematic use of the cave as a sacred space during the Classical/Hellenistic period. The Pan relief (probably dating in the Classical/Late Classical period) is itself a strong denotation of the presence of the god in the cave but none of the other finds – distinctive ritual artefacts such as figurines or miniature vases are completely absent – offers any further confirmation of cultic activity in it. Considering the random character of the pottery assemblage and the location, it could be assumed that activity in the cave may have been on one hand at least partly connected to the fortification, on the other hand though a cultic function is fairly reasonable even for a limited period.

<sup>14</sup> Roof tiles are often found in cave contexts. There is no clue as to their exact use, but the existence of structures made within defined cave spaces or in their immediate background is a possible explanation for their presence in the absence of other more substantial architectural elements. Tile fragments in great numbers are known from several cave contexts such as the ›Mastro Cave‹ in Aitolokarnania, Nagel 2021, ›Paliambela Cave‹ in the

same area (unpublished material at the Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology) and ›Lechova Cave‹ in Corinthia, Kormazopoulou et al. 2011. For the implementation of architectural features at cave sites, see Sporn 2013, 213, Sporn 2020, 163–165 Table 1.

<sup>15</sup> For non-cultic use of caves during antiquity, see Wickens 2013, 239–246.





6 Cave 10, rock surface with the four relief figures (second from the left: Pan)

## The ›Cave of Gose and Schober‹

A large cave (*cat. no. 05*) with traces of ancient use is located on a rock plateau called στην αετοφωλιά located at ca. 100 m altitude above the previous cave (*fig. 9*). This site was already explored in 1928 by Erich Gose and Friedrich Schober, who completed a manuscript with photos, a drawing and a description, which are kept at the archive of the German Archaeological Institute in Athens and remained unpublished until 2017<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, a sketch of the cave by Gose was preserved in his estate in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier. According to the description by Gose and Schober, this cave lies on a higher rock terrace next to a section of the outer fortification wall<sup>17</sup>. In 2016 we were able to identify the site during the field investigations. The rocky plateau is blocked by the outer fortification wall; the access is limited to this small, fortified section (cf. *fig. 8*). The cave (14.50 × 11.90 m; max. height: 4.65 m) can be entered

by three rock cut steps leading upwards. The interior is spread over two rising levels, the second of which is ca. 1.40 m higher than the first (*figs. 9. 10. 11*); along the side of the cave wall, the lower level bears a smoothed ground surface from frequent walking. After a deep cleaning of the cave from recent debris and dung – the cave was empty from deposits and vegetation when Gose and Schober were there, as their photograph shows<sup>18</sup> – the various man-made rock cuttings and natural features described in the manuscript came to light again.

Among the different cuttings (see *fig. 11*; for a detailed description see below *cat. no. 05*) there is a huge rectangular carved zone ›B‹ which could have been used for the erection of the base of a stele or a relief (*fig. 12*), while ›A‹ with its half-round ending pointing towards the valley could be a cutting for a plinth of a bronze or a marble statue (*fig. 13*). Other

<sup>16</sup> Sporn 2016; edition: Gose – Schober 2016/2017, commentary: Sporn et al. 2016/2017; see also Sporn in this volume.

<sup>17</sup> Gose – Schober 2016/2017, 336 f. *figs. 19. 20*.

<sup>18</sup> Gose – Schober 2016/2017, *fig. 20*.



7 Hellenistic finds from Cave 10 (Pan cave)

cuttings served probably for the deposition of votive offerings or lamps (fig. 10). A total number of eight small round cavities ›F‹, ›G‹, ›H‹, and ›K‹ were smoothed out probably by a liquid; they could have been used for *spondai* (fig. 14)<sup>19</sup>. Because of these features it may be assumed that the cave served a cultic purpose, although – like the first one – it did not contain any movable finds to further support this view.

Next to the entrance, on the eastern side of the cave (cf. fig. 9), a speleothem intriguingly resembles a human figure of 94 cm height (figs. 15. 16). It looks like a standing figure in a frontal position, the right arm bent and lifted beside the head (?)<sup>20</sup>, the left arm put against the body. The whole surface of the object is severely weathered and sintered. On the lower end of what may have been the left arm, a small cut hole (belonging to an attribute that was inserted or accentuating a part of clothes?) suggests that the speleothem was at least partly artificially reshaped to strengthen the impression of a figure. In antiquity, it must have

been clearly visible from the entrance of the cave and from the elevated floor level of the cuttings of the votive offerings; precisely it is oriented frontally towards the aforementioned rock bedding B respectively a person standing close by.

On the rear side of the cave, circa in the middle of the rock face (cf. fig. 9), another protruding speleothem measuring ca. 70 cm height gives the impression of a human (female?) figure sitting on a rock (fig. 17). In this case, there is no indication of artificial treatment of the rock. The impression of an enthroned deity however is strengthened also by the rock altar/omphalos-like shape of a speleothem immediately to the left of the figure (cf. fig. 9)<sup>21</sup>. Within the imposing setting of the cave's interior space the power of imagination and auto-suggestion could occasionally bring speleothems into a living state.

A small number of rather undiagnostic, probably medieval sherds, fragments of roof tiles from different periods and a hand-forged nail were collected on the surface of the rock terrace northwest of the cave. They indicate a later use of the cave. Also, 5–6 m below the entrance a few more sherds of plain wares were found. Movable finds from ancient periods however are not preserved.

Due to its natural formation this shallow cave space, which is greatly exposed to the elements and subject to constant erosion, could have hardly retained any significant soil deposit in situ. However, it is obvious that it was frequented in antiquity and may have served as a cultic shrine as is implied by the range of the rock-cut sockets for the placement of votives, the cup-holes for *spondai* and the speleothem figures. Since the large terrace in front of the cave would offer an excellent view of the Kephissos valley and the ancient city of Tithorea, it can be assumed that the site could have also served as a look-out and observation point connected to the nearby fortification wall.

## Other caves in the surrounding area

A major cave site is situated at Livadi, about 120 m northwest of the ›Cave of Pan‹ (cat. no. 02; figs. 2. 18. 19). Unlike the previous sites, this cave consists of a

large main chamber of maximum width 9.30 m and 18.90 m length, formed after a rather narrow oval entrance divided by a stalagmite column. The cave,

<sup>19</sup> For the widespread distribution of rounded ›cup-marks‹/›Schalensteine‹ and discussion of their function cf. Fleischer 2008, 231 and Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 62 f. 183.

<sup>20</sup> For the iconographic tradition of a figure (like Pan) *apokospeuon*, see Jucker 1956.

<sup>21</sup> cf. the enthroned figure (Kybele?) next to a rock omphalos in the ›Pan Cave‹ at Vari: Schörner – Goette 2004, 117 f. pl. 15.





8 Plateau with Cave 05 (left) and outer fortification (right)

suitable for human use, has been frequented during modern times probably by shepherds and their herds, as is attested by the existence of a modern paved floor in the main chamber, and by graffiti on the cave wall. At various spots, the natural surface of the cave floor has become smooth due to physical erosion. Following the main chamber, a very narrow corridor leads to a minor second chamber, which measures  $2.10 \times 3.15$  m max. From there, another tunnel extends further inward and is accessible only by crawling. Surface material from dung mixed with dirt, sand, rubble, bones and some pottery sherds and tile fragments covered the various chambers and spaces, not excluding the presence of further deposits underneath.

The front space (Chamber A) has yielded few potsherds of a Late/Final Neolithic date (*fig. 25, 4–6*). One of the pieces comes from a bichrome matt-painted jar (*fig. 25, 5*), featuring a set of oblique black-bordered bands filled in grey on the creamy background surface of the pot. The polychrome technique on this piece represents the latest (5<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.) variant in the long sequence of the mainland matt-paint-

ed styles<sup>22</sup>. William Phelps has cited a number of sites in the area, including Elateia, Eutresis and Thespiai, where the particular bordered ornament is attested<sup>23</sup>. Another fragment from the same chamber comes from a large container with a plain coarse exterior surface and a slipped interior, as well as a bulky lug (*fig. 25, 4*), and implies a Late/Final Neolithic date.

Surface investigation of the inner chamber (B) of the cave has led to the collection of more Late Neolithic pottery fragments (*fig. 25, 7–9*), including two pieces from bowls and one distinct fragment of a scoop vessel. One of the bowls attests to misfired brown matt-painted decoration on the brown background surface of the pot (*fig. 25, 7*). The other fragment comes from the body of a fine monochrome brown polished container (*fig. 25, 8*). The scoop vessel (*fig. 25, 9*) is worthy of our special attention here, given the long debate over the function of the range of scoop forms in the Greek Neolithic record. The specific fragment from Livadi cave comes from the lower body of a flat-based upright-standing scoop which had undergone an overall reduced firing resulting in grey on the polished exterior which represents the widespread class of grey

<sup>22</sup> Phelps 2004, 96.

<sup>23</sup> Phelps 2004, 100.



