

Communities in transformation

An archaeological survey from the 12th to the 9th century BC

IRENE S. LEMOS

Abstract

In this paper, I will explore the period after 1200 BC which marks the beginning of significant transformations that took place after the collapse of the Mycenaean administration system. In particular, I will focus on the earlier part of the period and trace the changes in settlement planning, burial rites and cult. Specific regions and sites will be discussed which highlight not only important breaks but also continuities from the Mycenaean past. Recent discoveries and debates will also be summarised, illustrating the significance of this period.

Keywords

Civilisational collapse – transformations – Iron Age – warrior society.

In the period after 1200 BC, there was no attempt to save or to reconstitute the Mycenaean political system. Instead, the period after the palatial Collapse marks the beginning of significant transformations.¹ Furthermore, by the middle of the next century (roughly 1050 BC) many aspects of living and dying in Greece had changed. The agenda to initiate these transformations was set in the post-palatial period and became archaeologically more visible and at the same time more uniform in the 8th century, a century which has been widely discussed.²

In this paper, I will explore the earlier part of the period and trace the changes in settlement planning, burial rites and cult. Aspects of the economy and lifestyle during this period will be also discussed, as well as the variety and diversity of responses by surviving communities. Regions and specific sites will be considered, from the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial period to the introduction of social

¹ In this paper, I refer to the 1200 events with the term Collapse which has been used by Oliver Dickinson (2006). I don't of course imply that such events happened in a single year, as they could have easily spread over a generation. I thank Oliver Dickinson for bringing this to my attention.

² This century has also been labelled as the 'renaissance' period which in my view underestimates the importance of the three centuries preceding the 8th century. For the 8th century see Coldstream 2003; Morris 2007, 2009; Bintliff 2012, 227-228.

and cultural structures which were more appropriate for the geopolitical setting of the region.³ Recently, the 12th century has enjoyed more attention, and it has been acknowledged that the study of the Late Helladic period (LH IIIC as it is known to specialists) is significant for any survey of the archaeology of early Greece.⁴

A number of projects undertaken in the last two decades have contributed to a much better understanding of the archaeological material of this period. In particular, research has advanced thanks to a series of conferences organised by Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy in Vienna; these were dedicated to the 12th century and aimed to clarify the chronological divisions and synchronisations among different regions from the northern Aegean to Crete.⁵ Much progress has been made due to the combined application of detailed stratigraphical analyses of sites and stylistic studies of ceramics, and also by using radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology. Although the latter are not always reliable or unanimously accepted, they have offered an arena for further research and debate.⁶ In addition, a number of excavations and surveys conducted in sites and regions other than palatial centres have provided significant data for the period.

One site with an impressive LH IIIC history is the palatial site of Tiryns in the Argolid. Earlier excavations by Kilian and more recently by Maran have revealed that it enjoyed a fascinating period after 1200. Without a doubt Tiryns' post-palatial reaction is remarkable.

The first manifestation was a shift in activity from the Upper to the Lower Citadel, with impressive buildings also being erected in the Lower Town. However, far from being abandoned, the Upper Citadel was, according to Maran, transformed into a venue for the emerging identity of a new post-palatial elite.

During the palatial period the Lower Citadel was part of the palace administration and had a more restricted character in terms of accessibility and participation in the running of the citadel. A typical house of this period here had a corridor plan, with only one main courtyard – the *Zwinger*. According to the excavators, this courtyard might have had a function connected with cult, which would have had a restricted membership.⁷ Soon after the 1200 destruction horizon, a few new buildings were already being constructed in the Lower Citadel. But it is by the end of LH IIIC Early that important changes began to take place, such as the

³ Due to the limits of space, this paper can only be selective, presenting sites and regions which highlight the significance of the period.

⁴ Deger-Jalkotzy & Lemos 2006; Crielaard 2011.

⁵ Deger-Jalkotzy & Zavadil 2003, 2007; Deger-Jalkotzy & Bächle 2009. For the debate on the synchronism between Crete and the mainland, see D'Agata et al. 2005.

⁶ Weninger & Jung 2009.

⁷ Mühlenbruch 2004, 244. This is based on the evidence from the area so far excavated and published.

fundamental restructuring of the Lower Citadel noted by Mühlenbruch. He strikingly calls this the archaeological horizon – the initial horizon – to mark this new spatial organisation. The earlier, corridor-type, design of house was abandoned and buildings with a variety of architectural styles were erected – some with quite elaborate features. A few of them might even have had a second storey. Importantly, these new buildings were not only used for living but also had storage facilities and, in some cases, kilns. In some of them cult rituals would have been practised, as for example in Room 117.⁸

Another important change during this period can be seen in the spatial organisation of the Lower Citadel, with an emphasis on using open spaces or courts. Some of the courts provided direct access to buildings with cult functions: one such case was close to the fortification wall at Casemate 7. Such accessibility surely suggests changes in the organisation and participation in cult which had been far more restricted in the past.⁹

At the end of LH IIIC Advanced (around 1150–1140 BC), the Lower Citadel was destroyed by fire, possibly after an earthquake. This was most probably contemporary with the earthquake which hit the Granary at Mycenae. During the latest stages of the LH IIIC period, more structures were erected immediately above those which had been destroyed.

Equally important is the construction taking place in the Lower Town. First, two LH IIIC buildings were erected over earlier remains to the south-east of the citadel. One of them, Megaron W, was a large building with three inner columns along its central axis, and a hearth. More buildings were discovered recently by Maran to the north-east of the Citadel and it is interesting to note that Cypriot and Cretan imports were among the ceramics discovered in these houses. The importance of this discovery lies not only in showing that contacts between Tiryns and these islands continued during the post-palatial period, but also in revealing that such exchanges were in the hands of those who chose to live in the Lower Town.¹⁰

During LH IIIC, the Upper Citadel was not abandoned but now a structure, the *Antenbau*, occupied the eastern part of the Mycenaean Megaron. Kilian suggested that Building T was deliberately aligned with the Megaron's eastern wall

⁸ One of the most exceptional buildings is 'Bau VIa' which might have belonged to an elite group. It has been suggested that its occupants could have been responsible for the reorganisation of the Lower Citadel: Mühlenbruch 2004, 244–245.

⁹ It has been suggested by Kilian that the area was associated with cult in LH IIIB: Kilian 1981; Livieratou 2011, 148. Veters, however, has argued against such continuity from LH IIIB to LH IIIC Early in the same area. She has based such an argument on the distribution and typology of figurines (personal communication).

