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AMENHOTEP III AND MYCENAE: NEW EVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT In 1886 and 1890, Ch. Tsountas found several faience plaque fragments inscribed with the names and titles of Amenhotep III during his excavations within the citadel of Mycenae. Further fragments were recovered subsequently, in the 1960s, by G.E. Mylonas and W.D. Taylour. Another has come to light recently from Mylonas' 1970s excavation material preserved in the storerooms at Mycenae, and is presented here for the first time.

KEYWORDS Mycenae, Egypt, LH III period, artefact/epigraphic analysis, exchange, Amenhotep III, faience, plaques.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Amenhotep III faience plaque fragments occupy an odd position in Mycenaean studies.¹ They are amongst the few readily identifiable inscribed objects of Egyptian origin, other than scarabs, found on mainland Greece. They have been recovered only at Mycenae, within the citadel itself. They are inscribed with a royal name, Amenhotep III, thus providing a good Egyptian date of manufacture, and so a

recognisable cross-reference for Egyptian-Mycenaean chronology. Unfortunately, most are from debris or fill contexts. No context that includes a plaque fragment at Mycenae can be dated earlier than LH IIIB Middle, a period already known from other evidence to be about a century after the death of this pharaoh in *ca.* 1353 BC (see previously Cline 1987; 1990; 1994, 38-42, 143, nos. 96-98; 1998; Phillips in press).²

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¹ We respectfully dedicate this article to Dr. O. Dickinson, whose own publications have done so much to further Aegean Bronze Age studies. We would also like to thank the following people: Professor S. Iakovidis, for permitting us to publish this piece in advance of his forthcoming publication of Professor Mylonas' excavations; Dr. K. Shelton, who first recognised the piece for what it is and brought it to our attention; Dr. D. Danielidou, now at the Academy of Athens, who kindly reexamined the stratigraphical and contextual position of the fragment that she excavated in 1975; Dr. E. French, for permission to discuss the Taylour fragments once again; and Dr. E. Palaiologou of the 4th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, for facilitating our separate study of the new Mylonas fragment. Additionally, J. Phillips wishes to thank Dr. L. Papazoglou-Manioudaki (Ephor of Prehistoric Antiquities, National Museum at Athens) and Dr. E. Palaiologou for facilitating her study of the other plaque fragments in their care. All photographs and line drawings are by J. Phillips unless otherwise noted.

The first Amenhotep III plaque fragments were recovered by Ch. Tsountas during his excavations within the citadel at Mycenae in 1886 and 1890. Two of the fragments were published by him in 1891. They—or at least some of them—were recognised from the beginning as bearing part of the titulary of Amenhotep III. The plaque fragments were the subject of a lecture to the Society for Biblical Archaeology by R. Sewell, published in 1904, and were discussed further by D. Fimmen in 1921 (Sewell 1904: 258-9; Fimmen 1921: 175-76, n. 4, fig. 171). Since Tsountas did not record their origin more precisely than 'north-west of the Lion Gate' and in the area of what is now known as Tsountas' House in the Cult Centre, little could be done with them in archaeological terms. Egyptologists took scant notice of them, although they were included by B. Porter and

² On Amenhotep III, see now the contributions in O'Connor & Cline 1998.

³ Although some suggestion was made that Smenkare was the ruler named, this was eventually rejected. Nonetheless, Porter and Moss (1952: 402) cite this king rather than Amenhotep III.

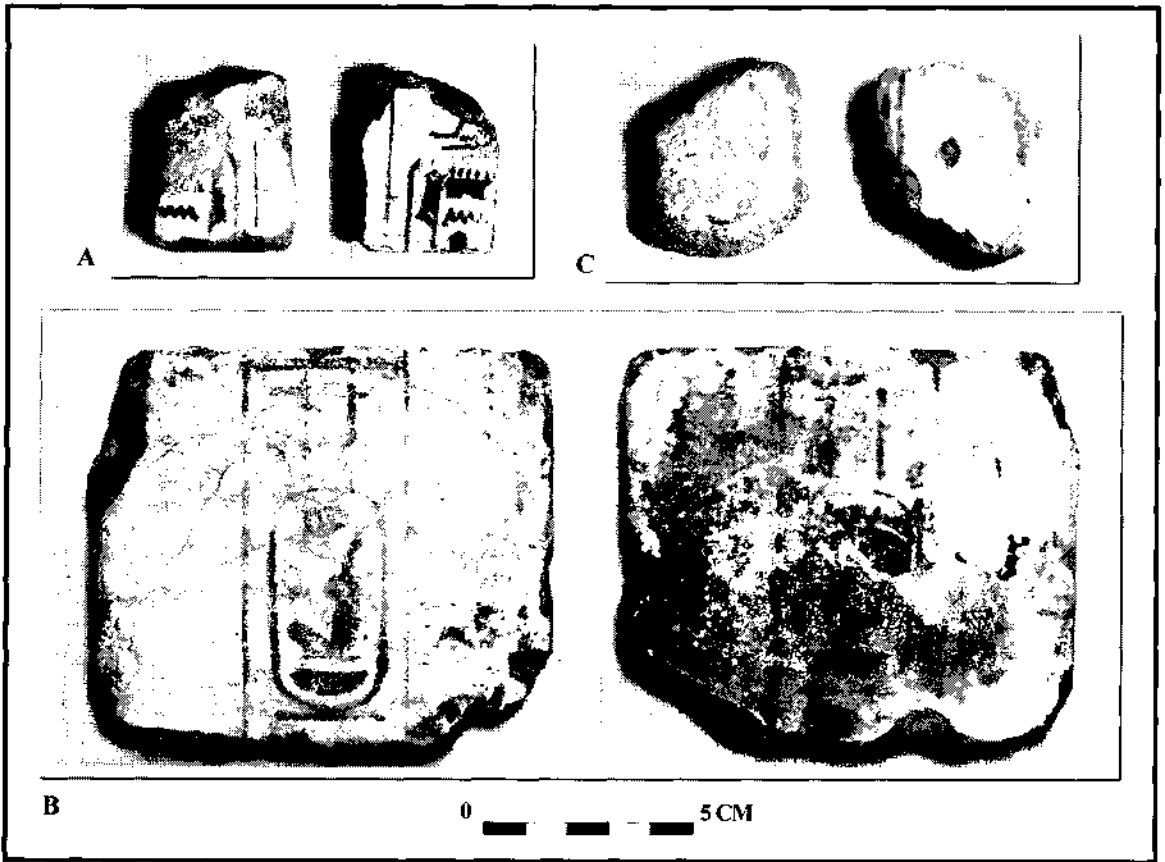


Fig. 1. A. Obverse (left) and reverse (right) of the new Mylonas fragment; B. reverse (left) and obverse (right) of the large Taylour fragment; C. obverse (left) and reverse (right) small Taylour fragment.