9 Cave 05 (view from north-west), with indication of the standing relief figure (left arrow) and the sitting relief figure(?) (right arrow)

wares of the earliest Late Neolithic (6<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.). Close inspection of its side break shows that technically the base was manufactured from a separate layer of clay, which overlapped with the lower side-wall. Despite the considerably worn surface, it has preserved evidence of incised-dotted ornaments, including two vertical narrow zigzag bands and an inverted triangle, all of them filled with dots. Profile, colour, and decorative patterns altogether attribute the fragment from Livadi to the small and squat flat-based scoop type with a sloping oval mouth, usually reconstructed with an arched handle on the upraised back of the rim, according to a specimen from Euboea<sup>24</sup>, and imply a date in the earliest Late Neolithic. In the region (Elateia and Chaeronea<sup>25</sup>), the shape has been revealed in the four-legged version – which is the most widespread anyway. The incised designs on both the flattened and the legged types are usually filled in with white paste, which makes it likely that the ornaments on the Livadi scoop were also initially white-filled. There is an extensive debate over the cult use of both scoop types as rhytons<sup>26</sup>. Although not all their find contexts at other sites provide substantial clue in support of this argument, there are certain specimens retrieved from ritual cave contexts<sup>27</sup>. The alternative suggestion on their function as lamps<sup>28</sup> is intriguing, especially considering their small size to serve the consumption of food and their presence inside dark cave chambers. Our specimen from Livadi cave may

provide an extra clue on this potential function, especially as far as its interior surface has acquired a blackened hue from soot or contact with fire.

The rest of the surface material comprises a number of hardly datable sherds from plain wares and some post-medieval glazed sherds from bowls and jugs possibly dating between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (*fig. 20*). Alongside the evidence of the cave functioning as a sheep/goat pen, the surface pottery assemblage points to a rather random or temporary use throughout the recent periods, unless excavation proves otherwise.

Another large cave by the name of Koudounisti (*cat. no. 06; figs. 21, 22*) and two small side caves *cat. no. 07 (fig. 24)* and *cat. no. 08* are located ca. 200 m west of the plateau with the outer fortification wall and the ›Cave of Gose and Schober‹, roughly on the same contour line, at about 720 m altitude. Koudounisti consists of one single chamber of 18.70 × 22.90 m, with a wide arched entrance opening to the north. The rear part of the cave is separated by rock formations and stalagmites as well as roof collapses and indicates traces of past water accumulation in a shallow pool. The most significant feature is a rock at the rear, its surface, measuring 72 × 85 cm, probably artificially cut, smoothed out and polished by human intervention (*fig. 23*). The rock could have served as a place for the deposition of votive offerings, as has been proposed in many cases of cave

<sup>24</sup> Sampson 1993, 89 fig. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Elateia: Weinberg 1962, 190–195, pl. 63; Chaeronea: Σωτηριάδης 1908, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Biagi 2003; Mee 2014; Bonga 2014.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. ›Skoteini Cave‹ in Euboea: Katsarou 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Batović 1979.





10 Cave 05, rock cut beddings (view from east)

shrines such as Paliambela in Aitolokarnania, and Lechova in Corinthia<sup>29</sup>; or it may have been a rubbing stone as suggested for various caves connected to fertility rituals, such as Agia Marina in Athens or Amnisos on Crete<sup>30</sup>. Since the morphology, size and location of the cave are favourable, future fieldwork could possibly provide contextual evidence on the nature of its use.

Inside the Koudounisti cave only a couple of sherds were spotted by the cave's entrance. One of these, a small black glazed sherd of good quality (possibly Late Classical or Hellenistic), belongs to a small open vessel; the other fragment is possibly of Neolithic date.

A small number of plain coarse prehistoric potsherds have been collected on the surface of the floor inside the two caves located by Koudounisti (fig. 25, 3). The survey of the second one of these side caves (*cat. no. 07*) has more particularly revealed a small collection of body sherds that were very much weath-

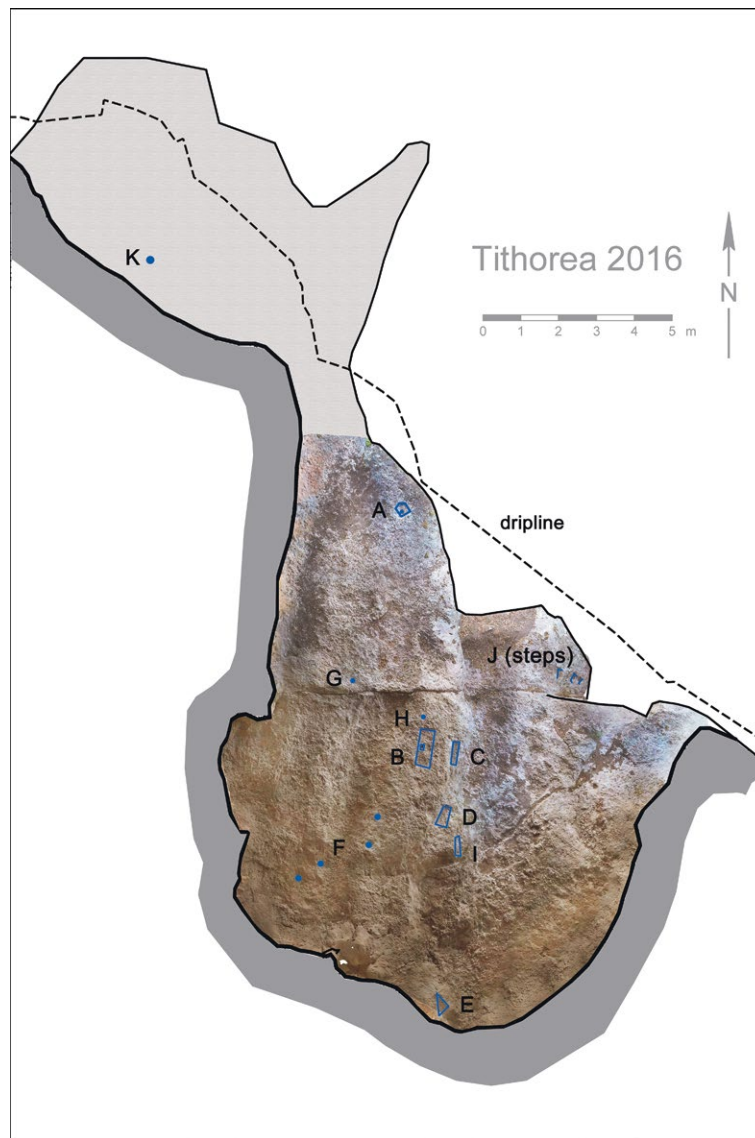
ered but enabled identification of coarse vessels with one or both slipped surfaces fired in the range of red/brown. Most of them more likely suggest a Final Neolithic date except from one large fragment from a light-coloured saucer with a close in-curving rim-body profile indicating an Early Helladic date. Given that the natural formation of this cave favours retention of the fill inside, the poor existing ceramic material may imply rare use in prehistory or severe taphonomic disturbance of the original deposit due to other processes that can be also anthropogenic.

## The plateau of cave chapels

Above Koudounisti cave, the path from modern Tithorea ascends to a small, elongated terrace on the steep slope of the mountain, lying at ca. 810 m alti-

<sup>29</sup> On Paliambela see Χατζιώτου et al. 1989 and Hatziotis forthcoming; on Lechova, see Kormazopoulou et al. 2011.

<sup>30</sup> See Lalonde 2005; Haland 2012, 32–39.



11 Map of Cave 05 including ortho-photo (scale 1:200)

tude. On top of this plateau two cave chapels, Agios Nikolaos and Agiarsali<sup>31</sup>, are situated. Both cave chapels include a built-in part which blocks their natural entrances and their interior is modified into a church-like space. Due to various renovation attempts in the last decades, both buildings have undergone major changes in their appearance, especially Agios Niko-

laos, so that it is difficult to determine the date of construction. None of the two chapels preserves any clear evidence of ancient finds or features<sup>32</sup>.

In front of the Agios Nikolaos chapel the remains of a medieval building are preserved: a small rectangular building of ca. 4.45 by at least 7 m which has the same northwest-southeast orientation as the facade

<sup>31</sup> Αγιαρσαλή is considered a variant of the name Αγία Ιερουσαλήμ (Saint Jerousalem) a female saint and martyr of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The name is shared by a number of cave chapels in Phthiotis and in many parts of Greece usually dedicated to the Virgin Mary bearing the attribute Ζωοδόχος Πηγή (meaning life-giving source), a fact indicating that the initial saint was forgotten. Many of these cave churches were founded in remote cave sites with water sources, which were believed to be miraculous. Another interpretation of the name has been connected to the presence and activity of monks from Jerusalem who had immigrated from

Palestine to central Greece for various reasons between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> cent. They carried with them icons and ecclesiastical objects and many of them retreated in caves or established monasteries and churches. About the name and relative traditions see Βελέντζας 2014 with further references.