¹⁰ Gercke et al. 1975; Maran & Papadimitriou 2006; Stockhammer 2006; Lemos et al. 2009, 68–69.

in order to incorporate the area housing the throne.¹¹ The function of the building, however, had changed. It has been suggested that Building T served as a meeting hall for the elite members who now controlled the settlement but who no longer occupied the Upper Citadel. It is not clear who these people might have been, but one possibility is that they were officials who survived the palatial collapse. This is the explanation suggested by Maran, who cannot see these leaders as newcomers from other destroyed or abandoned Mycenaean centres.¹² It is therefore clear that Tiryns continued to be occupied after the palatial collapse and, in fact, it has been estimated that the settlement was spread over 24.5 hectares.¹³ But as we have seen, the site underwent important changes in its urban planning, with an altered use of the Upper Citadel and the expansion of the Lower Town. The site was clearly prosperous and flourishing during the post-palatial period.¹⁴

I now move to Achaea (Figure 1), a region where, as far as we know, there is no evidence of any direct palatial control. The region suffered destruction at the end of LH IIIB (at least at Teichos Dymaion and the site of Pagona), but Achaea recovered and enjoyed a flourishing post-palatial period.¹⁵

A particular phenomenon noted in Achaea is the remarkable number of male burials with weapons. In Achaea, warriors were usually buried with bronze Naue II swords and other pieces of armour, but interestingly the tradition continued of taking with them tweezers, razors and combs, which were used for embellishment and beautification in the Mycenaean period. All these offerings strongly indicate that such burials were members of the Achaean elite. Warrior burials were found mostly in the western part of the region (for example in the cemeteries of Achaea Klauss, Krini, Kallithea, Spaliareika, Portes, Lousika).¹⁶ Most of these cemeteries – and, we assume, their corresponding settlements – were located on main routes controlling and participating in the exchange networks coming through the Corinthian Gulf on their way to the central Mediterranean. Moreover, links with Crete and Cyprus provide evidence that the Achaean elite enjoyed a wide range of contacts.¹⁷

¹¹ Kilian 1981, 53–54.

¹² Maran 2000, 2001, 2011.

¹³ Kilian 1978, 468–470.

¹⁴ Similar recovery is evinced at Mycenae and Midea in the Argolid; these two sites are not going to be further explored here. For Mycenae: French 2007, 2011; Iakovidis 2003. For Midea: Thomatos 2006, 186–188 with references.

¹⁵ Kolonas 2001, 2008; Moschos 2002, 2009a.

¹⁶ For a summary of the most important warrior burials in the region, see Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 157–160; Eder 2006, 557–559; Papadopoulos 1999; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994; Paschalidis & MacGeorge 2009; Moschos 2009a, 2009b.

¹⁷ Eder 2004, 2006; Eder & Jung 2005.

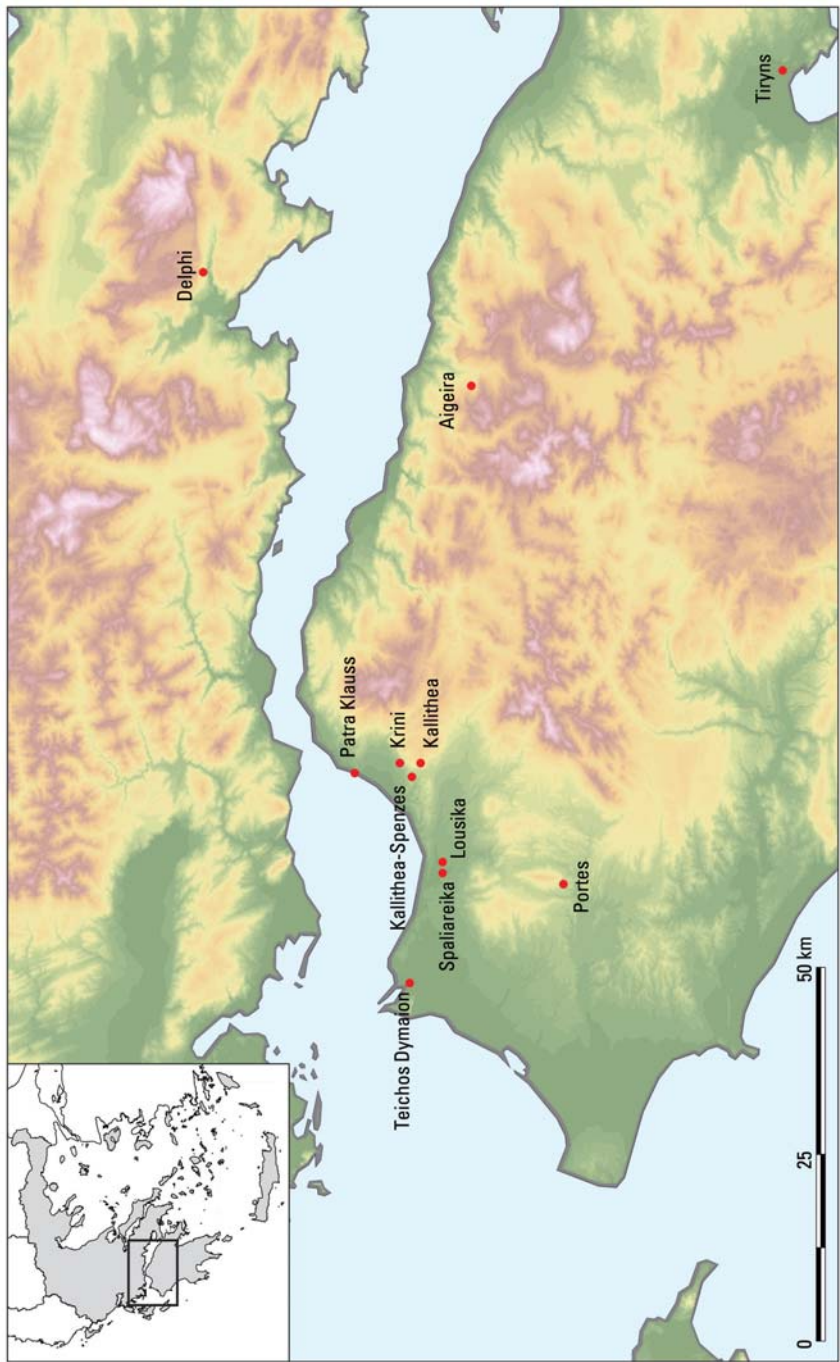


Figure 1. Map of Achaia with sites mentioned in the text (Jaap Fokkema)