R.B. Moss in their *Topographical bibliography* (Porter & Moss 1952: 402). The Tsountas fragments, including one not originally recognised as such, were intimately studied by P. Kourachanis, staff egyptologist at the National Museum at Athens, before his untimely death in 1988, but remained unpublished until recently.⁴

The discovery of further fragments in the 1960s in the same two general areas of the citadel as the Tsountas pieces—firstly in 1963 by Mylonas in Room 2 of House M (Mylonas 1963: 101, pl. 76B; Iakovidis 1983: 52), and secondly in 1968 and 1969 by W.D. Taylour in the Room with the Fresco of the Cult Centre (Taylour 1969: 95-96)—activated further study and interpretation of the plaque fragments, since these new finds were better preserved than the original Tsountas pieces. W. Helck presented a reconstruction incorporating all of Tsountas' fragments, which showed that the pieces were inscribed with a titulary of Amenhotep III, including his *prenomen* and *nomen* encircled by cartouches and accompanied by standard epithets (Helck 1979: 96-97, with unnumbered

figure).⁵ The basics of his reconstruction have been generally accepted, although some extra embellishment has been removed. The 'complete' text as reconstructed by Helck and generally accepted today is:

ntrnfr(Nb-m3't-R') s3 R'(Imn-htp hk3 w3st) di 'nh

'the good god, (Neb-ma'at-Ra), son of Ra, (Amenhotep, ruler of Thebes), given life'.⁶

Interpretations of their presence and use at Mycenae also were considered. Helck suggested they had been set into a door of an 'Egyptian Room' in the palace at Mycenae (Helck 1979: 97). V. Hankey (1981: 45-46) thought they were foundation deposits for a temple or shrine. E. Cline, focusing on the Taylour finds, suggested that they may have been 'sent from Egypt [...] as part of a formal contact, perhaps even via an official Egyptian delegation' (Cline 1990: 211; see previously Cline 1987). C.Lilyquist (1999) cautioned

⁴ They were published finally with a good photograph by Papazoglou-Manioudaki 2000: 250-52 (no. 249).

⁵ See Gardiner 1957 [1927]: 71-76, also 294, §378, for a detailed description of the full royal titulary. References to individual hieroglyphs below are to Gardiner 1957 [1927]: 442-548.

⁶ See the long reconstruction suggested by Cline (1990: fig. 4).

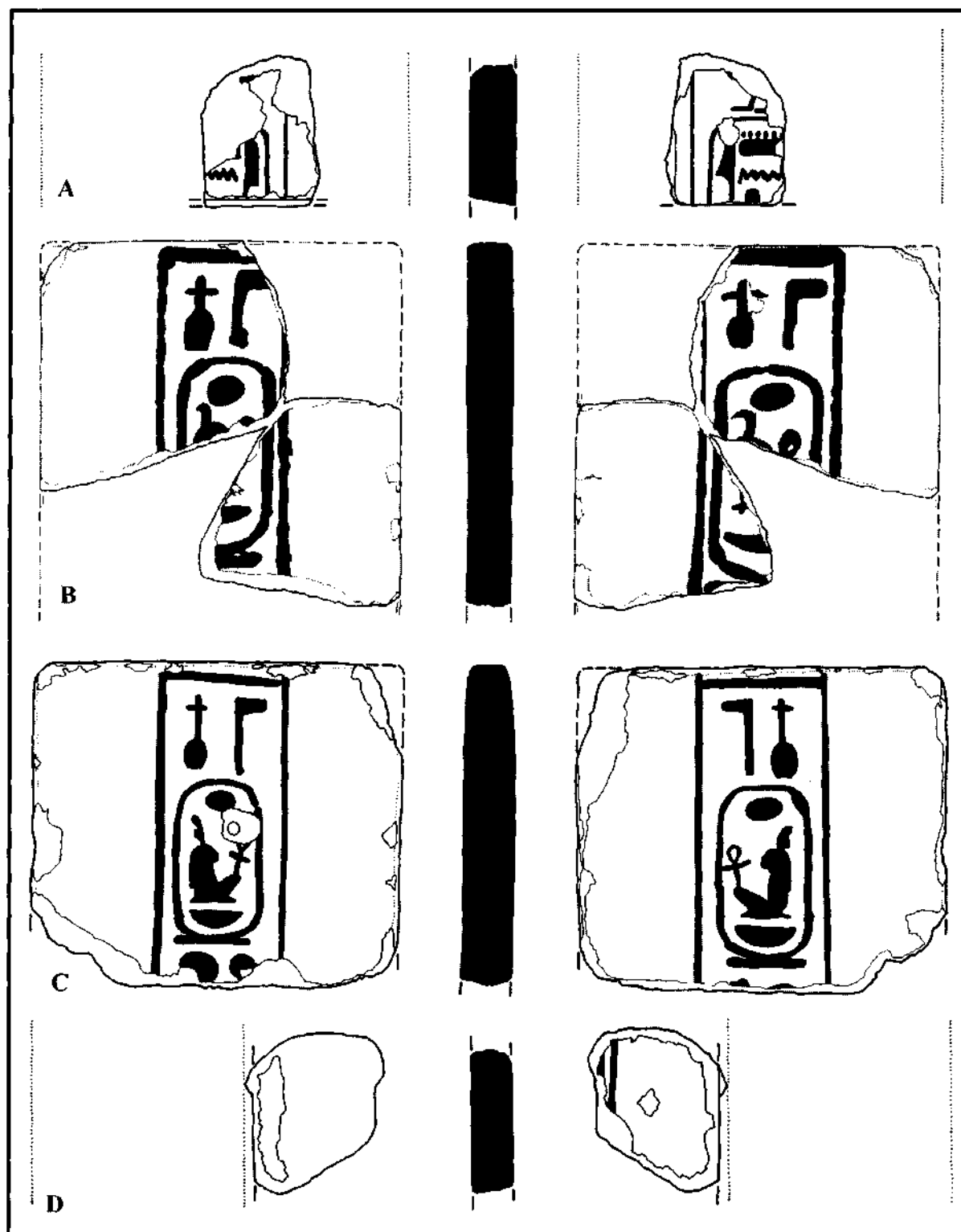


Fig. 2. Line drawings of the Mylonas and Taylour plaque fragments: A. obverse (left) and reverse (right) sides of the new Mylonas fragment; B. obverse (left) and reverse (right) of the two original Mylonas fragments; C. obverse (left) and reverse (right) of the large Taylour fragment; D. obverse (left) and reverse (right) of the small Taylour fragment.