<sup>32</sup> Σιμόπουλος 1985, 476, where both chapels are catalogued as post byzantine. Agiarsali is referred to as Ζωοδόχος Πηγή and is dated after 1600. The year 1908 is mentioned as date of construction for Agios Nikolaos.





12 Cave 05, rock cut bedding B



13 Cave 05, rock cut bedding A

wall of the modern church. Its walls are built of rubble and layers of bricks, with lime mortar; the floor is carefully paved with polygonal slabs of dark stone. In the middle of the building lies a peculiar huge block which looks rectangularly worked, but there is no indication of a suitable ancient wall or building where it could have originated.

Agiarsali, most probably the older of the two cave chapels, is located a few meters above the plateau and is accessible by a stone stairway. The cave has been arranged into a chapel with the addition of a stone

wall and a semi-cylindrical apsis. Architectural parts, spolia, were included in the masonry. The floor is uneven leading to a higher section where a well is located. This part most probably served as a side chapel with a separate entrance. The iconostasis and the stair to the chapel are of recent date. The church is dedicated to Virgin Mary.

Located on the steep slope above and around Agiarsali there exist a number of hardly accessible caves of oval shape which are said to have housed hermits originating from the Holy Land<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Βελέντζας 2014 quotes a local tradition about a group of refugees from the Holy Land who, during the Crusades, escaped to

the Greek lands and were accepted in Tithorea, Amphikleia and Davleia as guests. Some of them retreated to these caves as monks.

## Summary: human occupancy in the cave area above Tithorea

In summary, the results of the 2016 survey revealed a dense cave landscape extending on the slopes above ancient Tithorea in terms of number of cave sites and their spatial/geomorphological variation (caves/rock-shelters, one-chamber/multi-spatial sites etc.). The project combined survey and excavation methodology to provide a detailed record of the cave spaces, detect and document the range of preserved features, contexts, and materials including some heavily eroded and fragmentary assemblages of potsherds which had survived continuing activities and speculate on the initial content of human use. Our analysis revealed the existence of a multiperiod cultural landscape of cave sites. Human activities integrated multispatial sites including rock-shelters, one-chamber caves as well as deep multi-chamber and dark places. They also found expression through multiple media including rock art, rock cuttings, speleothems, rock/floor levelling, built structures, spolia from ancient ruins. The emphasis of use was on the implementation of rituals (or this use has become the most evident today) from prehistory (ritual vessel), then antiquity (ritual reliefs) and through the present (chapels); other simultaneous uses (perhaps domestic) should overlap but may be obscured by low preservation.

### Prehistory

In relation to their surrounding natural and settled resources, in prehistory Tithorea caves acted as familiar ›intermediate‹ territories between the mountain and the plain; in antiquity and post-antiquity the area was found at the boundary between the territory of the ancient acropolis or the modern village and the mountain of Parnassos higher up as a strong ecological asset<sup>34</sup>. The caves were also favoured with a dominating view of but also the proximity to the Kephissos River valley and the plain which would be able to provide natural resources at the foot of the mountain and cultural resources based on the density of settlements and their strategic role as a corridor that united ancient Phokis with Boeotia.

In this context, the earliest stage of human use of the Tithorea caves dates from the Late Neolithic, goes on in the Final Neolithic and possibly scarcely also in the Early Helladic period. Although the overall material account is random, fragmentary, chronologically discontinuous, and comes from dispersed or secondary contexts, it is revealing of the human expansion towards a higher altitude and an ecological zone that lies beyond the boundary with the populated and cultivated land, as early as in the Late Neolithic. However, it does not allow detailed insights into the range of practices that took place in each site and the extent of ritual or domestic activities or their relevance to the villages. The presence of some exceptional mobile equipment allows us to reflect on the possibility that gatherings for special events<sup>35</sup> may have taken place in at least one of the discussed caves during the prehistoric period. The marginal forested foothills where the caves lie perhaps also offered faunal and vegetal resources that would potentially provide farmers with an array of extra provisions (wild game, firewood etc.).

The poor range of material evidence from Tithorea caves perhaps reflects taphonomic and post-depositional parameters rather than the actual density of primary use, and perhaps also reflects the lack of a very large cave space. In this sense, the Tithorea caves represent an occupation pattern based on the use of multiple small sites, operating as a network rather than providing the density, richness, thickness, continuity and intensity of cave use documented in central big caves, such as the Sarakenos Cave in the Kopais basin<sup>36</sup> at short distance to the south, or the Corycian Cave<sup>37</sup> in the upland zone of Parnassos, which was even subject to accessibility challenges and environmental constraints.

### Historical periods

With regards to the historical periods, the available evidence from the surveyed Tithorea caves extends over a range of media comprising sculpture and rock-art rather than being limited only to the ceramic evi-

<sup>34</sup> McInerney 1999, 40.

<sup>35</sup> Katsarou 2021; Tomkins 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Sampson 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Péchoux et al. 1981.



dence. They reveal unique assemblages of rock-cut carvings of Classical/Hellenistic date and an unusual concentration of ritual plastic renderings and facilities modifying the physical cave walls and features in various ways (rock carvings, rock cuttings/levellings, speleothems). In their original ancient context, some of the examined caves would have probably formed a network of interactive neighbouring shrines. The dense concentration of caves on the mountain of Tithorea (including several sites that remain unsurveyed, cf. introduction), irrelevant to their size and space, enhances the operation of this network. These caves lying at the border lands of the ancient town of Tithorea may be connected to all sorts of activities exercised marginally.

At least, two of the investigated caves give reason to assume a cultic context. The ›Cave of Gose and Schober‹ with its rock cuttings and artificial cavities, probably also its ambiguous figures, could indicate the existence of an ancient sanctuary, however without further clues as to the nature of the worshipped deity. The ›Cave of Pan‹ yields no clear evidence for ritual use; the relief of Pan however indicates a connection of this deity with the cave. Pausanias' account of a nymph named Tithorea, who lent her name initially to the mountain and later to the town, could support our speculation on the existence of a cultic site for the nymphs at some location on the Tithorea mountain<sup>38</sup>. The nymphs were often worshipped together with Pan, whose cult spread from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. on. Yet, the worship of the nymphs could not be identified in any of the surveyed caves.

Cave use in the Tithorea area comprises only a small part of the wider ensemble of the Parnassos area where other cave shrines are known, the most prominent being the Corycian Cave on the uplands of Parnassos, to the southwest of Tithorea, not far from the Oracle at Delphi. The Corycian was a renowned cave shrine with continuous and diachronic use in antiquity, dedicated to the nymphs and Pan as is attested by the numerous votive offerings excavated at the site<sup>39</sup>. Recently a new cave shrine was investigated at the site of Ampouria on the northeast side of Parnassos, at short distance to the south from Tithorea. This cave is found at a high altitude overlooking the village of Agia Marina and the Kephissos valley. According to epigraphic evidence, this shrine was also dedicated to the nymphs and Pan and was obviously seasonally visited by the local rural population throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.<sup>40</sup>



14 Cave 05, one of the small round cavities



15 Cave 05, east side next to the entrance with relief figure

The ›Cave of Gose and Schober‹ and the ›Cave of Pan‹, as well as other caves in the vicinity of Tithorea which were not included in this survey, are very well visible from different locations inside the city and even the extramural area. This indicates the promi-

<sup>38</sup> Paus. 10, 32, 8–9. Larson 2001, 147.

<sup>39</sup> Pasquier 1977 and Lerat et al. 1984.

<sup>40</sup> Κατσαρού 2013, 33–40.





16 Cave 05, relief figure next to the entrance



17 Cave 05, relief(?) of a sitting dressed figure(?) on the rear rock surface of the cave

ment role of these two caves in the religious life of the polis, apart from their various other conceivable functions (e.g., as shelters, meeting places, outlooks, and bee-keeping spaces). In terms of topography, it is interesting to note that the two caves are closely linked to sections of the city's fortification system but may have been in use as shrines already before the construction of the wall. The excellent view of the plain and the city of Tithorea suggest that they were associated to the fortification as observation or guard posts.

## Recent past

In the recent past, the investigated caves were still frequently used as indicated by modern pottery, and the construction of rubble walls (›Cave of Pan‹), or slab floors (›Livadi Cave‹). At the ›Cave of Pan‹, the lat-

er carved figures extend the ancient tradition of this site. The construction of this modern assemblage of carvings is particular to this site and is also unique in providing a new media for the expression of folk art. The apotropaic or other symbolic meaning of the carved imagery transforms the physical cave space into a place of alert to the evil and supernatural protection for the occupants. The later reliefs connects them to the standard visual folklore codes and awe for the supernatural irrelevant of probable religious tones. Some of the caves may have served as hideouts and temporary shelters, especially the deeper and darker spaces like ›Koudounisti Cave‹ and the smaller ›Livadi Cave‹. During the recent centuries the religious spirit of the local Christian population has been expressed in the cave chapels of Agiarsali and Agios Nikolaos, while other caves in the vicinity are said to have been used by hermits<sup>41</sup>. Also an apotropaic and protective meaning may be attributed to the numer-

<sup>41</sup> Βελέντζας 2014, where there is mention of the existing literature on the subject with further references (see above n. 33).

ous Christian symbols and graffiti in many of the caves mostly dated to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The survey in the area can end with one last cave which be-

came a site of collective memory for the inhabitants of Tithorea through its connection to the life of the military commander Odysseas Androutsos<sup>42</sup>.