One of the most remarkable cemeteries in the region is that at Portes. This was close to its settlement located in the highlands of Achaea – near the border with Elis and in control of important inland routes. The cemetery was in use from the 16th century to the 11th century BC. During this long period, tholos and chamber tombs and enclosures were used for burials. In LH IIIC Middle, one of the burials was a man with a rich array of weapons and also an unusual bronze headgear: a tall tube, open on the top, in which an inner lining was preserved. It is remarkable that a similar object was also found in a tomb at Kallithea-Spenzes, and even further afield in the tholos tomb at Praisos-Foutoula in Crete.¹⁸ Since such objects do not appear to be suitable for protecting the head, it has been suggested that they are not helmets but headgear. If this is the case, they could have been worn to indicate the particular status of their owners, and it is not then far-fetched to suggest that these men were leaders of their communities. It is also interesting to note that male burials found with such headgear were also given warrior status.¹⁹

Thus the evidence from Achaea and other regions can demonstrate the rise of some kind of military elite, which can be traced mainly to the middle of LH IIIC when there was an increased number of warrior burials. As there is no evidence yet of firm palatial control in Achaea during earlier periods, it is tempting to interpret the appearance of such displays as evidence of a group whose power was not inherited but achieved through military prowess.²⁰

If we could agree that we can trace some sort of hierarchy from those buried in Achaea and elsewhere, then we might be able to conclude that a similar group might have been seated in the eastern part of the region at Aigeira.

At Aigeira, the LH IIIC occupation was located on the top of the ‘acropolis’ – while settlement remains were also found in the lower saddle of the site. On the ‘acropolis’, three phases of occupation were documented. A number of household areas have been excavated but because of the later occupation of the site complete buildings cannot be restored. Nevertheless, storage rooms with bins full of barley, beans and vetches were found, and also kilns, indicating that the settlement had adequate resources and subsistence organisation. At the end of LH IIIC Early the site was destroyed and after that the settlement was reorganised with a new layout and also larger buildings occupying the plateau. One such type of building had a large central room with several smaller ones attached to it. These buildings were once again badly damaged by the later occupation of the site, but what remains

¹⁸ Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 159, 163–164; Kanta 2003; Moschos 2009a, 248–250.

¹⁹ Moschos 2009b, 352–363.

²⁰ However, Oliver Dickinson (2009) has pointed out that such military displays in Achaea and elsewhere were still found in the old cemeteries and that in any case warrior burials were rare. Even so, such burials are evidence of prominence within the social group and thus we may argue that they reveal the military identities of some sort of local or regional leaders.

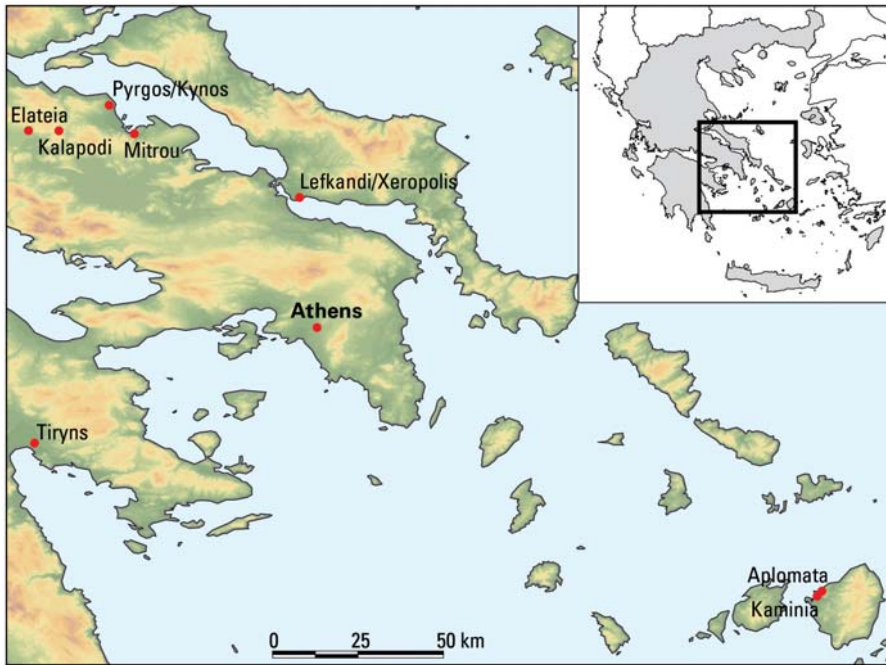


Figure 2. Map of central Greece with sites mentioned in the text (Jaap Fokkema)

fits well with the pattern of important changes in both the size of houses and their architectural design, marking the middle of the 12th century on the ‘acropolis’ of Aigeira.²¹ The importance of Aigeira’s location cannot be overestimated; the site is in eastern Achaea and overlooks the Corinthian Gulf. It is connected not only with other sites along the gulf but also with sites in central Greece across the gulf.

It is in central Greece that important excavations conducted in the last two decades allow us to bring together evidence from settlements, cemeteries and from one significant sanctuary – Kalapodi (Figure 2).

The sanctuary at Kalapodi is located in a fertile and strategic location between Lokris and Elis and is not far from the coastal sites along the Euboean gulf. Recent research at the site by Niemeier and his team suggests that the sanctuary was in fact that of the renowned oracle of Apollo at Abai, and not that of Apollo and Artemis at Hyampolis, as has previously been argued.²²

²¹ Alram-Stern 2003, 2007; Deger-Jalkotzy 2003; Alram-Stern & Deger-Jalkotzy 2006; Gauss 2009.

²² Felsch 1987; Niemeier 2008, 2009.



Figure 3. Late Protogeometric krater found in situ on the floor of the Protogeometric temple at Kalapodi; courtesy of Wolf Niemeier

During the LH IIIC period, the cult primarily involved open air rituals. The abundance of animal remains and the discovery of mainly bowls, cups and cooking pots suggest that the emphasis was on communal dining. As Cathy Morgan has stated, such practices imply both a celebrated location and occasion.²³ What is important is that such occasions were taking place throughout LH IIIC and into the Early Iron Age (EIA) (Figure 3).

Kalapodi might be considered an early version of an extra-urban sanctuary. Such sanctuaries have been associated with the rise of the polis, and it is notable that Kalapodi was already in operation in the 12th century BC.