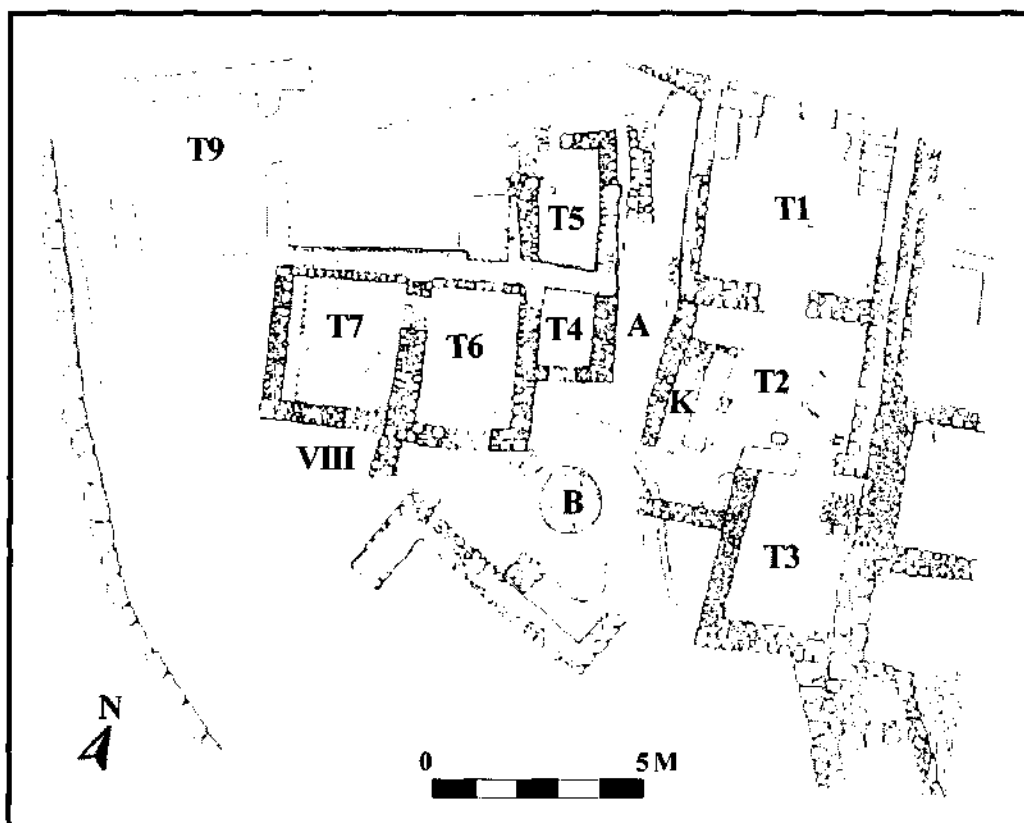


Fig. 3. Plan of the find-spot of the new Mylonas fragment and the neighbouring area (adapted from Mylonas 1973: 110, fig. 1).

against automatic acceptance of an Egyptian origin for them and provided for the first time a modern egyptologist's perspective. Most recently, J. Phillips (in press) was able to study in detail the fragments from all excavations and has provided further analysis and observations on the various pieces as a specific corpus of objects.

A new fragment was recognised by K. Shelton in 2000 in the Nauplio Museum, whilst she was evaluating unstudied material from Mylonas' 1972-1975 excavation and a clean-up operation in the Cult Centre area [Figs. 1A, 2A]. Mylonas' material was all transferred to the new Mycenae Museum in 2001, together with other material from the site. Subsequently, the fragment was cleaned and entered into the Mycenae Museum register as BE 12374. It is now on exhibition in the Mycenae Museum (MM 1500). This brings the total number of fragments from Amenhotep III faience plaques found at Mycenae to 13: eight (two joining) found by Tsountas in 1886 and 1890, two (joining) by Mylonas in 1963, two by Taylour in 1968 and 1969, and now another by Mylonas in 1975.⁷

II. FIND-SPOT OF THE NEW MYLONAS FRAGMENT⁸

In the years 1968-1969, Taylour excavated on the west slope of the Mycenaean citadel, under the supervision of Mylonas. It was then that he discovered the Room of Idols (where the well-known idols were found) and a group of rooms, on the chamber's west side, which must have been shrines, as proved by their contents, especially the so-called Room with the Fresco (north of T6 and T7) [Fig. 3]. After the British excavation permit expired, all research reverted to the Archaeological Society, under the direction of Mylonas and Iakovidis, both of whom brought to light and cleaned the whole area of the so-called Cult Centre of Mycenae. It was then felt that research in this area should be continued. So, during 1972-1975 the complex of rooms numbered T1 to T9 and the courtyard with the altar in front of them were revealed [Figs. 3-4], with the intention of combining the plans made by the British with those of the Archaeological

Note that a more detailed background to observations on the new fragment is presented in that article (see also previously Cline 1987; 1990; 1994; 1998).

⁸ The following details regarding the find-spot were kindly provided by D. Danielidou, who excavated the Mylonas fragment during the 1975 season. Her notes are provided *verbatim* in the following section. See also Mylonas (1975: fig. 1) for the published report of the final season, including the site plan.

⁷ The present fragment was studied separately by Cline and Phillips. The latter kindly refrained from discussing or considering the fragment in her earlier article (Phillips in press).