## Appendix: catalogue of caves of the 2016 survey

### 01 Name: –<sup>43</sup>

Location<sup>44</sup>: E383649 N4270855

The cave is located ca. 20m west of the uppermost tower (TowerXI), on the outer side of the circuit. Elevation: at ca. 618m altitude.

Type<sup>45</sup>: cave

Orientation<sup>46</sup>: North

Dimensions: Entrance: 0.80m wide, 2.50m high; length of the cave: 5m

Description: The cave has an entrance in the form of a triangle. A big limestone rock, probably from the collapsed roof, lies in front of the mouth of the cave. The cave consists of one long and narrow room rising steeply at the rear. The floor is covered with moss, rubble and small limestone particles. The surface at the rear of the cave is strongly covered with flow-stone deposits, which indicates past water accumulation or a spring.

Cultural evidence: Inside the cave four sherds and two handles of red clay coarse ware were noticed. All of them are covered with a calcareous incrustation. Outside the cave 2 m in front of the entrance we found a fragment of a roof tile.

Modern: On the west wall inside there is a modern graffiti (»ΛΑΤ«) and a Greek cross painted in white colour<sup>47</sup>.

Surrounding area: The area in front of the cave is sloping and wooded but moderately accessible.

Type: cave

Orientation: North

Dimensions: Entrance: 5.50m wide, 3.30m high

Main chamber: 18.90m long, 9.30 to 2.80m wide, 2.20m high

Second chamber: 2.10m long, 3.15m wide, max. 1.42m high

Third chamber: ca. 1.50m long, 6m wide, 0.55–1.0m high

Description: The cave consists of a wide main chamber which is easily accessible and comfortable for human use. The oval mouth is divided by a stalagmite column. From the entrance of the cave the floor rises to a small ridge (max. 1 m H) dividing the first room in two parts. The left corridor is paved with stones gathered from the surroundings. Deeper inside, the floor is gently sloping. Following the main chamber, a very narrow corridor leads to a minor middle chamber. From there, another tunnel extends further inward to the inner chamber which is accessible only by crawling. Southwest of the middle chamber there is another tunnel which is too small to allow further investigation. It is filled up with loose rubble.

Some parts of the cave floor – especially near the entrance – have a smooth surface due to natural causes or wear. Behind the stalagmite column there is a natural cavity with a diameter of 10 cm. It has perhaps become smooth due to a liquid content. Surface material consisted of dung mixed with dirt, sand, rubble, bones and some pottery sherds and tile fragments. The ceiling of the cave descends gently to the south. Its surface is dry and partly covered by a shiny black and green stain. Light penetrates into the main chamber but is quite dim along its south part. Very little light penetrates far into the second chamber and the tunnels are almost totally dark.

### 02 Name: »Livadi« | figs. 18–20. 25, 4–9

Location: E383581 N4270931

The cave is situated 115m northwest of TowerXI, next to the footpath leading from the village to Agios Nikolaos chapel, at a spot named Livadi. Elevation: at ca. 600m altitude.

<sup>42</sup> cf. above notes 5 and 7; for an aspect of the Tithorea caves being a place of memory even in antiquity cf. also van Rookhuizen 2019, 176 f.

<sup>43</sup> For all entries, compare fig. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Coordinates according to Greek system EGSA87.

<sup>45</sup> Based on the terminology in Andreassen et al. 2017, 34.

<sup>46</sup> The direction the cave entrance faces.

<sup>47</sup> According to the villagers, the ΛΑΤ graffiti noticed in almost all of the caves around Tithorea go back to a local in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; this might be the case for the majority of painted crosses and similar markings.



18 Cave 02, interior, view towards the entrance

Cultural evidence:

**Chamber A**, 3 prehistoric sherds: 1) body from closed jar, outside brown slipped, sinter deposit, inside plain brown, brown core, coarse texture, Late Neolithic?, 2) shoulder from broad vessel, outside black/grey-on-light brown painted tongue-like bands, inside brown slipped?, brown core, fine texture, Late Neolithic, 3) neck with ear lug from broad jar, outside brown slipped, inside black slipped, red core, coarse texture, Late Neolithic?

**Chamber B**: 4 prehistoric sherds: 1) body from bowl, outside brown-on-brown painted oblique lines, inside black slipped, black core, coarse texture, Late Neolithic, 2) body from bowl, outside/inside red slipped, black core, coarse texture, Late Neolithic?, 3) body and flat base from scoop, Dm 7 cm, outside grey polished, inside plain brown, grey core, coarse texture, 4) body from broad jar?, outside brown polished, inside brown slipped?, brown core, fine texture, Late Neolithic.

Post-medieval sherds (16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> cent.?) and some undated sherds (see above).

Modern: The cave has been frequented during modern times, probably by shepherds and their herds, as indicated by dung. The paved floor in the main chamber and the graffiti possibly derive from the modern period of use of the cave. Next to the entrance there is a modern graffiti painted in white colour: »AAT 1921«. A Greek cross is painted on the eastern face of the stalagmite column. At the west wall close to the entrance the figure of a Christian saint is painted in white and light brown color. The figure turns to the left and holds a big cross in his left hand. Above the figure there is an inscription: »AAT 1906« and another

Greek cross. Further inside at the mouth of the second chamber there is a painted graffiti: »10«.

Surrounding area: East and west of the entrance of the cave there are two more chambers. The western chamber has an oval form (1.10 m wide, 2.10 m long, ca. 3.90 m high). It is connected to the main chamber of the cave by a small natural opening on its eastern wall. The floor rises steeply to the south. To the north the rock forms a natural basin which probably contained a natural spring. The walls are covered with flowstone deposits and many small holes in the rock indicate the presence of water. Today it is completely dry.

The second chamber to the east can be entered from the main chamber of the cave but its level is much higher. The floor is very smooth and slippery. The small chamber has a width of 3 m, a length of 5 m and a height of 1.0 m. Small round stalactites cover the ceiling.

The area in front of the cave is relatively accessible yet steep and densely covered by scrub and trees.

### 03 Name: –

Location: E383589 N4270925

The cave is located about 5 m east of Cave 02. Elevation: at ca. 595 m altitude.

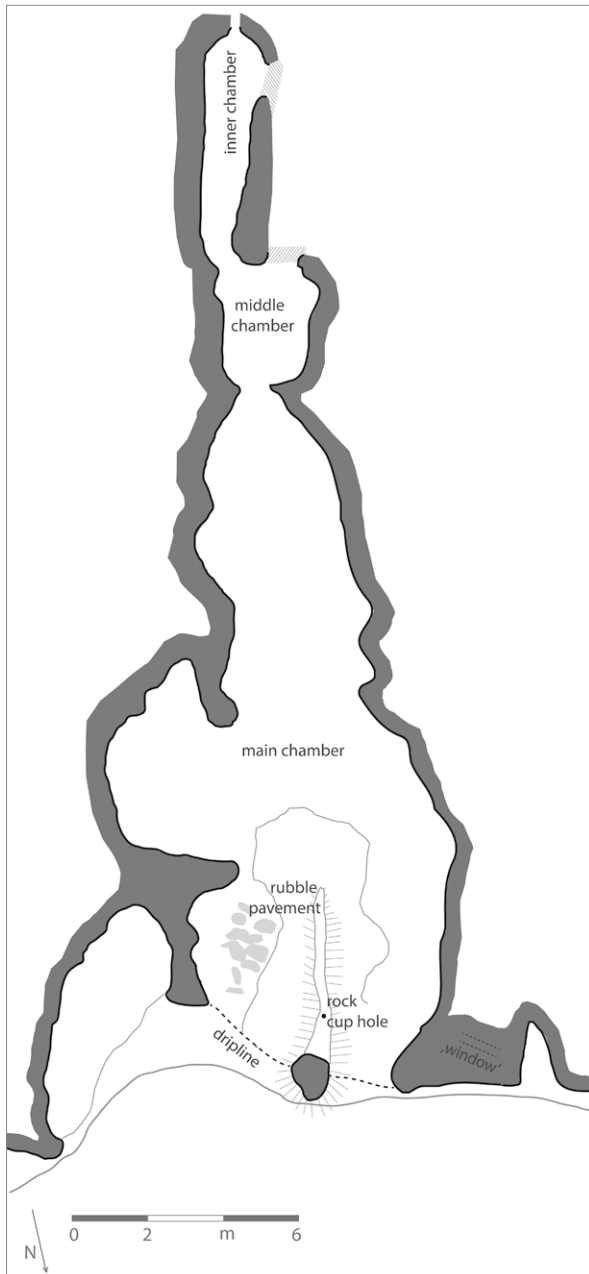
Type: cave

Orientation: North

Dimensions: Entrance: 2 m wide, 1.40 m high; length of the cave: 4.45 m

Description: The cave consists of one semi-circular room with a small number of speleothems. The floor





19 Schematic map of Cave 02 (scale 1 : 200)

slopes slightly down towards the interior from the entrance. It is covered by soil, foliage and rubble. The cave is dry and well-lit.