One of the communities which must have had links with the sanctuary was that of nearby Elateia in the fertile plain of the Kephisos. The cemetery at Elateia was established in LH IIIA₁ and remained in use until the Roman period. It has been reported, however, that its most active period was during LH IIIC and the following Sub-Mycenaean (SM) period. During this period the dead at Elateia were adorned with rich bronze offerings, indicating a prosperous community which was much more advanced in the production of bronze objects than ceramics.²⁴

²³ Morgan 1996; Livieratou 2011.

²⁴ Deger-Jalkotzy 1990, 2004, 2009; Dakoronia 2004; Dakoronia et al. 2009.

Elateia is the only one of many cemeteries located in the wider region around Kalapodi that has been systematically excavated. It has been noted that these cemeteries, which generally started to receive burials during LH IIIB, were also in use during LH IIIC, while a few continued even into the EIA. It is equally important to note that the cemeteries, and presumably their settlements, were located along the main routes of communication connecting the inland regions of the north to the coastal regions of the south. The fact that cemeteries continued to receive burials after the palatial period signifies that such routes remained important and in use throughout the period.²⁵

These inland regions with the sanctuary at Kalapodi as their common middle ground were in close contact with the coastal sites of Pyrgos/Kynos and Mitrou, and through them with the rest of the Aegean. Pyrgos/Kynos and Mitrou have been systematically excavated and again their peak periods of occupation were during LH IIIC and the EIA.

At Kynos the LH IIIC settlements consist of buildings with several rooms. Storage of food is important at the site and the discovery of kilns is evidence that workshops were also housed in the buildings. One workshop specialised in the production of pictorial pottery. A number of the pots found are craters – dated to the LH IIIC Middle period and depicting warriors on ships, a combination which was not common in the iconography of the Mycenaean period (Figure 4).²⁶

It is interesting to note that the ships on the better preserved craters clearly depict oars and especially steering oars. Wedde has extensively advocated the importance of the steering oar on the depictions of LBA ships. He has argued that the appearance of the galley in the Aegean was sudden and perhaps not even dependent on any Minoan forerunners. The galley was indeed a faster and safer ship and the depiction of such ships on LH IIIC pottery supports the idea that the galley survived palatial collapse. And as we know galleys continued to be represented in the iconography of the EIA Aegean.²⁷

Most importantly, it has been established that for such galleys to operate it was necessary to recruit a crew of at least twenty oarsmen for the smaller vessels, and up to fifty for the larger ones. This suggests that a suitable infrastructure for the efficient maintenance and management of these ships had to be in place during this period.

The site of Mitrou, which in antiquity was on the coast and is today on a small islet, also appears to be of greater importance in LH IIIC than earlier, during

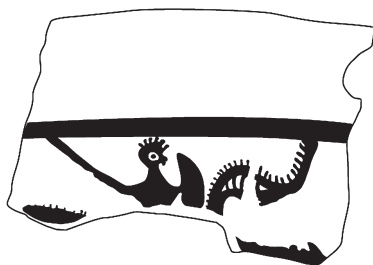
²⁵ Kramer-Hajos 2008, 129-131; Livieratou 2011.

²⁶ Dakoronia 1996, 2003, 2006.

²⁷ Wedde 2000, 2005, 2006; Eder 2006; Crielaard 2006.



a



b



c

Figure 4. Representations of ships on pottery from Kynos-Livanates;
courtesy of J.P. Crielaard (2006, after fig. 14.2 b-d).
Based on Dakoronia 1996.

LH IIIB.²⁸ A large building has been dated to LH IIIC Early; this was replaced by another building in the Protogeometric (PG) period – but this time the plan is apsidal as is the norm in the EIA.²⁹

Such evidence suggests that the prosperity of these sites during this and the following period was dependent on their strategic location along the Euboean Gulf and on their connection with similar sites which also flourished after the palatial collapse. Crielaard has suggested that the end of the palatial period was one of the best times for the whole region. He pointed out that, although some sites had been destroyed by fire at the end of LH IIIB, a number of coastal settlements continued to be occupied into the next period.³⁰ The mosaic of small or larger communities could easily sustain the growth of close economic and cultural links which are also clearly evinced in their use of similar material culture.

One of the most important sites in the region is that of Lefkandi. The site was founded by at least the Early Bronze Age (EBA) – if not earlier – and was important in the Middle Helladic (MH) period. At present the LH IIIB period is not well represented but this might change with future research.³¹ In any case, Lefkandi was a prosperous LH IIIC site and it becomes especially prosperous in the LH IIIC Middle period after a destruction at the end of the LH IIIC Early phase. The old excavations and trial trenches together with my excavations, suggest that the whole hill was probably occupied in this period.³² The current size of Xeropolis and its surrounding area is around 8-9 ha. If we take into consideration the dramatic erosion of the tell – especially in the south – we can deduce that there was a large settlement occupying the tell during this period. Indeed, Xeropolis might have been one of the largest settlements in the central Aegean. Life on Xeropolis was comfortable for most of its inhabitants. This conclusion is based on the finding of large houses – some with a second floor – which were divided by alleys. Storage was also extremely important: every house had excellent storage capacities.

The recent excavations on Xeropolis have uncovered a large building in the eastern part of the site, in close proximity to the eastern harbour (Figure 5). This building has been named a ‘Megaron’ because of its size and architectural plan. The date of its construction is the middle of LH IIIC and it had several phases of use. It is of major significance that the building was occupied during both LH IIIC Late and the SM period, while its last phase of use was at the

²⁸ This has been recently challenged and it seems that LH IIIB at the site might have been underestimated, see Van de Moortel & Zahou 2011.

²⁹ Van de Moortel 2009; Kramer-Hajos 2008, 44-48.

³⁰ Lemos 1998, 1999, 2002, 212-217; Crielaard 2006.

³¹ Sherratt 2006, 304.

³² Evely 2006.



Figure 5. The so-called Megaron at Xeropolis; photo by the author

beginning of the EIA. The building had, during its first phase of use, an additional room used mostly for storage and preparation of food, while in another room – the ‘Annexe’ – we have evidence of some cult practice linked perhaps to the foundation of the second phase of the ‘Megaron’. In later times this second room was also used for storage.