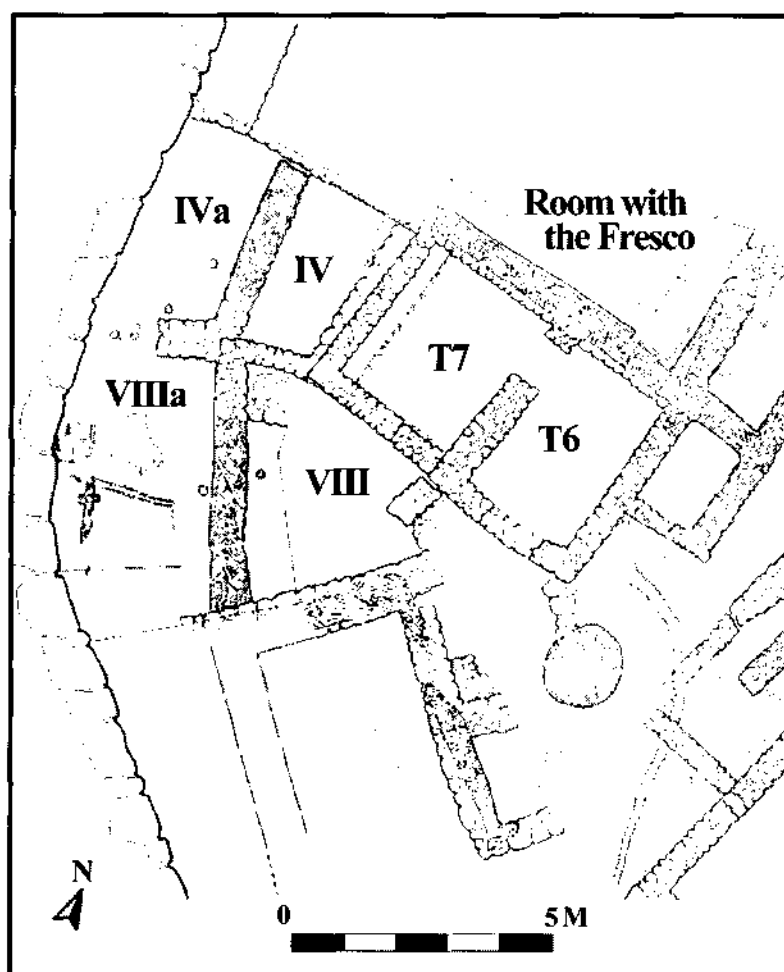


Fig. 4. Later plan of the find-spot of the Mylonas fragment and the neighbouring area (adapted from Mylonas 1975: 154, fig. 1).

Society and the original plan published by Tsountas (see now Iakovidis & French 2003). Many parts of the fill had not been excavated earlier, leaving some floors covered. The new excavation reached the rooms' actual floors, where 'floor deposits' were revealed, consisting of vessels, sherds, figurines, small bronze objects, etc. Outside the rooms, to the south and the west, and up to the West Cyclopean Wall, there were intact sloping fills, which were excavated from 1973 to 1975.

Outside the south wall of Room T7, there was an intact fill numbered 'VIII' [Figs. 3-4], which started 0.48 m from the top of the uppermost cornerstone of the southwestern corner of Room T6 (datum) and reached as deep as 4.60 m. The first layer, of red soil, which reached down to a layer of ashes at 0.88 m, yielded many sherds, a few LH IIIB-LH IIIC cooking vessels, kylikes, a goblet, decorated skyphoi, jugs and cups, two broken animal figurines, the head of a female figurine, and a button. The second layer, of greyish soil mixed with small stones, down to 1.48 m, contained a few LH IIIB-LH IIIC cooking vessels, undecorated

and decorated kylikes, jugs, stirrup jars and skyphoi. The third layer, of soft sandy soil, went as deep as 3.15 m. It yielded some LH IIIB and a few LH IIIC vessels painted inside, cooking jars and tripods, many undecorated and some decorated vessels, such as kylikes, tankard mugs, goblets, jugs, a large stirrup jar, skyphoi and figurines. Fragments of coloured plaster decorated with wavy lines were also collected there, including one representing a black foot on white ground.

In the east part, and continuing over an area measuring 0.90 x 0.90-2 m, the layer continued down to a depth of 2.78-3.15 m, containing a lot of ashes and a few burned bones. In this, the fourth layer, LH IIIB pottery was found, which consisted of many fragments of jars and cooking vessels, among which were a strainer, kylikes, a cup and decorated skyphoi, jugs, and a stirrup jar, along with an ivory amulet, figurines, and beads.

At a depth of about 3.15 m, there was a spread of whitish *plesia* clay in which sherds of large vessels

and a skyphos were embedded. From this fill (VIII), sherds were collected at a depth of 3-3.5 m, including a LH IIIB2 pyxis with the representation of a sphinx. The excavation ended at the depth of 4.60 m.

In 1974, the excavation of Fill VIII was extended westwards (Fill VIIIA) [Fig. 4] and was carried downwards to the previous year's depth. The layers found were similar to those of 1973, with complete typological and chronological correspondence of the finds: many sherds, whole and fragmentary vessels, ivories, a Psi and a kouroutrophos figurine, a seal of black steatite with the representation of a goat between branches facing left, etc. Moreover, a few cross-walls were found, as were large holes with bits of charcoal on their sides and bottoms, obviously the remains of burnt wooden poles.

In the same year, excavation started at the intact fill, west of Room T7—Fill IV—which sloped down to the West Cyclopean Wall and up to a mudbrick wall to the north. There was also a layer of ash there, although not continuous, at the same depth of 0.85-1 m. The pottery is similar and the finds include a four-spoke terracotta wheel, a fragment of a spouted stone vessel, various figurines (one of which a kouroutrophos), a stone tool, a bronze arrow, ivories, beads, and buttons.

In the same fill, the northern continuation of one of Fill VIIIA's walls was found, enclosing a small room—Room IV [Fig. 4]—exactly to the west of T7, with which it shares a party wall along which a low bench is preserved. Its floor, covered with a layer of *plesia*, was found at a depth of 2.5 m.

The rest of Fill IV, Fill IVa [Fig. 4], extending to the West Cyclopean Wall, was excavated in 1975. This fill was 0.95 m thick. The first layer consisted of soft sandy soil mixed with ash. The finds included sherds and pottery of the LH IIIB2 and LH IIIC periods, mainly skyphoi with monochrome interiors, along with figurines, part of an ivory tablet, and a fragment of an Egyptian faience plaque with the same inscription on both sides (MM 12374). All these fills, as is shown by their composition and by their sloping towards the fortification wall, were created by the toppling of the upper stories of Rooms T7, T9, and IV.