**Cultural evidence:** Two fragments of roof tiles and two sherds of coarse ware were found inside the cave.

**Modern:** West of the entrance there is a rubble wall probably built by shepherds.

**Surrounding area:** The area in front of the cave is gently sloping. There is another small cave ca. 5 m to the east. The floor is covered with soil and foliage. No archaeological artefacts were readily apparent there.

#### 04 Name: –

Location: E383518 N4270912

Cave 04 is located in the eastern end of a slightly overhanging rock scarp, 27 m north of the footpath leading from the village to Agios Nikolaos chapel. Today it is easily accessible from this path. The shelter provides a panoramic view to the north over the Kephissos valley. Elevation: at ca. 650 m altitude.

Type: rock shelter

Orientation: North

Dimensions: Entrance: 11.60 m wide, ca. 4 m high; length of the cave: 5.05 m

**Description:** The rock shelter has a semi-circular form and is composed of five small rooms, each having a separate entrance. It is possible to stand upright only in the front parts of the rooms. The bedrock is exposed over the whole area. The ceiling has a dark grey and brown colour and is partly covered by speleothems.

**Cultural evidence:** No archaeological artefacts have been noticed.

**Modern:** Between the second and the third room from the east and above the mouth of the fourth room there are two modern graffiti of Greek crosses painted in white colour.

**Surrounding area:** In front of the rock shelter there is a long rock terrace with a total L of ca. 80 m, B 6 m (in the east) to 8 m (in the west). The terrace is enclosed to the south by a looming cliff. About 12 m west of the rock shelter there is another small cave. The floor is covered by hay and the cave might have been used by shepherds as an animal pen.

#### 05 Name: >Αετοφωλιές plateau<, the findspot was named >Cave of Gose and Schober< during the survey | figs.8–17

Location: E383495 N4270829

Cave number 05 is situated on a rock terrace ca. 50 m east of the outer fortification. Elevation: at ca. 720 m altitude.

Type: rock shelter

Orientation: North

Dimensions: Entrance: 11 m wide, ca. 4.65 m high; length of the cave: max. 7.30 m

**Description:** The cave has an arched entrance opening to the north. It can be entered by three rock-cut steps (J) leading upwards inside. The interior develops into two rising levels, the western one ca. 1.40 m higher than the eastern. To the northwest the cave extends to an overhanging rock scarp, which forms a natural terrace (8.40 m wide, 4.80 m long) that provides a panoramic view of Tithorea and the Kephissos valley.



20 Post medieval to early modern sherds from Cave 02 (Livadi)

The floor consists of the natural bedrock covered by recent debris and dung. After cleaning the interior in June 2016, we found several man-made cuttings and natural features. Some of them had been already described by Schober and Gose in 1926<sup>48</sup>. Nearly all the cuttings are located along the east and west side of the rocky step separating the two levels of the cave. Along the side of the cave wall, the lower level bears a smoothed ground surface created from intense use or walking. A natural trench (ca. 5.5 cm deep) in the floor was probably caused by water running diagonally through the east chamber towards the entrance of the cave. At the south wall of the cave, next to cutting E, there is a stalagmite (1.03 m high, 2.50 m perimeter) on the higher level. Directly above, the ceiling bears some speleothems.

It is possible to stand in all parts of the cave. Due to the large openings in the north and northeast the cave has enough natural light.

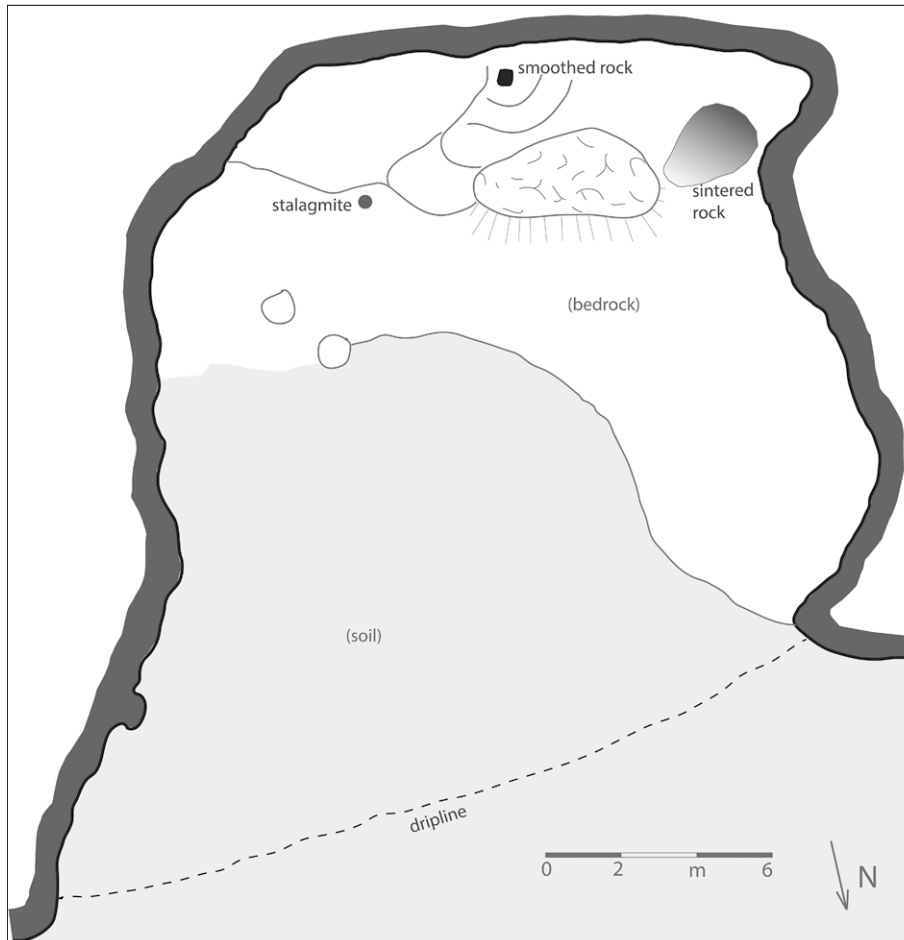
**Cultural evidence:** Along the natural (north-south) rock edge, which divides the cave's east lower level

from the upper west, three smoothed, step-like cuttings of similar shape and dimensions C (58 × 19 cm), D (57 × 25 cm) and I (53 × 17 cm) are arranged in a line (figs. 10, 11). Probably they served for the deposition of votives or lamps. Another cutting E is situated in the same line as C/D/I but at the rear of the cave, where the path from the lower part joins with the upper one. It is carved in a rock hump with a flattened surface. At the edge of the cave's upper part, right above cutting C, there is cutting B (50 × 100 cm) with a nearly quadrangular dowel-hole (10 × 9 cm, depth 9.5 cm) almost at the center of the long side, which was probably used for the erection of the base of a stele or a relief (fig. 12). Situated rather in front of the shelter, 60 cm away from the slope, lies cutting A (31–41 × 21–22 cm, depth 4–7 cm) with a half-round ending pointing north, facing the valley, and another dowel-hole (diameter 12–13 cm, depth 6 cm) must be a cutting for a plinth of a bronze or a marble statue, which was inserted directly into the rock (fig. 13). The statue would have looked down towards the valley. A/B/C/D/E/I are arranged

<sup>48</sup> Gose – Schober 2016/2017, 336 figs. 19, 20; cf. Sporn 2016, 85–87. In the description of the cuttings inside the cave (above) and in fig. 11, the same letters (A–F) are kept as in the text by Gose and Schober (newly discovered cuttings from 2016 are numbered G–K).