The discovery of a wall – perhaps even a double wall – in the centre of Xeropolis has added to our knowledge of the settlement. The wall runs from east to west for 35 m or more and continues east into an area which has not yet been investigated. The date of the primary use of the walls is within the LH IIIC period and their construction involved a complex design and deliberate landscaping which marked the approach to the settlement. They were also close to a ‘ritual’ area located to the west, where a number of structures were excavated whose character is neither domestic nor funerary. The earliest can once again be dated to LH IIIC Early and the latest to the transitional stage from the SM to the PG period, at the end of the 11th century.³³

Xeropolis provides some interesting observations: first although it is impossible to estimate the precise size of the settlement during this period, it would not be wrong to suggest that the plan of the houses, divided from each other with alleys and yards, and the extensive character of the settlement implies some sort of proto-urban organisation. Such a statement might be supported by the discoveries in the middle of the tell and close to its main approach where rituals of some kind were taking place, emphasising the bonds of the community. Moreover, during LH IIIC Middle a large building was constructed in the eastern end of the tell with a long architectural form set in a different orientation from both earlier and contemporary structures. Both orientation and plan marked, in my view, a clear change in the architectural traditions of the tell. Moreover, I would like to suggest that such a change might signify a transformation of social order on the hill.³⁴

Whether the so-called ‘Megaron’ was the seat of a *qa-si-re-u* is a matter of further discussion and debate, but someone must have been in charge to administer this large site: to organize the completion of buildings, keep the wall or walls in a good state of repair, and oversee the organisation of communal rites and feasts.³⁵

³³ Lemos 2005-2006; ead. 2006-2007, 38-40; ead. 2007-2008, 51-54; ead. 2008-2009, 47-49; ead. 2009-2010, 87; ead. 2010.

³⁴ Lemos 2010.

³⁵ Crielaard (2011) has recently reconsidered what he calls the ‘wanax to basileus model’. He is correct in that there is too much diversity in local responses after the collapse to apply the term *qa-si-re-u*=/basileus to every surviving site. However, it is possible that at Lefkandi (which was most probably under the palatial control of Thebes) such an official might have been in charge and this official might well have survived after the breakdown of the palace administration. I also agree with Crielaard that even if the term survived during the LH IIIC and later periods, this cannot imply continuity either of his authority or the functions of his social and political office.

Success at Lefkandi depended on the good organisation of local resources and the advantageous location of the site in the Euboean Gulf. Xeropolis, with its double harbours,³⁶ controls the approach to the most difficult part of any journey up the Gulf. This necessitates passing through the narrow Euripus strait where strong tidal currents with their reverse flow require local knowledge to pass through safely. In addition, the site's long history of occupation relied on its proximity to the most fertile plain on the island, the Lelantine plain.

The connectivity that the site enjoyed with other sites in the Aegean during this period, and even during the last stages of LH IIIC, can be traced through a ceramic koine shown by Mountjoy as an 'East Mainland Aegean' koine. My interest in such a koine stems from a belief that this reflects more than just random ceramic choices by Aegean communities and it allows us to trace patterns of networking, especially when such patterns continue into later periods.³⁷

Another major centre in this network was Naxos. The LH IIIC town at Naxos-Chora is characterised by large houses equipped with hearths and storage facilities. The fortification wall, which has been partly excavated in the area of Mitropolis, is particularly impressive.³⁸ It enclosed a cluster of workshops, including one for making faience objects. The nearby cemeteries of Aplomata and Kaminia with their rich offerings confirm the importance of the island in maintaining contacts within and outside the Aegean. The rich burial gifts given to some of the burials suggest the existence of some kind of ruler or ruling class which was in charge of such operations. In these cemeteries some male burials also demonstrate a decision to portray the deceased with the status of a warrior – a practice found elsewhere (Achaia, Attica, Crete).³⁹

Crete has also benefited in the last two decades from a number of key excavations, surveys and studies (Figure 6).⁴⁰ Saro Wallace has argued recently that – in contrast to other Aegean areas – the 1200 collapse on the island was resolved with a well-prepared and successful plan. While that might be the case, I argue that other communities managed to operate successful survival strategies, as was the case for the sites located along the Euboean Gulf and elsewhere.⁴¹

It is remarkable that Nowicki estimated that some 120 sites were founded for the first time in the 12th century on Crete. Even if this number has been overestimated, it is obvious that population levels do not appear to decrease during the LMIIIC period, as was the case with regions in the mainland. Most of these new

³⁶ Davidson et al. 2010.

³⁷ Lemos 1998; ead. 1999; ead. 2002, 212–217; Thomatos 2007; Mountjoy 2009.

³⁸ Lambrinoudakis & Philaniotou-Hadjianastasiou 2001.

³⁹ Vlachopoulos 1999, 2003, 2006.

⁴⁰ See also J. Driessen and C. Langohr's paper in this volume.

⁴¹ Wallace 2010.