The plaque fragment, therefore, was found west of the complex of rooms, in Fill IVa, close to the West Cyclopean Wall, at a distance of 1-2 m east of the Wall, and in the layer immediately below the disturbed surface, at a depth of 1.10-1.20 m from the datum.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW MYLONAS FRAGMENT

This fragment is, in many respects, comparable to those already published (Cline 1990; 1994, 143, nos.

96-98; Phillips in press). It is a flat, rectangular piece of faience, in a mid-brown fabric, and now is 4.7 cm in preserved height, 3.5 cm in preserved width, with a maximum thickness of 1.53 cm. Extremely little surface glaze has survived and so the present 'surface' is the near-white colour of its core. The added text, still visible on the present surface and therefore added prior to glazing, is now a dark brown but originally would have been black in colour. The original glaze almost certainly was blue-green in colour and would have covered the entire surface, as is seen on the two Mylonas fragments from House M. The bottom edge is flat and smooth, whilst the other sides are rough and jagged—evidence of breakage in antiquity.

The preserved text is in vertical format, the text itself facing right on one surface and facing left on the other, as can easily be recognised by the orientation of the feather sign (H 6). The right-facing surface is here described as the 'obverse' and the left-facing surface is the 'reverse,' whilst 'top' and 'bottom' also are relative to text orientation. The surviving inscription is a portion of Amenhotep III's titulary, conforming to that reconstructed by Helck. The reverse inscription preserves part of a standard epithet and the beginning of his *nomen*:

...s3 [R'] (*Imn-h ...*) (...'son of [Ra,] (Amenh...').

The feet and legs of the bird (a duck, G 39) and the upper portion of the papyrus roll (Y 1) are recognisable, although both signs are mostly lost. The obverse inscription is less well-preserved but recognisably the same text. Here, only the edge of the duck's breast survives, while the papyrus roll is entirely lost. The remaining signs are almost completely preserved on the reverse, although less so on the obverse. As can be more clearly seen on other fragments, the *nomen* is surrounded by a cartouche, of which part of one side and the top are preserved here. The text also has a vertical border preserved on one side that is part of the rectangular enclosure surrounding the entire inscription.

IV. DISCUSSION

It is most unlikely that the new Mylonas fragment can be joined with the other two Mylonas pieces [Fig. 2B] or the eight Tsountas fragments, particularly given the find-spots of these other fragments within the citadel at Mycenae in the area north-west of the Lion Gate and around Tsountas' House. However, we need to address the possibility that the new Mylonas piece is another fragment of the same original plaque as either, or both, of the Taylour fragments [Figs. 1B-C, 2C-D] recovered immediately uphill, in different levels within the Room with the Fresco. We may judge the likelihood of this possibility by examining a number of

criteria: find-spot; fabric; edges; thickness; text overlap, orientation, and palaeography (hand); text compatibility and positioning; and some additional considerations.⁹

A. FIND-SPOT

The find-spot of these three pieces (the two Taylour fragments and the new Mylonas fragment) has already been partially considered above; we have noted that they were all found either in or immediately south of the Room with the Fresco [Fig. 5]. However, each was found in a different level and a different context. The large Taylour piece was found on the LH IIIB (middle) floor of the Room with the Fresco, within the mouth of a crumpled lead vessel. The small Taylour piece was recovered in the same room, but at a higher level in a debris/fill context dating later in the LH IIIB period (Cline 1990: 200–201). The new Mylonas piece came from south of the room, near the West Cyclopean Wall, in a debris/fill context located immediately below the disturbed surface and including LH IIIB2 and LH IIIC sherds, as described above.

B. FABRIC

The visible unglazed core fabric surface along all edges of all three fragments has been adversely affected by their context conditions, with the result that it all appears discoloured, very worn and 'stone-like' in texture. Proper comparison of the plaque fabrics therefore is not possible without making fresh breaks which, for these objects, is neither advisable nor indeed possible without express permission from the authorities. No attempt was made to obtain such permission. Fabric colouration is quite varied, ranging from near-white to near-black, even on individual pieces. So far as can be observed on the visible surface, all three fabrics are generally similar in appearance, although the small Taylour fragment appears somewhat more 'bubbled' in texture. This is the only observable distinction in the fabric of these pieces, and may not be relevant.

C. EDGES

The smooth bottom edge of the new Mylonas fragment is not the original one—it has been deliberately sawn and cut down to produce a new (reduced) edge. Virtually all the Tsountas pieces and the smaller Taylour fragment also have been sawn to produce new edges—on either one vertical edge or the other, relative to the vertical text, although one Tsountas piece (NMA 2566.2) is sawn on both vertical edges. Some pieces are also sawn horizontally at the top or the bottom of the surviving fragment. One

Tsountas fragment (NMA 2566.4) is sawn at both top and bottom as well as on one vertical edge.¹⁰

The large Taylour fragment and the two Mylonas fragments from House M are different, as they preserve the original edge on three of their four sides, as indicated by the glazing that continues onto the sides from both inscribed faces. This glaze is lacking on the apparent edges of all other Amenhotep III plaque fragments found at Mycenae. Instead, the apparent edges are extremely smooth and flat, an indication that they had been reduced by sawing. On many, the glazing is chipped on both faces at these edges.

Virtually all of the sawn edges on the various fragments either are at right angles, or are close to it, and do not noticeably diverge from that angle as the edge continues from the obverse to the reverse faces. The alteration of the fragments is thus consistent and deliberate, as indicated by the smaller Taylour fragment (BE 18532), which was snapped off after it had been sawn, leaving a small portion still standing proud of the reduced edge (cf. Cline 1990: pls. 2 [especially 2b], 3). Unlike all the other sawn pieces, however, the resulting edge of the new Mylonas fragment has been sawn at an angle of 11° from the square, to produce instead a noticeably steep edge, tapering from obverse to reverse. Thus, this treatment of the new Mylonas piece is an anomaly amongst the known corpus as a whole.

Moreover, the new Mylonas fragment also is the only one that has been sawn at an inappropriate point of the original text—right through the middle of the pharaoh's *nomen* and cartouche. All other horizontally sawn edges on the various fragments are either at the end of the text and the end of the final epithet (in the case of the joining fragments of NMA 2566.2 and NMA 2566.4), or at the top immediately between an epithet and the cartouche (NMA 2566.4, obverse). This careful positioning is emphasised by the further observation that *all* of the plaque fragments with sawn vertical edges appear to have had only 0.3 cm removed from the original edge, when compared to the two fragments with their original edges intact. The sawn edges at the bottom also appear to have had only minimal material removed, likely also only 0.3 cm, judging from the surviving text. The rather cavalier, indeed downright disrespectful, treatment of the existing text on the new Mylonas plaque fragment again is an anomaly amongst the corpus as we have it.

