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The World War II Gun Emplacements at Rachi

Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey

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The ridge of Rachi runs E/W along the south edge of the village of Kyras Vrysi and overlooks both the Gulf of Corinth to the north and the Saronic Gulf to the south and east. During World War II, it was first fortified by the Italians and then used by the German army to guard the approaches to the north-east Peloponnese. Some remnants of the defense works are still visible, and it was decided to survey the area.

The ridge was first walked by DU team 2 and then revisited by DU team 3/LOCA team to map, measure and describe extant features. No gridding or collections of artifacts was planned or carried out.

General Description

The area investigated was the summit of the crest contained within a perimeter of natural and man-made trenches running around the lower parts of the slopes. It was limited to the east by an abandoned house on a rise north of the road, and to the west by a further group of houses. The distance between the ends was approximately 200m. The N/S axis as measured in a straight line was about 45 m. Aside from a small olive grove, the land is unused and covered with weeds, some trees and maquis, especially around the slopes of the ridge. The following features from E to W were identified:

- a) four gun emplacements, two facing north and two south
- b) a circular, shallow depression
- c) a rectangular hole in the ground
- d) a rectangular underground room
- e) remnants of a tunnel (system)
- f) segments of defensive trenches

Though all of the above were built during the Occupation, and probably reused during the Greek Civil War, no objects contemporaneous with either period were found.

The Gun Emplacements

Although somewhat different in dimensions, and in varying states of disrepair, they seem to have had virtually identical ground plans: dug into the soil and encased in a platform of concrete, they were basically octagonal, with the gun end forming a

rectangle jutting out from the body of the polygon. There seemed to be no separation between this part and the rest of the structure. The entrance was at the opposite end, where the walls fanned outwards. Within the concrete casing, the walls were built of cut stone blocks and mortar. Four to five rectangular spaces were built into the walls and may have been used as bunks or for storage.

a) Gun emplacement 1 (MI 1)

Situated south of the house, the north-east end or entrance extends under the garden fence and has been destroyed. It has been partially filled in. Five rectangular spaces were built into the walls. The cleanest and most representative of these measured 2.26m long, 1.30m wide and 1.34m high.

b) Gun emplacement 2 (MI 2)

To the south-west of MI 1, it faces the Saronic Gulf to the south-east and is the most damaged and the most overgrown of the gun emplacements recorded.

c) Gun emplacement 3 (MI 3)

MI 3 is to the north-west of MI 2 on the rim of the ridge and is directed towards the Gulf of Corinth. It has been filled in and is heavily overgrown with weeds.

d) Gun emplacement 4 (MI 4)

South-west of GE 3 and east of the olive grove, this is the most damaged and overgrown of the four. The gun end faces the south covering the Saronic Gulf.

Circular Depression (MI 5)

To the west of MI 4 is a shallow, circular depression covered in weeds. No architectural features are visible.

Rectangular Hole (MI 6)

Continuing to the west, there is a rectangular hole measuring 9.20 x 5.65 x 1.50. It is oriented north-south with an entrance 1.10m wide in the middle of the north wall. The walls today are bare bed-rock, however, they would have originally been faced with cut stone blocks and mortar some of which presently litter the floor. This structure was possibly a service or storage area.

Rectangular Underground Room (MI 7)

South-west of the rectangular hole, it is also oriented north-south and entered from a doorway in the north wall. Today it measures 10m long, 5m wide and 2.05m high but it would originally have been larger as most of the wall facing has collapsed into rubble. The doorway is 1.10m across and 65cm high. The ceiling as measured over the exterior of the doorway is 1.65cm thick. The walls were built in cut stone and mortar and covered with concrete and plaster. Only the south wall has survived relatively intact. Curiously, it has a square opening in it 1.78m above the floor which seems to run on for a short distance. Where it ends is uncertain, but it may have led to a ventilation pipe. Some modern graffiti is scribbled on the west wall and above the

interior of the entrance. This room may have been a more intact version of the rectangular hole.

Tunnel Segment (MI 8)

Further to the west of the above are the remains of a tunnel with cut stone walls faced with concrete. The walls have collapsed nearest the ceiling area, but still retain some mortar near the center. In the middle of the tunnel is a small basin fed by two pipes with broken fittings, which lead through the wall into a large cistern. The overpass of the tunnel measures 4.40m long and 1.13m wide and is overgrown. The quality of the building material of the tunnel is inferior to that of the rectangular underground room.

Guard Post (MI 9)

Just to the north-west of MI 8 and downhill is a ditch-like structure 6.75m long and some 1.55m wide, with a protective wall of rubble to the east, north and west. The south side was dug into the slope.

Segments of Defensive Trench (MI 10)

Farther down the northern slopes, three segments of trench-works were discerned. Some four or five steps were visible built into the south rim of the westernmost section. The height of the trench here was 1.88m and the width 8.90m. The middle section to the east was 15m long, 1.42m high and 8.25m wide. The dimensions of the easternmost portion were 1.70m high and 9.50m wide. The trenches were cut into the slope where the builders took advantage of a natural drop in the bed-rock.