**Sources of illustrations:** Fig. 1: K. Sporn/H. Birk. – Fig. 2: DAI Athens. – Fig. 3: D-DAI-ATH-2016-16151, 16152, 16153 (H. Birk). – Fig. 4: DAI Athens (H. Birk – E. Laufer). – Fig. 5: E. Laufer. – Fig. 6: DAI Athens (K. Sporn, drawing: K. Kock-Paraskeva) – Fig. 7, 20: L. Kormazopoulou. – Fig. 8: D-DAI-ATH-2017-28014 (H. Birk). – Fig. 9:

D-DAI-ATH-2016-15269 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 10: D-DAI-ATH-2016-15202 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 11: DAI Athens (H. Birk – E. Laufer). – Fig. 12: D-DAI-ATH-2016-15269 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 13: D-DAI-ATH-2016-15176 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 14: D-DAI-ATH-2016-15252 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 15: D-DAI-ATH-2018-17783 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 16: D-DAI-ATH-2018-17729 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 17: D-DAI-ATH-2018-17789 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 18: D-DAI-ATH-2016-15111 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 19, 21: DAI Athens (E. Laufer). – Fig. 22: D-DAI-ATH-2016-15305 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 23: D-DAI-ATH-2016-15316 (E. Laufer). – Fig. 24: D-DAI-ATH-2016-15453 (S. Zipprich). – Fig. 25: St. Katsarou.



21 Schematic map of Cave 06 (scale 1:200)

almost in a line along the access path and thus face the visitors of the cave.

Eight perfectly round, but natural cavities (F, G, H, K) had a smooth surface probably caused by liquids. Since the position of these cavities does not correspond to any stalactites on the ceiling above, they could have been used for *spondai* if the cave was used as a shrine.

Next to the entrance and in the middle of the back-side, two peculiar speleothems (discussed above) give the impression of human figures (of ca. half life-size): the first of it (*figs. 15. 16*) of a figure standing frontally opposite the socket B, the second one of a sitting figure (*fig. 17*).

Finds: a few undiagnostic (Byzantine?) sherds, a few medieval sherds of plain ware, roof tiles from different periods and a hand-forged nail (found at the rock terrace northwest of the cave, 5–6 m below the entrance).

Modern: West of the stalagmite the cave wall forms two natural niches. In the western niche there is a modern graffito of a Greek cross painted in white color.

Surrounding area: The cave is located on a steep rock scarp (ca. 6.60 m high). In the east it is closed by a widely projecting rocky ridge. The slope directly in front of the cave is rocky and steep. It is relatively inconspicuous and covered now with low scrub and some scattered deciduous trees. A little further down to the west the terrain is plain and only partly rocky. It is covered with grassy vegetation and low scrub. Ca. 30 m east of the cave, below the end of the triangular shaped plateau, a dense concentration of roof tile fragments was noted in the 2016 survey; there is no further evidence of building activity on this hardly accessible slope. A similar concentration of tile fragments has been documented ca. 90 m west of the plateau's fortification line, next to the footpath, also without any obvious architectural context.



22 Cave 06

### 06 Name: ›Koudounisti‹ | figs.21–23

Location: E383255 N4270798

Type: cave

The large cave called ›Koudounisti‹ lies 180 m west of the outer fortification, a few meters beside the footpath leading from the village to Agios Nikolaos chapel, at about 720 m altitude.

Orientation: North

Dimensions: Entrance: 18.70 m wide, max. 4.40 m high; length of the cave: 22.90 m

**Description:** The cave is composed of one single, sub-circular chamber. Its wide arched entrance can easily be entered. The floor is level and gently rising at the rear. In the front part it is covered by a sandy sediment partly mixed with fragments of bones, sherds, rubble and pieces of modern glass. The rear part of the cave is divided by some rock formations and stalagmites as well as roof collapses and indicates traces of past water accumulation in a shallow pool. Almost in the center there is a 2.30 m high limestone rock covered by flowstone deposits. To the east rises a big stalagmite (1.08 m high, ca. 1.77 m perimeter) in the form of an omphalos. The most significant feature is a rock at the rear, west of the stalagmite. Its surface, measuring 72 × 85 cm, is artificially cut and probably smoothed and polished by human intervention. The ceiling of the cave is low and partly covered by small speleothems. The whole chamber is relatively well-lit.

**Cultural evidence:** 1 prehistoric sherd: shoulder from jar, outside brown slipped, inside red slipped, grey core, coarse texture, Final Neolithic (?), 1 Late Classical/Hellenistic sherd.

**Modern:** Directly behind the rock we noticed a painted cross of recent date on the rock surface. Two

more crosses and a graffito with the date 1910 painted in white color are located on the eastern wall close to the entrance. A recent use of the cave is attested by a small hearth in the rear part in front of the limestone rock and by glass fragments.

**Surrounding area:** The slope immediately in front of the entrance of the cave is steep and densely overgrown with trees and scrub vegetation.

### 07 Name: – | figs.24. 25, 3

Location: E383229 N4270814

Ca. 30 m northwest of cave 06 (›Koudounisti‹), the Caves 07 and 08 are located on a small plateau in the forest. Elevation: at ca. 600 m altitude.

Type: cave

Orientation: East

Dimensions: Entrance: 1 m wide, 2.20 m high; length of the cave: 7.10 m

**Description:** The cave opens at the base of a small-curved rock scarp. It is composed of one circular chamber of 7.10 × 7.10 m. The mouth is partly closed by big stalagmites. In recent times the openings were closed by rubble walls, so it can be entered today only through a small passage at the east part of the mouth. The south wall of the cave forms four natural niches; the eastern wall is covered with flowstone deposits. The floor consists of the natural bedrock. It is only partly covered with sandy sediment. At the rear of the chamber there are six small natural cavities (diameter 9.5–26 cm) in the floor, comparable to those in cave no. 05. Small speleothems hang down from the ceiling.





23 Cave 06, polished rock

Cultural evidence: 5 prehistoric sherds: 1) body from deep vessel, outside/inside plain red, dark core, coarse texture, Final Neolithic(?), 2) body from jar, outside plain brown, inside brown slipped, grey core, coarse texture, Final Neolithic, 3) body, outside/inside light-brown slipped, brown core, coarse texture, Final Neolithic (?), 4) body, outside red slipped (or painted?) on light brown, inside plain (?) light brown, brown core, fine texture, Neolithic (?), 5) close-curved rim from saucer, outside/inside red, light red core, coarse texture, eroded surface, cut marks (?), Early Helladic.

Modern: The cave is comfortable for human use and there is evidence that it has been used in the recent past as a dwelling place. An old pickaxe was found. We further noticed two rusty nails on the western and northern wall. Close to the entrance inside the cave there is a recent graffito ›ΛΑΤ‹ (without date) painted in white color.

Surrounding area: Immediately in front of the cave there is a small plateau. The slope below is steep and covered with trees and scrub.

## 08 Name: –

Location: E383229 N4270814

About 10 m east of Cave 07 in the same rock scarp. Elevation: at ca. 720 m altitude.

Type: cave

Orientation: Southeast

Dimensions: Entrance: 0.65 m wide, 1.28 m high; length of the cave: 3.30 m

Description: The small cave is one main oblong room with a tiny, impassable chamber (ca. 0.50 × 0.50 m) in its western wall. The mouth is divided by big stalagmites; the gaps are filled with rubble stones so there is only one passage and a window today. Especially at the rear of the cave there are thick flowstone deposits

in white, green and red. Here, the gaps are filled with rubble, too. The sediment consists of sandy earth mixed with small stones, and fragments of bones and ceramics. Small speleothems and flowstone deposits cover the ceiling.

Cultural evidence: Three sherds of coarse ware covered with a calcareous incrustation were noticed inside the cave.

Modern: Like Cave 07 it was probably used in the recent past, when the entrance was partly closed with dry stone walls. A graffito of a Greek cross is painted in white color on the north wall outside the cave.

Surrounding area: Immediately in front of the cave there is a small plateau. The slope below is steep and covered with trees and scrub.

## 09 Name: –

Location: E383559 N4270699

Number 09 is situated 175 m southeast of the outer fortification, on a higher level, in a sharply overhanging rock scarp, next to the footpath leading from Agios Nikolaos chapel up to the mountain. Elevation: at ca. 830 m altitude.

Type: rock shelter

Orientation: Southwest-Northeast

Dimensions: Entrance: 23 m wide, 7 m high; length of the cave: 5 m

Description: The rock shelter is located on a sheer overhanging rock scarp. The natural bedrock is exposed across the whole floor. The ceiling of the rock shelter carries small speleothems. Ca. 2.50 m above the floor a very small cave leads inside the rock. It has an irregular form and a depth of ca. 5 m. Traces of flowstone deposits indicate presence of water in the past. Today it is filled up with goat dung.

Cultural evidence: In the north-eastern part of the rock scarp there is an (ancient?) graffito of latin letters ›AENL...‹ (letters quite weathered) engraved in the smooth rock surface.

Modern: A small hearth and pieces of glass attest the modern use of the rock shelter. Low drystone walls of rubble close the shelter ca. 5 m to the south-east. They are most probably of recent date and show the use of the shelter as an animal pen. A little south of the small cave a narrow outcrop bears an artificial hole, probably made for tying animals. Numerous modern graffiti are painted on the rock surface: ›ΑΑΤ 1908 ΚΤΑ‹, a Greek cross, ›ΦΙΝΦ‹, another ›ΛΑΤ‹.