¹⁰ Tsountas' fragment NMA 2718 is the only one where all surviving 'edges' are in fact the result of breakage. One additional fragment found by Tsountas (NMA 2566.3) retains no inscription; therefore the orientation of its edge cannot be determined.

⁹ These criteria are more fully discussed in Phillips in press.

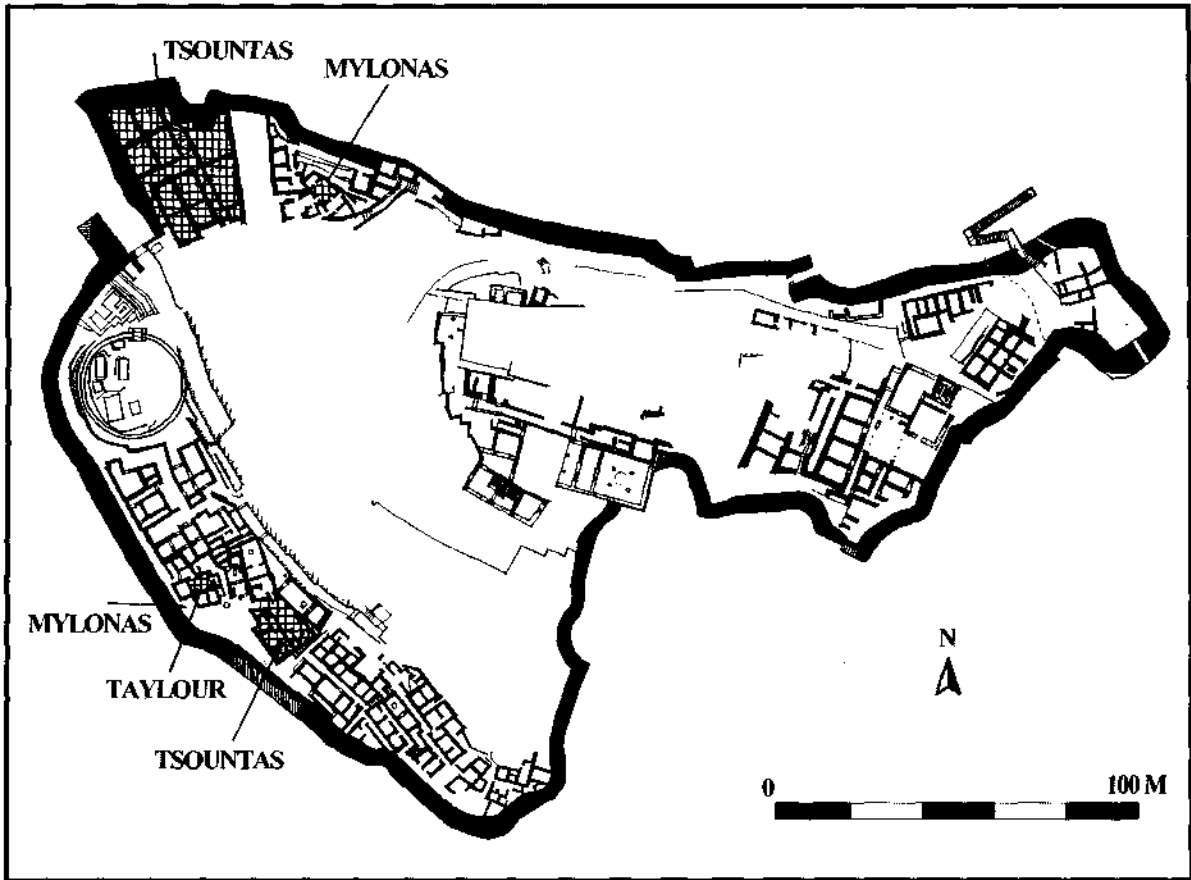


Fig. 5. Map of the Mycenae citadel showing the find-spot of the examined plaque fragments.

D. THICKNESS

The criterion of plaque thickness is complicated by the fact that each original plaque was individually produced, so each fragment may or may not have been the same thickness originally, even *if* they had originally come from the same plaque. This can be illustrated by two of the larger plaque fragments: the larger Taylour piece and the joining Mylonas fragments from House M. The larger Taylour fragment (Mycenae Museum, BE 18340 = MM 1501), with extremely well-preserved glaze on both obverse and reverse, ranges between 1.68-1.78 cm in thickness in the middle at the inscription and between 1.43-1.58 cm in thickness near the plaque edge.

The Mylonas fragments, on the other hand, also with extremely well-preserved glaze on both obverse and reverse, measure between 1.5-1.52 cm in thickness over the entire surface area, with extremely little variation between the middle and near the edge of the original plaque itself. Their good surface glaze preservation itself accounts for some of their total thickness measurements. The seven Tsountas pieces, with surface glaze preservation varying from reasonable to non-existent, range between 1.28-1.56

cm in thickness (NMA 2566.3, with surface lost from below the text on both faces, is 1.26 cm thick).

When comparing all of the fragments, actual surface condition must be taken into account, for loss of glaze will affect thickness measurement. When comparing the two Taylour fragments, we must first note that the smaller one (Mycenae Museum, BE 18532), with virtually all glazing lost on both surfaces and worn further to below the inscription level on the reverse, can be measured most accurately only near its sawn edge where both surfaces survive. Here it ranges between 1.3-1.33 cm in thickness. Near the painted vertical lines of the cartouche and rectangular enclosure line on the obverse, where it has worn down to below surface level and no glaze survives on the reverse, it is but 1.27 cm thick. The glazing may or may not account for a hypothetical 'missing' 0.2 cm to conform to the larger fragment's near-edge measurement. Thus it is theoretically possible, based on this criterion, that the two Taylour fragments *might* be from the same original plaque, as Cline (1990) has suggested.