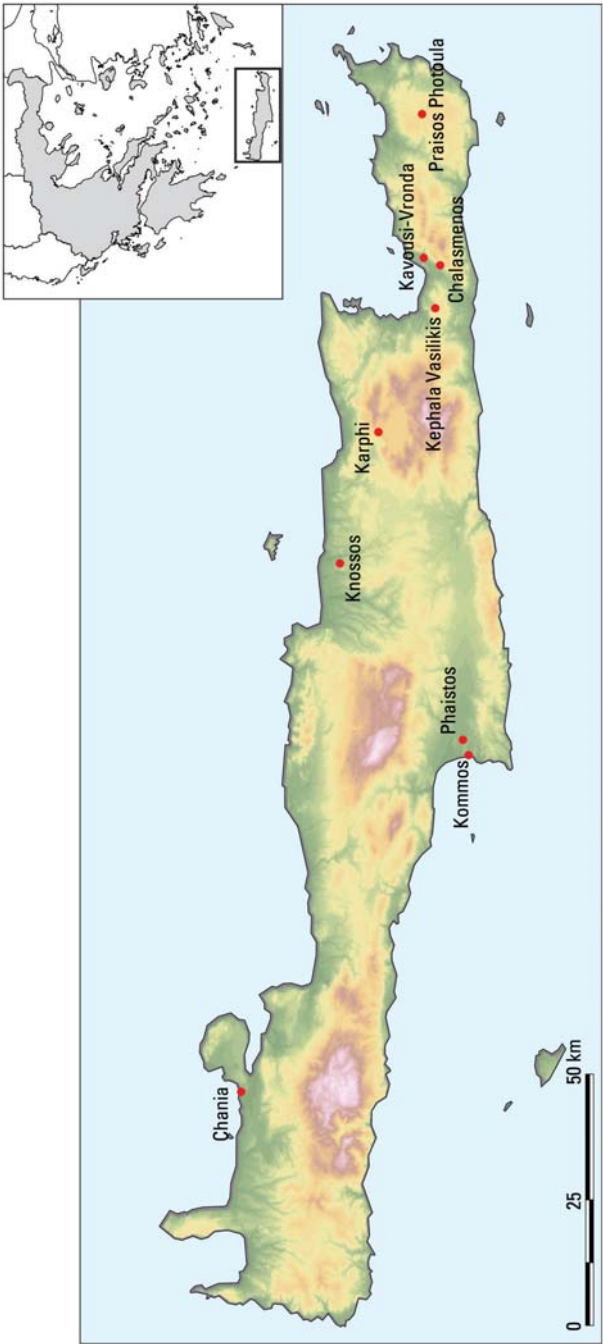


Figure 6. Map of Crete with sites mentioned in the text (Jaap Fokkema)

sites have been perceived as refuge settlements because of their position in remote and sometimes not easily accessible locations.⁴² Wallace, however, has challenged the concepts of defensibility and remoteness applied to the newly founded locations and offered a different explanatory model. She argues that although most of them are found in defensible locations, they are actually located in the foothills rather than the highlands. Wallace interprets this relocation as a well-planned reaction to the collapse, with a shift to settlements whose family-based communities were focussing on subsistence self-sufficiency. She also pointed out that a number of them are 3-4 hectares in size, suggesting a population of around 1500 people each.⁴³ This further supports the suggestion that the island was well populated after the 1200 events.⁴⁴ Haggis also argued that regional networking was important and some of the sites that are located closer to each other – as for example in the area of Kavousi in eastern Crete – were formed by clusters of extended families.⁴⁵ Thus scholars see the institution of networks fundamental for the survival of these communities, which were in the hands of kin groups related by marriage and other family ties. In that sense we observe some sort of scaling down in social organisation and thus a change from the earlier palatial organisation.

Interestingly, however, it is on Crete, as on the mainland, that such kin groups were living in large rectangular complexes. Examples at Karphi and Kavousi-Vronda illustrate this well; these households were equipped with storage vessels, cooking wares, loom-weights, and tools.⁴⁶ What is also noticeable in many sites in Crete is the discovery of cult installations and also cult buildings – these are often equipped with benches where distinctive artefacts are found such as the wheel-made female figurines.⁴⁷

In fact the study of cult rites and religious architecture in Crete has benefitted during the last decade from new discoveries and debates. In such debates the question of continuity from the Minoan/Mycenaean past has played a role.⁴⁸ New discoveries come mainly from eastern Crete (such as at Chalasmenos, Kavousi-Vronda and Kephala Vasilikis) but with interesting cases found in the rest of the island, as for example with Temples A and B at Kommos. Studies have shown that though the architectural plans and the finds associated with the cult may differ

⁴² Nowicki 2000.

⁴³ Bintliff in a personal communication noted that these are extremely high estimates for village densities when compared to ethnoarchaeological parallels. He expects that such sites could accommodate around 500-600 people.

⁴⁴ Wallace 2010.

⁴⁵ Haggis 2001; Hayden 2004.

⁴⁶ Day & Snyder 2004; Glowacki 2004; Wallace 2011.

⁴⁷ Day 2009; Klein & Glowacki 2009; Tsipopoulou 2009; Prent 2005, 2009.

⁴⁸ See for example Prent 2009 and Whitley 2009.

from site to site, some similarities have also been observed: in the use, for example, of benches, and particular types of ceramics and figurines. But what is equally important is that both private and public cults are clearly archaeologically visible during this period in Crete.

It would be wrong, however, not to acknowledge that during the same period some of the major LBA sites continued to be inhabited throughout the LBA/EIA transition, notably Knossos, Phaistos and Chania. I think that the full picture from those palatial sites is not yet entirely clear. One reason might be because the newly founded sites have attracted more attention and are currently better documented and discussed. It is clear, however, that the old palatial centres were not abandoned. But at Knossos, as with the other sites, we await the definitive interpretation of the post-palatial periods. Certainly the study and results of the Knossos Urban Landscape Project will, when completed, provide more information of the character of the region in the immediate post-palatial period and its restructure as a major EIA centre. This will complement what we already know from the contemporary rich burials in Knossos.⁴⁹

We therefore need a more appropriate model in which the evidence from both the major Cretan LBA urban sites and the newly founded ones can be explained satisfactorily. In any case most of the newly established settlements would have been abandoned by the 10th century and relocated. In fact, scholars see this new shift as the beginning of the nucleation process which will eventually lead to the establishment of the later city states on the island.

To sum up, although the archaeological record reveals different responses after the 1200 events, at the same time there are some common features shared by surviving communities. For example, in a number of sites (which were well-built and in many cases large), houses were constructed after the 1200 events. Some had yards and were divided by alleys and passages, some even had second floors (Tiryns, Lefkandi, Mitrou, Karphi). Some of these houses have rooms with dedicated functions such as the 'Megaron' at Lefkandi, the dwellings in the Lower Town in Tiryns and the houses at Aigeira, Mitrou and Kynos.⁵⁰ Indeed, a common feature is that both large and smaller houses appear to have been well-equipped with storage facilities. Loom-weights, tools and kilns and other workshop areas were found at Tiryns, Kynos, Naxos and several sites on Crete.

Moreover, where information is available the picture which emerges is that of a socio-economic management which supported a broad agricultural strategy, engaged in the cultivation of different species of cereal and legume crops as well

⁴⁹ Whitelaw et al. 2006-2007.

⁵⁰ Lis & Rückl 2011.

as fruit.⁵¹ Animal bones – again when such studies are available – show that cattle were in some areas more widespread than sheep or goats (as in Nichoria), but this was not so at Kalapodi where sheep and goats were plentiful, as they were in Crete.⁵² Interestingly, however, in central Greece red deer, and to a lesser extent fallow deer, are prevalent (Kalapodi, Kynos and Lefkandi). The evidence from Lefkandi and Kalapodi suggests that red deer might have been eaten at particular festivals related to cult. This might imply that hunting was important for both ritual and cult display.⁵³

It seems then that most of the communities that have been investigated were well-organised, and from what we know from the available data, they made the right choices to enable their communities to be fed properly, produce their own goods, and live fairly comfortable lives.

