



MYCENAEAN FOUNDATION INC. (est. 1967)
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Press Release

in response to the Petrakos letter to the Ministry of Culture regarding the discovery of the throne of the palace at Mycenae

Violation of professional ethics

The importance of an archaeological find is assessed by the international academic community on the basis of its scientific publication and in due time. The actions of Mr. B. Petrakos, secretary general of the Athens Archaeological Society, to arbitrarily form a committee in order to evaluate the fragment of the throne at Mycenae, and to address their conclusion to the Ministry of Culture, in the absence of and without knowledge of the excavator and researcher, so that they may bias the forthcoming professional publication, are unacceptable, improper, arbitrary, non-professional, unethical, and anti-collegial.

Such actions, that recall practices of a remote past, constitute a very dangerous precedent of an organization/carrier openly violating the inalienable study/publication rights of every scientist, archaeologist and excavator/researcher. This is truly a form of obscurantism, an attempt to silence, intimidate, and manipulate the scientist, that is, an “intellectual rape.”

Composition of the Petrakos committee

Equally problematic was the arbitrary selection of the committee members, who are subjectively labelled by Mr. Petrakos as “distinguished.” The members were rather unsuitable to serve the particular purpose of this committee, that is, to conduct an objective and substantiated assessment of Mycenaean antiquities, due to their different expertise (in classical, not prehistoric archaeology), or their limited technical and field experience, or even due to restraints of work-related dependence from the chair of the committee.

Argumentation of the Petrakos Committee

The assessment of the Petrakos committee about a «basin» is unreliable and fallacious, as it is based on unfounded assumptions and erroneous observations. The limitations and



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inadequacies of the committee for the particular purpose they were called to serve, the limited time they invested, and the fact that they did not have (or requested) our study data at their disposal, led them to several errors and, consequently, to an impromptu and unfounded interpretation of a “basin.”

In brief, the argumentation of the Petrakos committee for a “basin” is limited to the fact that they could not locate the traces of the contact surface of the backrest, their presumption that the depth of the depression (4-5 cm) is too deep for a throne but sufficient for a basin, and that the particular type of stone is “unsuitable” [sic] for a throne, their assumption that the fragment was allegedly found elsewhere, not where it is reported, and the fact that Agamemnon is not a historical, but a mythical figure.

In response to the above:

(i) In my initial brief report to the Archaeological Society, the stone fragment of the seat is displayed embedded in the drawing reconstruction of the throne, but it is placed by mistake at an angle (side view of the fragment) to the throne (frontal view). The Petrakos committee, therefore, having my initial report as a guide, and not our complete data and final plans at their disposal, *analyzed erroneously the stone fragment, not realizing what is obvious to the trained eye - that the preserved side with the wide ledge is not the “left side” of the throne, as they describe it, but the rear side, upon which the backrest of the throne was resting.*

(ii) As a result of their erroneous analysis of the stone fragment, the committee mistook the fracture of a pebble as the rectilinear contact traces of the backrest that I describe in my report. These contact traces of the backrest are not located where the committee presumed, but elsewhere, being visible on the ledge of the rear side of the throne.

(iii) The committee erroneously presumes that “the depth of the depression alone excludes the possibility of being part of the throne,” ignoring *the fact that the average depth of the depression of the throne fragment of Mycenae is only 4 mm (0.004m) deeper than the throne of Knossos.*

(iv) *Contrary to common sense, the committee presume that the average depth of of the depression of our stone fragment (4.1 cm) is too deep for a throne, but quite befitting for a “basin” (!) (which, of course, are far deeper and lack the characteristic seat ledge).*

(v) The committee presume that “the stone, of bad quality, difficult to work with, and unsuitable for carving it into the most formal furniture of a palace.” *This is another arbitrary and erroneous argument: anyone who has worked at Mycenae, or even studied*



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Mycenaean architecture would know that elaborate decoration of facades of tholos tombs and gates have been carved on this type of stone (conglomerate).

(vi) The committee misread even our excavation tag (the label ‘Lower Town’ is printed on all our tags and denote not the findspot, but our project name!), thus concluding arbitrarily that the “the Lower Town is different from the ‘Chavos riverbed’ where the stone fragment is said to have been found. Therefore, there are two findspots”! Well, this is a fact and beyond any doubt: the stone fragment of the throne was found in the dry riverbed of Chavos (37°43’44 North, 22°45’28 East), approximately 80 m south of the edge of the hill of Mycenae, right below the Mycenaean palace.

(viii) Furthermore, anyone who has excavated or studied the site of Mycenae would know well that *the Chavos River was part of the Lower Town, since it runs through it*, which is why the Mycenaean had built stone bridges/dams to cross the river.

(ix) In my report to the Archaeological Society, I write that “the scientific importance of the find (the only throne of a Mycenaean palace discovered so far on mainland Greece) and its special semiological weight as a symbol connected with mythology and the ancient literary tradition (‘the throne of Agamemnon,’ the last mythical king of Mycenae) is undeniably great.” Of course, it is not me who connects Mycenae or the palace of Mycenae with Agamemnon, as Mr. Petrakos misreads my statement, but mythology and ancient literary tradition – therefore, if our find is indeed part of the throne of the palace at Mycenae, then, it acquires a special semiological weight.

In conclusion, *the assessment of the Petrakos committee about a «basin» is unreliable and fallacious, as it is based on unfounded assumptions and erroneous observations.* Therefore, to use his exact wording, *it is “unfortunate, if not intentional.”*

Argumentation for the throne interpretation

Our argumentation will be presented appropriately, professionally, and timely in an archaeological journal (not in press releases).

As to the study and publication process, I would like to state that:

1. *Before concluding to the interpretation of a throne, we had carefully examined and rejected all other potential interpretations.*
2. *Our arguments for the interpretation of a throne are many, diverse, interlaced, and solid. These arguments are the outcome of an interdisciplinary examination of the stone fragment (archaeological, literary, morphological, technical, geological,*



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topographical, study of dimensions and proportions, study of comparanda, examination of impact traces, etc.).

3. *The study of the find was conducted by a team of researchers and lasted for more than a year.*

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