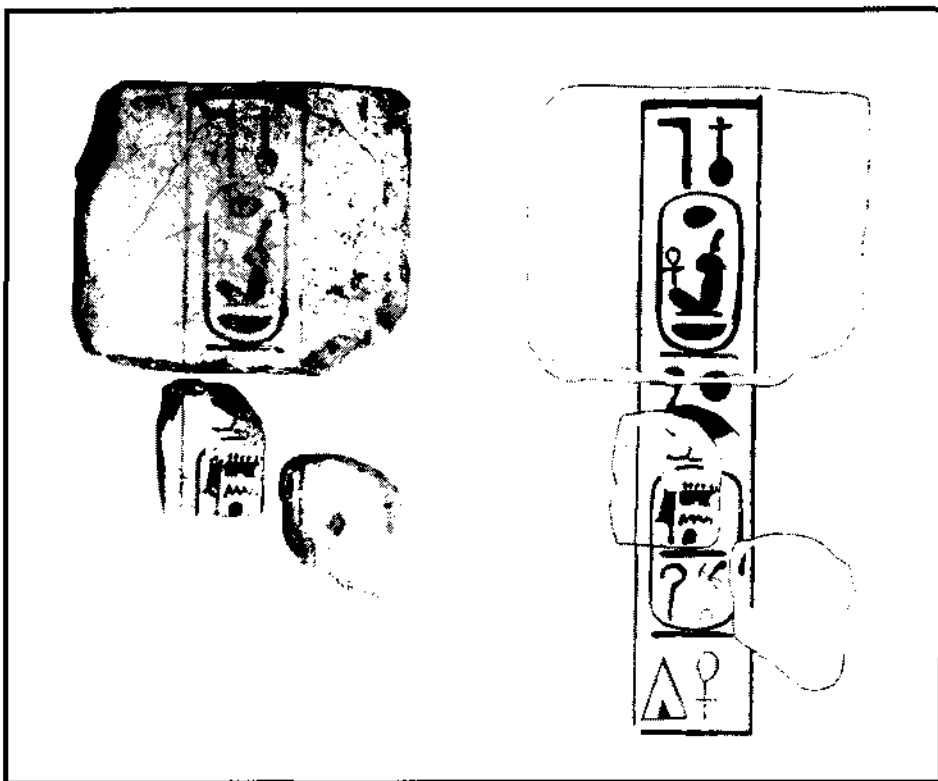


Fig. 6. The reverse sides of three plaque fragments in their possible positions as a single artefact (left) and reconstruction of their reverse sides (right; drawing by K. Shelton).

In the case of the smaller Taylour fragment and the new Mylonas piece, direct comparison is impossible since their available measuring points are incompatible. The smaller Taylour fragment has already been described above; it is 1.3-1.33 cm thick near the sawn edge. The new Mylonas fragment, with glaze less well-preserved on both faces, ranges in thickness between 1.49-1.58 cm, but this is over the inscription at what originally was the middle of the plaque. This *ca.* 0.2-0.3 cm difference might be the result of glaze/surface loss or could be due to the different measuring positions on the plaque face. However, it might also mean that these fragments are from separate plaques.

In comparing the larger Taylour piece and the new Mylonas fragment, a measurement of their respective thicknesses can be made at the same point—at the heart of the inscription and thus the middle of the original plaque. Both pieces already have been discussed above: the large Taylour fragment is between 1.68-1.78 cm in thickness, while the Mylonas fragment is between 1.49-1.58 cm in thickness. This difference of *ca.* 0.2-0.3 cm again could be explained by the lack of surface glaze on the latter, or by the possibility that the two fragments come from separate plaques. Nevertheless, direct comparison remains problematic, due to their differing surface condition,

and the relative thicknesses of these three fragments is inconclusive evidence either for or against the possibility.

E. TEXTUAL OVERLAP, ORIENTATION, AND PALAEOGRAPHY (HAND)

None of the three pieces, as preserved, overlap textually, for no complete sign—or specific portion of a sign—on any one fragment is repeated on either of the other two. It is therefore possible, from the textual point of view, that the three fragments are all from one original plaque [Fig. 6].

The text on the large Taylour piece and on the new Mylonas fragment both face right on the obverse and left on the reverse, and are thus compatible on this criterion. Textual orientation on the small Taylour fragment cannot be discerned, so it may or may not have had the same opposing orientations.

There is also no overwhelming evidence of different hands in the texts as a whole. However, while the apparently unsure application of paint on the long straight lines seen in the cartouche and enclosing border of the large Taylour fragment is not as evident on the other two pieces, these other pieces do not have such elongated lines preserved, which makes valid

comparison difficult. The two small fragments, though, indicate no definable palaeographical differences from the larger fragment.

One visible distinction, however, is the space between borderline and cartouche. The surviving cartouche line on the smaller Taylour fragment is extremely close to its surviving borderline, far closer than either of the two cartouche lines relative to their neighbouring borderline on the larger piece. The text as a whole (including the cartouche/borderline relationship) on the larger piece is far more open, and less cramped.¹¹ This is not an insurmountable difference, but it should be noted that, while the relative positions of the cartouche and borderlines on unrelated fragments vary considerably, their positions vary little on individual pieces which come from the same original plaque (such as the Mylonas fragments from House M). This distinction suggests that different hands *may* have inscribed the two Taylour fragments and the new Mylonas piece, indicating in turn that they may have come from as many as three separate plaques originally.

F. TEXT COMPATIBILITY AND POSITIONING

We may also directly compare the positioning of the text on the individual fragments by looking specifically at the relative positions of the vertical borderlines of the inscription. Whilst the borderlines on the larger fragments are not always absolutely parallel to the plaque edge (whether original or reduced), they are surprisingly near-parallel, and it must be assumed that the lines were applied using some form of positioning guide relative to the edge itself. This is apparent not only on the larger Taylour piece, but also on the Tsountas and other Mylonas fragments (although badly done on the House M pieces). On these, the borderlines and edges are remarkably parallel for individual lines, although collectively they are not always separated by a uniform distance.

On the basis of plaque width, already discussed above, the two Taylour pieces can be compared directly. The reduced edge of the smaller fragment should be 0.3 cm in from the original glazed edge of the larger piece, as argued above. The inscription of the former is thus more or less centrally positioned on a reduced plaque width of 10.7 cm, as is that of the latter on its original width of 11.3 cm. If these widths are used as guidelines, and one is positioned over the other, the

vertical borderline of the smaller fragment is incompatible with three of the four borderlines shown on the larger piece. *Only* if the smaller fragment is superimposed on the right borderline of the obverse (right-facing) face of the larger fragment are the two feasibly related. Other positions place the two borderlines at different distances from the edge, and so they would be incompatibly positioned. Thus, *only* if they were in this one relative position could it be hypothesised that the two Taylour fragments might have been from the same original plaque, unless we assume that the difference is due to other causes.