But who was in charge of these communities? It is clear from the above discussion that the archaeological material cannot provide a uniform answer. For example, Maran has suggested that in Tiryns there was a restoration of power after the 1200 events which is manifested in the re-use of Building T. Maran does not support, however, the idea that Building T was the seat of a *wanax* and he further suggests that the construction of impressive houses, especially in the Lower Town, was the result of an internal restructure of the social order in the post-palatial period. The driving force behind these developments was the emergence of a new ruling class of independent *oikoi* which emerged after the collapse and which articulated its power with the construction of new architectural complexes away from the citadel. We may speculate that some of these were members of the previous elite who survived the power break after the collapse and kept (some of) their titles, at least for a while. Achaea, after 1200, sees the emergence of a number of local leaders who had now to challenge for leadership.⁵⁴ Such men were buried with weapons and other status symbols (for example the headgear), advertising their military prowess and their authority within their communities. Finally, it is

⁵¹ Such studies are just appearing and will provide additional and crucial information for the strategies in feeding the LH IIIC population. In any case the available data do not suggest major changes from the LBA. For Crete see discussion in Wallace 2010, 35–36. Others: Schachl 2006 (Aigeira); Livarda & Kotzamani 2006 (Xeropolis-Lefkandi); Pasternak 2006 (Tiryns).

⁵² Morris 2007, 224. In any case it is clear that such results depend on the character and the setting of particular sites (for example Kalapodi was a sanctuary and cannot be compared with the post-palatial settlement of Nichoria). For recent studies on fauna from sites of this period: Wallace 2010, 36–38 (with bibliography for Crete); Forstenpointner et al. 2006 (Aigeira with bibliography). The study of the fauna from Lefkandi is being undertaken by Alex Mulhall; his research will provide a diachronic analysis of the fauna of the site from the EBA to its abandonment at the end of the 8th century.

⁵³ Felsch 2001. At Lefkandi, red deer are very common among the faunal material of this period.

⁵⁴ Perhaps also on Naxos, an island which might not have had strong palatial control.

possible that the provincial seats of the Mycenaean *qa-si-re-we* survived at sites such as Lefkandi.

We may assume that these elite groups established or in some cases hung on to their power gradually throughout the 12th century and consolidated their rule during the LH IIIC Middle period. It is interesting to note here that a number of sites had experienced further destruction by the end of LH IIIC Early (such as Xeropolis, Kynos, and Aigeira). In my view this destruction could be the result of both internal and external fighting, though excavators often prefer to blame it on earthquakes. In any case, it is indeed in the following LH IIIC Middle period that we can see further improvements in lifestyle at most of the surviving sites. The construction of dwellings such as those on Xeropolis and elsewhere (for example at Aigeira, Naxos, and Crete) signals the emergence of new social and cultural ideologies. The significance of these dwellings has already been mentioned. Moreover, the heads of such houses could recruit the manpower to build walls (as on Naxos and Lefkandi) and were responsible for the spatial organisation of their sites (Tiryns, Lefkandi and Aigeira). Their burial offerings further signify that they were also in charge of initiating and maintaining contacts with other sites. Finally, such leaders were also able to organise local and inter-regional occasions where rituals and religious rites took place, establishing venues which were becoming important for the promotion of the new social identities which emerged during the period. As mentioned earlier, it is noticeable that such leaders promoted a military ideology, deduced from the fact that prominent men were buried with warrior status. Warrior scenes became popular themes, depicted on the pottery produced and used in major sites of the period (Figure 7).⁵⁵

Although we can trace a number of changes in the middle of the 12th century, it would be wrong to neglect evidence of continuity with the palatial past. We can argue that exploiting links with the palatial past was essential for the surviving elite and their followers. One of the most significant manifestations is that burial rites carried on as before in reused and/or new chamber tombs in most regions. As we have already discussed, reusing the area of the Megaron in the Upper Citadel at Tiryns probably had similar connotations. Furthermore, cultural memory, as Maran has recently suggested, was operating at Tiryns and elsewhere in the manipulation of objects – some of them of exceptional importance. ‘Keimelia’ such as the objects found in the Tiryns Treasure could make use of powerful symbols in an attempt to establish links with the past and, as Maran puts it, ‘... to construct for oneself and one’s kin-group a genealogical or other relationship to the ruler of the past’.⁵⁶ Though such agenda were significant for the survival of

⁵⁵ Deger-Jalkotzky 1994; Crouwel 2006, 2007.

⁵⁶ Maran 2006, 2011.



Figure 7. Late Helladic III C krater from Xeropolis depicting a warrior; photo by the author

the rulers of post-palatial Tiryns, in my view this also underlines the fact that social order was highly unstable and, in the long run, links with the past could be counter-productive. Tiryns would no longer be the key site in the Argolid after the end of LH III C and thus the policy of using, or perhaps abusing, links with the palatial past was not such a good strategy in the long-run.

In any case, we may agree that by the end of the LH III C period, and almost four to five generations after the end of palatial rule, life was very different. The archaeological record from the short period between the last phases of the LBA and the introduction of iron smelting which marks the arrival of the EIA, presents us with further remarkable changes. Even more dramatic than the introduction of the new iron age technology was the change in burial practices. I refer to the introduction of cremation and the shift from multiple to single burials (though in

regions such as Thessaly and Crete collective tombs remained the norm). Another important observation is that the general uniformity in burial practices – as observed in the main Mycenaean regions – was abandoned. Instead there was clearly diversity in the burial practices from region to region and in some cases even within a single cemetery.⁵⁷ This was a significant change and, as Oliver Dickinson has observed, signifies perhaps that individuals began to feel entitled to be buried according to their wishes or at least to those of their kin group.⁵⁸

However, most of the evidence gathered on EIA communities comes from the dead rather than the living. The lack of combined evidence, of course, creates problems in our data but this lack of evidence from the contemporary settlements is accidental. Suffice to say that John Bintliff has argued convincingly how hard it is to locate sites of this period in surveys.⁵⁹

Burial rites from the 10th to the 8th centuries and their significance have been widely discussed by my generation of Iron Age scholars and there is no need to review here the well-known literature on the subject.⁶⁰ What is noteworthy is that during the EIA, in most of the main regions, male elite members continued to be buried with symbols of warrior status.