Surrounding area: The rock shelter is easily accessible and conspicuous. It provides a panoramic view of the eastern Kephissos valley. The area immediately in the front slopes steeply; it carries scrub and tree vegetation as well as fallen rocks.



24 Cave 07

## 10 ›Cave of Pan‹ | figs.3–7. 25, 1. 2

Location: E383559 N4270699

The rock shelter is formed at the base of a limestone cliff close to the uppermost tower (XI), on the inner side of the ancient town. Elevation: at ca. 618 m altitude.

Type: rock shelter

Orientation: North-Northeast

Dimensions: Entrance: 13.70 m wide, max. 3.70 m high; length of the cave: 9.80 m. The surface area covers ca. 82 m<sup>2</sup>.

**Description:** The shelter is composed of a single room and a wide opening to the north. It is conspicuous and well-lit. The floor consists of the natural bedrock covered by a layer of decayed goat dung ca. 50 cm thick. The ceiling and the walls bear flowstone deposits; speleothems are only visible at the north-western part of the shelter. Especially the inner south part of the ceiling is covered with black and green stains.

**Cultural evidence:** On the eastern wall there are some rock-cut reliefs and carvings as well as a natural formation resembling a figure (for descriptions see text above): the figure of Pan (*fig. 5*); three figures next to Pan on the right (*fig. 6*) of probably more re-

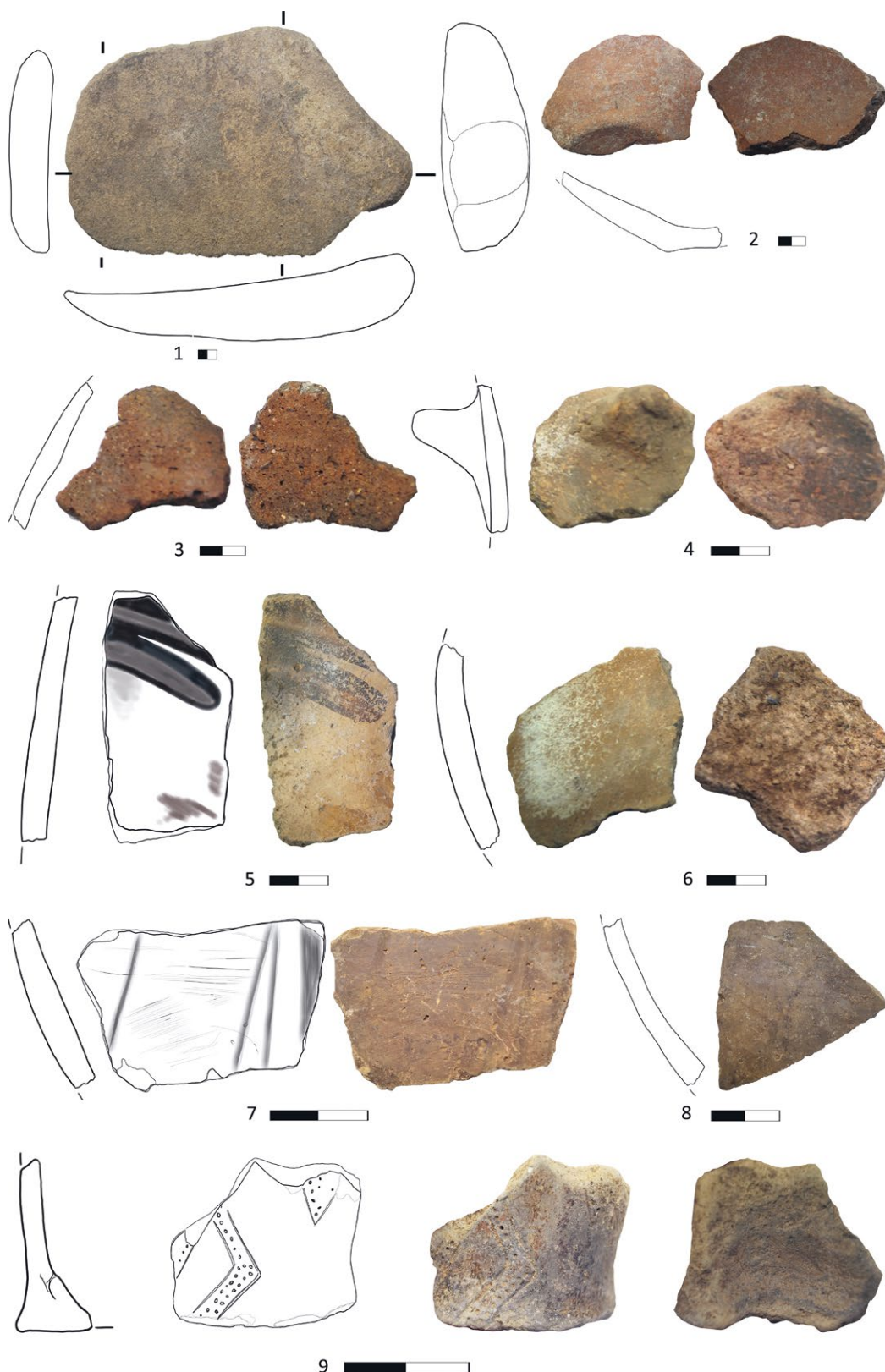
cent date, a formation resembling a bearded protome and some triangular cuttings along the same side of the cave (used rather for setting up lamps than for holding installations).

**Surface findings:** 3 prehistoric sherds: 1) body from closed vessel, Dm 19 cm, outside black-on-red vertical lines, inside plain red, red core, fine texture, Late Neolithic, 2) body from closed vessel, Dm 25 cm, outside black slipped, inside plain brown, brown core, fine texture, Early Helladic?, 3) everted rim from bowl, outside/inside black slipped, brown core, fine texture, Early Helladic?; a quern-stone, max. L 3.45 cm, max. width 21.5 cm, 8.9 cm thick, andesite, saddle type, oval platform, grey; a few Hellenistic to Early Roman sherds; some post-medieval to modern sherds; fragments of roof tiles (see text above).

**Excavation findings:** Square A, surface cleaning: 1) hollowed base from deep-broad jar, Dm 12 cm, outside/inside red-brown slipped, grey core, coarse texture, Final Neolithic, 2) body from open/broad vessel, outside brown, evidence of soot?, inside brown slipped?, brown core, coarse texture, Neolithic? 3) body from closed vessel, outside/inside plain grey, grey core, coarse texture, Neolithic, 4) body from closed vessel, outside polished black, inside plain grey-black, evidence of soot?, black core, coarse texture, Late Neolithic? 5) body from closed vessel, outside plain brown-black, inside plain black, black core, coarse texture, Neolithic; Square A, bedrock: 6) body from broad jar, outside plain brown, inside red slipped, black core, coarse texture, Final Neolithic, 7) shoulder from broad jar, outside plain brown-grey, inside brown slipped, grey core, coarse texture, Final Neolithic.

**Modern:** The northern part of the shelter is closed by a low dry-stone wall (H ca. 60 cm) consisting mainly of reused blocks from the fortification wall (cf. *figs. 3. 4*). From west to south another rough stone wall closes the inner part of the shelter. Whether these walls are ancient or of recent date is not certain. The accumulation of goat dung may indicate their modern use. Numerous recent graffiti are painted in white color: ›4‹, ›AAT 1914‹, ›I‹, a Greek cross inscribed in a circle, ›K‹.

**Surrounding area:** In front of the cave the slope forms a narrow plateau covered with earth and foliage. Beneath it the terrain falls off more steeply and is wooded with deciduous trees and scrub vegetation. Southeast of the cave the cliff extends for ca. 20 m. Along the base there are two more shallow rock shelters bearing modern graffiti: ›5‹, ›K II‹, ›AAT 1940‹ (engraved), ›V.S.X.‹, ›K II‹, ›1930‹, ›AAT‹, Greek cross, ›1910‹, ›1916‹, Greek cross (in red color). The



25 Cave of Pan: 1. Saddle-quern, volcanic, grey, max. length 34.5 cm, max. width 21.5 cm, max. thickness 8.9 cm; Neolithic(?) – 2. Hollowed base from deep-broad jar, diameter 12 cm, red-brown monochrome, Final Neolithic. – Side cave of Koudounisti cat. no.07: 3. Body from deep vessel, plain red monochrome, Final Neolithic. – Livadi cave, Chamber A: 4. Neck with ear lug from broad jar, plain brown monochrome, Final Neolithic (?) – 5. Shoulder from jar, black/grey-on-light brown matt-painted, Late Neolithic. – 6. Body from closed jar, plain brown monochrome, Late Neolithic (?) – Livadi cave, Chamber B: 7. Body from bowl, brown-on-brown matt-painted, Late Neolithic. – 8. Body from broad vessel, brown polished monochrome, Late Neolithic. – 9. Body and flat base from scoop, diameter 7 cm, dotted incised triangles, grey polished, Late Neolithic

west end of the plateau, immediately adjacent to the cave, is occupied by the rectangular tower of the urban fortification (of probably Late Classical or early Hellenistic date), which is built directly against the rock shelter.