The new Mylonas fragment has no surviving vertical edge, so it cannot be considered in the same way with either Taylour piece. There are no features within this criterion, in fact, on the basis of which to compare it with the smaller Taylour fragment, as the latter has only one inscribed face surviving. However, comparison with the larger Taylour piece is possible, based on two factors:

- whether the broken top edge overlaps the broken bottom edge of the Taylour piece when their borderlines are compatible, yet does not distort the figure of the duck that represents the god Ra.
- whether the borderlines on *both* faces of *both* fragments align correctly relative to a single position for both fragments.

Regarding the first factor, there *is* sufficient leeway in the height of the duck that this is not a problem. For the two fragments, we are limited only to one possible relationship as the text orientation itself is opposed; therefore they can be positioned only obverse to obverse, reverse to reverse. Only the feet and top of the duck's head survive on the reverse, whilst on the obverse only the head and upper neck and a small portion of the breast are extant. The two pieces would need to be positioned quite near each other, although not necessarily touching, in order to gain a presentable duck. Thus, if the two pieces *were* joined originally, any small space remaining between them may be explained by the worn condition of both edges as they survive.¹² On this argument, then, a common origin from a single original plaque for the new Mylonas fragment and the larger Taylour piece is possible.

Regarding the second factor, this is simply a matter of positioning the two pieces correctly on one face, and then ensuring that the positioning of the other face also is compatible, to ascertain if they are (or theoretically could be) from the same original plaque. Since the two pieces would be positioned close together on the

¹¹ See Cline (1990: 206, pl. 3), for a photograph illustrating these points. Note that the relative positioning of the two pieces shown in that photograph is now known to be incorrect, for the smaller Taylour fragment should be on the right-hand side rather than on the left-hand side as shown there, if the pieces even go together in the first place.

¹² The junction of the two House M fragments is also worn, but nonetheless the fragments still touch at the centre of the break.

original plaque, to judge from the extant text itself, the borderlines would need to be aligned almost exactly on the same face of both pieces. As only one borderline survives on the Mylonas fragment, we can only judge using the obverse right and reverse left borderline on the Taylour piece. When positioned so that the obverse borderlines are aligned, those of the reverse are off alignment by some 0.3-0.4 cm, thus strongly arguing that they are in fact *not* from the same original plaque after all.

G. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

In reviewing other possible indications of relationship, using points noted earlier in this paper, further indications of incompatibility also can be argued. The fact that the larger Taylour fragment still retains its glaze on its three unbroken edges, whilst the two smaller fragments clearly have had their one unbroken 'edge' deliberately reduced, suggests that all three pieces had originally been from at least two separate plaques. While the fact that the two small fragments, on the other hand, both clearly had been sawn on their one unbroken 'edge' argues for the *possibility* of them belonging to a single original plaque, the inappropriate positioning and deliberate angle of the sawing on the new Mylonas fragment (in contrast to *all* known others) suggests that it too came from a different plaque originally, giving a total of three separate plaques.

V. RAMIFICATIONS AND FURTHER DISCUSSION

Thus, we have no compelling reason to believe that these three fragments came from the same (complete) original plaque. If the three fragments (both of Taylour's and this new Mylonas piece) are indeed each from a separate original plaque, then we are faced with the possibility that there were even more Amenhotep III faience plaques at Mycenae than previously suspected—at least eight and perhaps as many as 11 plaques (rather than the six to nine previously hypothesised). Phillips' research (in press) indicates that there were likely to be 11 original plaques.¹³

We are still left with the observation, first made by Cline, that the fragments come from two separate groups of plaques: one set on which the hieroglyphs on both sides face in the same direction—right; and a second set on which the hieroglyphs on both sides face in opposite directions—right on one side, left on the other (Cline 1990: 202-205). Although this is clearly deliberate, why it should be so remains a mystery. Previously, Cline (1990) suggested several

possibilities, including the idea that one group may have been imports and the other group local imitations, but it is unclear why the original group would have been imitated. More recently, Lilyquist (1999) has called the Egyptian origin of all of these plaques into question and has suggested instead a Levantine origin, but this seems unduly cautious.

We are also still left with the observation made by Phillips (in press) that the original plaques were all sawn into smaller pieces: 'deliberately altered with great care into something quite particular', as she notes. However, what that 'something' was, and why the alterations were done in the first place, remain a mystery. Is it possible that the plaques were already in pieces—that they had already been sawn and otherwise cut up—before their arrival at Mycenae?

CONCLUSION

This new plaque fragment, originally discovered during Mylonas' excavations in 1975 and subsequently left unstudied in the storerooms for several decades, offers new research opportunities for the investigation into the Amenhotep III faience plaques at Mycenae. The new fragment, together with a recent detailed study of the other fragments (Phillips in press), offers additional evidence that the original plaques were vertically rectangular in shape, with most having a full inscription reading:

nṯrnfr(Nb-m3't-R') s3 R'(Imn-ḥtp ḥk3 w3st)di 'nh

'the good god, (Neb-ma'at-Ra), son of Ra, (Amenhotep, ruler of Thebes), given life'.

Our study of the new Mylonas fragment also indicates that the two fragments found earlier by Taylour may not have come from the same plaque after all, as Cline (1990) had previously postulated. In fact, all three fragments may each have come from a different plaque. Thus, there may have been more Amenhotep III faience plaques at Mycenae than previously suspected—perhaps as many as 11.

The largest mysteries of all, however, still remain unsolved, for we have yet to answer the questions concerning: 1) the presence and importance of these plaques at Mycenae; 2) exactly how, why, and when they came to be Mycenae in the first place; 3) why there are two different groups of plaques at the site; 4) why the original plaques were cut up and otherwise altered; 5) the specific use and function of these plaques at Mycenae; and 6) why such plaques are found only at Mycenae. In sum, the 13 Amenhotep III faience plaque fragments remain unique, intriguing, and obstinately silent.

¹³ If correct, this observation may necessitate a revision of some of the statements originally made by Cline (1990).

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