Evidence of contacts with the east also appears more frequently in funeral displays, especially at Lefkandi and Knossos. I have argued that, at least at Lefkandi, most of the ‘orientalia’ were present in female burials rather than in male and I have suggested that links with the east are shown by the gifts given to elite women. Rich display in female graves – even if not as spectacular as at Lefkandi – are to be found in Athens and elsewhere and it has been argued that such display occurs in societies where male members are in stiff competition with each other.⁶¹

New evidence, however, comes from sites discovered in central and northern Greece (Figure 8). In Thessaly, and especially the Almiros plain, there have been excavations and surveys by the Greek Archaeological Service and others.⁶² At Kephalsi near the Hellenistic town of Halos, welcome remains of a settlement dated to the 10th century were found. This site includes an apsidal house equipped with storage facilities and two pottery kilns. Cemeteries were also excavated at Agrielia, where both inhumation and cremation were practised. Cremations, here as elsewhere (for example Lefkandi and Athens), were associated with male burials and weapons.⁶³ At Voulokaliva, some 40 tumuli have been identified but only a

⁵⁷ Lemos 2002, 151–190; Dickinson 2006, 183–195.

⁵⁸ Dickinson 2009, 16.

⁵⁹ Bintliff et al. 1999; Bintliff 2012, 211–220.

⁶⁰ Morris 1987, 2000; Whitley 1991.

⁶¹ Lemos 2006, 2007.

⁶² Reinders 2004.

⁶³ Malakasioti & Mousioni 2004, 353–368; Malakasioti 2006, 111–121.



Figure 8. Map of central and northern Greece with sites mentioned in the text (Jaap Fokkema)

few have so far been excavated. In the same area extended flat cemeteries of mostly single burials were also found, ranging in date from LH IIB to the Geometric period. The adult burials were in cist or shaft graves, while children were buried in vessels. The tumuli are impressive because of their size (some are 30 m in diameter and 3 m in height) and their construction of rough stones and river gravels heaped on top of circular built periboloi. One of the tumuli contains some 98 cremation pits and four tholos-like structures which enclosed even more *in situ* cremation burials, together with 16 inhumations of children. According to the preliminary reports, the earliest burials are dated to the 9th century. Weapons

were found in many of the cremation burials which were reported to be male, while the pottery indicates that the site belongs to the so-called Euboean koine. The fact that we have both sexes and all age groups found under the same tumulus strongly suggests that this must be the burial ground of the same kin group.⁶⁴

In mainland Greece during the EIA, however, tumuli were not common and Snodgrass has in the past compared them to similar tumuli in Vergina and further north in Bosnia at Glasinac, where several inhumations and cremations were enclosed.⁶⁵ But Georganas has argued that since the offerings in the tumuli at Voulokaliva are similar to those given in other contemporary Thessalian cemeteries, we should not associate the appearance of the rite to the arrival or influence of newcomers. He sees the introduction of the new burial practice as a way of creating a new social identity based on family solidarity.⁶⁶ Antonis Kotsonas, on the other hand, has recently challenged the view that collective tombs belong to families and argued that burial – in particular at Knossos – was determined by age and sex rather than kinship.⁶⁷ Future research and especially analyses of skeletal remains may support this or other interpretations.

What I find interesting at Voulokaliva is that the choice of perhaps marking 'new identity' copies closely a 'northern' type of burial. The similarities with Vergina, and especially with Gynaikokastro in inland central Macedonia, are striking. The latter site has a number of tumuli, bearing close similarities to those found in Thessaly.⁶⁸

It is new discoveries such as these, made in the northern Aegean in the past two decades, which are going to challenge us not only to incorporate them into any discussion of the period but also to adjust and change our perceptions. The plethora of new discoveries in the northern Aegean, some of which are already fully documented while others are known mostly from preliminary reports, will take some time to digest.⁶⁹ But as Kotsonas has noted, the regions in the northern Aegean can no longer be considered peripheral, as they were actively involved in the transformations which marked the EIA in Greece.⁷⁰

One of the major developments in the last ten years is that LH IIIC has been the focus of much research, and this is why this paper concentrates on highlighting new discoveries dated to this period. Moreover, the study of this period has shown that the artificial division applied in the past between the LBA and the EIA

⁶⁴ Malakasioti & Mousioni 2004, 359–367; Malakasioti 2006, 113–115.

⁶⁵ Snodgrass 1971, 162.

⁶⁶ Georganas 2002, 289–298; id. 2009.

⁶⁷ Kotsonas 2006.

⁶⁸ Savvopoulou 2001.

⁶⁹ Cambitoglou et al. 2001; Papadopoulos 2005 (Torone); Gimatzidis 2010 (Sindos); Bessios et al. 2012 (Methone).

⁷⁰ For past perceptions, see Coldstream 2003, 19 and compare with Kotsonas 2012, 219–240. See also Archibald 2010–2011.

must be revisited. This is because the break with the main feature of the LBA – the palatial administration – does not coincide with the introduction of iron technology but with the rejection and gradual abandonment of the Mycenaean social order. This took place during the 12th century and not later. If my present reading is correct then the change in architectural forms, ritual practices and even social order had already started early in LH IIIC and was further consolidated during the middle of the period. I also believe that continuity in occupation throughout the period I examine does not necessarily imply continuity in social order, spatial organisation and cult. Those who were behind these important changes are harder to identify and it is certainly not possible to offer the same answer for every Greek community. I believe that at the beginning of the period some of the officials of the Mycenaean system might have survived and remained in charge, but I wonder whether, by the second half of the 12th century and certainly during the 11th, such titles, if still used by elite leaders, any longer had an association with the palatial administration.

In any case what is clear from the available evidence provided by burial rites, iconography and the epics is that the warrior ethos was prevalent among the elite throughout the period. Without ignoring the problems related to any interpretation of warrior burials, it is possible to suggest that such warriors were in charge of their communities.⁷¹ If this was the case, these men were in charge in many sites until the late 9th century, when leaders and their communities were forced once more to explore and invest in different social and cultural identities. But all this would take place in the following century.

So I, together with a growing number of scholars, believe that the post-palatial period was indeed important for the survivors of the 1200 events and their descendants. I think that communities and their leaders took some important decisions to re-organise major aspects of living, communication and even cult. I also think that not all of them were always successful. Nonetheless, these communities need to be studied and judged on their own merits and it is misguided to compare them to what went before and came after. They could teach us a lot about survival in crisis years.

I. S. LEMOS
Oxford University
irene.lemos@classics.ox.ac.uk

⁷¹ D'Onofrio 2012.

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