### 11 ›Agiios Nikolaos‹

Location: E383072 N4270740

Situated on a rock plateau (ca. 810m altitude), ca. 100m higher than the plateau of Cave05

Type: cave

Dimensions: not measured. The entrance is closed by the wall of the church

Description: see above

Cultural evidence / Modern: church inside; small medieval building in front; single ancient (?) ashlar in front (see above)

The chapel has been renovated during the past decades leaving very few clues of its older form. Modern wall bars the cave and forms the church facade. Iconostasis made of cement inside. From the initial (?) building phase remain the niches of the *prothesis* and *diakonikon* in the bema (chancel) as well as a small cylindrical column.

Surrounding area: Natural plateau narrow but 300m long, with water resources. The northern edge of the slope is partly supported with terrace rubble walls. More shallow caves exist on the high cliff above Agiarsali.

### 12 ›Agiarsali‹

Location: E383336 N4270684

Situated on the same rock plateau as Cave 11 (ca. 847m altitude), ca. 130m above the plateau of Cave05

Type: cave

Dimensions: Not measured. The entrance is closed by the wall of the chapel

Description: Accessible by a stone stairway of recent date. Between the entrance and the tall retaining wall there is enough room for a small flat area. Arranged into a chapel with the addition of a stone wall and a semi-cylindrical apsis that bar the cave opening and form the chapel facade. On it: two doors and two windows. Architectural parts, spolia, included in the masonry. The floor inside is uneven and a recently built staircase leads to a higher section – probably a side chapel – where a well is located. The iconostasis and the stair to the side chapel have been constructed of cement in the recent years. The chancel consists of a semi-cylindrical apsis with a built in stone bench underneath. A small square opening on the left serves as window. A small cylindrical column and a mullion were used for its construction. In the side chapel a well is located and a natural cavity separated by a stone wall from the rest of the area forms a small chancel. The church is dedicated to Virgin Mary.

Cultural evidence / Post medieval, see above, note 32. Modern era renovations: church inside, see above

Surrounding area: plateau, see description *cat. no. 11*

Athens

Athens

Athens

Marburg

Athens

Athens

St. Katsarou

L. Kormazopoulou

E. Laufer

S. Neumann

K. Sporn

I. Zygouri

## Addresses

Dr. Stella Katsarou  
Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology  
Ministry of Culture  
Ardittou 34b  
11636 Athens  
Greece  
skatsarou@culture.gr

Lina Kormazopoulou, M.A.  
Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology  
Ministry of Culture  
Ardittou 34b  
11636 Athens  
Greece  
lkormaz@hotmail.com

Dr. Eric Laufer  
laufereric@gmx.de

Dr. Sabine Neumann  
Philipps-Universität Marburg  
Marburger Centrum Antike Welt  
Deutschhausstraße 12  
35032 Marburg  
Germany  
sabine.neumann@uni-marburg.de

Prof. Dr. Katja Sporn  
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut  
Abteilung Athen  
Fidiou 1  
10678 Athens  
Greece  
katja.sporn@dainst.de

Ioanna Zygouri, M.A.  
Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology  
Ministry of Culture  
Ardittou 34b  
11636 Athens  
Greece  
izigouri@culture.gr



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# Zusammenfassung – Abstract – Περίληψη

## Survey der Höhlen oberhalb von Tithorea im Jahr 2016

**Zusammenfassung** Im Jahr 2016 wurden von der Ephorie für Paläoanthropologie-Speläologie und dem Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Athen sechzehn Höhlen und Felsunterstände in der Gegend oberhalb der antiken Stadt Tithorea an der Nordostseite des Berges Parnassos erforscht. Die Fundstellen sind durch unterschiedliche Größe und Morphologie geprägt und sind Teil einer naturräumlichen Umgebung, die einen weiten Überblick über die Flussebene des Kephissos bietet. Das Projekt umfasste eine detaillierte Dokumentation der untersuchten Höhlenräume und des Spektrums an erhaltenen charakteristischen Merkmalen und Funden, die Belege für diachrone menschliche Aktivitäten vom Neolithikum über die griechisch-römische Periode und das Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart liefern; das Befundbild ist infolge von Erosionsprozessen freilich recht fragmentarisch. Zu den neolithischen Keramikresten gehörte ein Fragment eines Schöpfgefäßes, das mit geritztem Dekor aus Zickzack-Linien und Punkten verziert ist. Die Funde aus der griechisch-römischen Epoche zeigen eine bemerkenswerte Vielzahl und Bandbreite von Felsausarbeitungen, darunter eine seltene Darstellung des Gottes Pan, die in die natürliche Felswand des Felsunterstandes eingemeißelt ist; letzterer befindet sich in unmittelbarer Nachbarschaft zu dem höchstgelegenen Turm und Endpunkt der Stadtmauer von Tithorea. Zwei Höhlen, die in der nachmittelalterlichen/frühneuzeitlichen Periode in Kapellen umgewandelt wurden und die zahlreich vertretenen christlichen Symbole an den meisten Fundorten zeugen von der anhaltenden religiösen Bedeutung der Höhlen bis in die Gegenwart.

**Schlagwörter** Tithorea, Höhle, Kult, Pan, neolithisch

## Surveying the caves above Tithorea in 2016

**Abstract** In 2016, sixteen caves and rock shelters were investigated by the Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology-Speleology and the German Archaeological Institute Athens in the area above the ancient city of Tithorea, on the northeast side of Mt. Parnassos. The sites are of varying size and morphology and form part of a natural setting with a commanding view over the alluvial plain of Kephissos. The project provided a detailed record of the investigated cave interiors and the range of the preserved features and materials and revealed evidence of diachronic human activities from the Neolithic, the Greek and Roman Antiquity, and the medieval era through to the present, even though the sites were severely affected by erosional processes. The Neolithic ceramic remains included a fragment from a scoop vessel decorated with incised-dotted motifs. The evidence from the Greek and Roman periods revealed a remarkable assemblage of rock-cut features and carvings, including a rare depiction of the god Pan carved onto the natural shelter located near the uppermost tower of the city walls of ancient Tithorea. Two caves that were converted into chapels during the post-medieval/early modern period and the widespread presence of Christian symbols at most sites reflect the continuing religious significance of the caves until our times.

**Keywords** Tithorea, cave, cult, Pan, Neolithic

## Ερευνώντας τα σπήλαια πάνω από την Τιθορέα το 2016

**Περίληψη** Το 2016 εξερευνήθηκαν από την Εφορεία Παλαιοανθρωπολογίας – Σπηλαιολογίας και το Γερμανικό Αρχαιολογικό Ινστιτούτο της Αθήνας δεκαέξι σπήλαια και βραχοσκεπές στην περιοχή πάνω από την αρχαία πόλη της Τιθορέας, στη βορειοανατολική πλευρά του Παρνασσού. Οι θέσεις ποικίλλουν σε μέγεθος και μορφολογία και αποτελούν τμήμα ενός φυσικού τοπίου με επιβλητική θέα προς την αλλουβιακή πεδιάδα του Κηφισού. Στο πλαίσιο της συνεργασίας πραγματοποιήθηκε λεπτομερής τεκμηρίωση των ερευνημένων σπηλαίων καθώς και των σωζόμενων διαμορφώσεων και υλικών καταλοίπων, τα οποία παρείχαν στοιχεία διαχρονικής ανθρώπινης δραστηριότητας, από τη Νεολιθική εποχή, την ελληνική και ρωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα και τους μεσαιωνικούς

χρόνους μέχρι και σήμερα, παρά την αλλοίωση που επέφερε η διαβρωτική διαδικασία σε αυτά. Τα κατάλοιπα της Νεολιθικής εποχής περιλάμβαναν θραύσμα αγγείου διακοσμημένο με εγχάρακτα-αυλακωτά μοτίβα. Στα στοιχεία της ελληνικής και ρωμαϊκής αρχαιότητας περιλαμβάνονται μια σημαντική συγκέντρωση από λαξεύματα και γλυφές επί του βράχου, συμπεριλαμβανομένης μίας σπάνιας απεικόνισης του θεού Πάνα, λαξευμένου στο φυσικό τοίχωμα βραχοσκεπής που βρισκόταν κοντά στον ψηλότερο πύργο των τειχών της αρχαίας Τιθορέας. Δύο σπήλαια που έγιναν παρεκκλήσια κατά τη διάρκεια της μετά-μεσαιωνικής/πρώιμης νεότερης περιόδου και η εκτεταμένη παρουσία χριστιανικών συμβόλων στις περισσότερες θέσεις, αντικατοπτρίζουν τη διαχρονική θρησκευτική σημασία των σπηλαίων αυτών μέχρι τις μέρες μας.

**Λέξεις-κλειδιά** Τιθορέα, σπήλαιο, λατρεία, Πάνας, Νεολιθική εποχή