

# Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Laconia:

Settlements, cemeteries and  
sanctuaries (1200-700 BC)



Volume I

Text

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*Cover: Wheelmade terracotta figurine, c. 1100-1000 BC, Amyklai (by the Author)*

*‘Como primeira característica, o conhecimento de todos os fatos humanos no passado, da maior parte deles no presente, dever ser, [segundo a feliz expressão de François Simiand,] um conhecimento através de vestígios. Quer se trate das ossadas emparedadas nas muralhas da Síria, de uma palavra cuja forma ou emprego revele um costume, de um relato escrito pela testemunha de uma cena antiga [ou recente], o que entendemos efetivamente por documentos senão um “vestígio”, quer dizer, a marca, perceptível aos sentidos, deixada por um fenômeno em si mesmo impossível de captar?’*

*Marc Bloch, Apologia da História*



# Abstract

## **Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Laconia: settlements, cemeteries and sanctuaries (1200-700 BC)**

Deborah V. Nadal Koussiounelos, DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford

Much of archaeological and historical research has, until recently, heavily depended on written sources and relatively little evidence regarding the LBA and EIA periods. A number of new developments however, such as the discovery of a palatial site at Aghios Vasileios, the recent excavations at the sanctuary at Amyklai, the identification of Laconian Protogeometric pottery among the offerings of at least two Arcadian sanctuaries (Tegea and Mt. Lykaion) and the continuous work by the Greek Archaeological Service, make it necessary to review the evidence from and re-assess former theories regarding the region during the LBA and EIA periods.

The present study thus offers a new interpretation of the socio-economic and political development of Laconia during the period between 1200 and 700 BC. In order to achieve this, all information from settlements, cemeteries and sanctuaries from the period are examined, including previously unexamined evidence from recent discoveries. Furthermore, it introduces updated catalogues and interpretation of the development of Laconian ceramics from the LH IIIC to the end of the Geometric period.

The analysis suggests that during the LH III period, Laconia was not organised under a central authority, as seen in Messenia for instance, but rather by autonomous centres. Furthermore, that between the Protogeometric and Geometric periods, the region was not abandoned or isolated. Votive offerings at the Spartan sanctuaries and the adoption of certain pottery shapes and decorative motifs indicate that Laconia was aware of and participated in developments taking place throughout Greece. Lastly, the close examination of the pottery strongly suggests that Laconia should not be included in the so-called West Greek koine



## **Disclaimer – COVID-19 Restrictions**

Part of this dissertation was written under the restrictions introduced by governments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, I was unable to visit museum collections, such as that of the Museum of Sparta in Greece, and the Ashmolean Museum, in the UK. Furthermore, excavation projects were closed, including that at the sanctuary at Mt. Lykaion in Greece. Thus, I could not access the most recent findings from the site, as I had previously planned. At times, access to bibliography was challenging due to the closure of libraries and other institutions. Lastly, communications with scholars and colleagues were limited to virtual meetings only.



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**VOLUME III: ILLUSTRATIONS**

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# Abbreviations

## Chronology

<b>BA</b>	Bronze Age	<b>IA</b>	Iron Age
<b>EIA</b>	Early Iron Age	<b>LBA</b>	Late Bronze Age
<b>EH</b>	Early Helladic	<b>LH</b>	Late Helladic
<b>FN</b>	Final Neolithic	<b>LPG</b>	Late Protogeometric
<b>H</b>	Hellenistic	<b>MH</b>	Middle Helladic

## Settlements and Burials

<b>S (followed by a numeral)</b>	Site (corresponding to Appendix 1)
<b>B (followed by a numeral)</b>	Spartan burial (corresponding to Appendix 2)

## Pottery Shapes

### Fineware

<b>K</b>	Krater	<b>Le</b>	Lekythos
<b>C</b>	Cup	<b>Hy</b>	Hydria
<b>M</b>	Mug	<b>Stj</b>	Strainer jug
<b>Dp</b>	Dipper	<b>Fb</b>	Feeding bottle
<b>Bw</b>	Bowl	<b>Sj</b>	Stirrup jar
<b>Ky</b>	Kylix	<b>RA</b>	Ring askos
<b>DB</b>	Deep bowl	<b>MV</b>	Multiple vase
<b>Ka</b>	Kalathos	<b>Sk</b>	Skyphos
<b>Bas</b>	Basin	<b>LK</b>	Lakaina
<b>Amp</b>	Amphoriskos	<b>PI</b>	Plate
<b>CJr</b>	Collar-necked jar	<b>Py</b>	Pyxis
<b>Al</b>	Alabastron	<b>Tri</b>	Tripod
<b>Jg</b>	Jug		

## Coarse Ware

<b>CWBas1</b>	Basin
<b>KB</b>	Kitchen beaker
<b>AmpCP</b>	Amphoroid cooking pot
<b>CWST</b>	Shallow tray
<b>CWJr</b>	Collar-necked jar
<b>Pit</b>	Pithos
<b>Tub</b>	Tub

## Handmade Burnished Ware

<b>BWBw</b>	Bowl
<b>BWBas</b>	Basin
<b>BWBr</b>	Beaker
<b>BWJr</b>	Ovoid jar
<b>BWJg</b>	Jug
<b>BWPit</b>	Pithos

## Pottery Description

<b>D</b>	Diameter
<b>h</b>	Height
<b>w</b>	Width
<b>D. max</b>	Maximum diameter



# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

Laconia has long attracted the interest of historians and archaeologists alike due to its important role in the history of the Archaic and Classical periods. However, less is known about the earlier periods of Laconia's history, mostly due to the lack of systematic excavations and large-scale surveys. The general lack of evidence from the Late Bronze Age (LBA) and Early Iron Age (EIA) (c. 1200-700BC) has, consequently, led scholars to propose that Laconia was not as developed as other areas of Greece during this period. Yet, a number of developments in the field show that this period was more complex than originally thought. Perhaps the most exciting discovery is that of the palatial site at Aghios Vasileios, a site which can be compared to other Mycenaean palaces such as Tiryns or Mycenae. Moreover, new excavations have taken place at another important Laconian site, the sanctuary of Amyklai. Evidence continues to come to light at Sparta, especially since the extension of the archaeological protective zone, which resulted in an increase in the number of excavations in the city. Another important development is the publication of the excavations at two important centres, the Menelaion and Aghios Stephanos. Lastly, an unexpected source of material comes from two sanctuaries in Arcadia, at Tegea and Mt. Lykaion, where a considerable number of Laconian Protogeometric vessels have been identified. This dissertation aims to combine all of the evidence now available from LBA and EIA Laconia in order to offer an interpretation of the socio-political and economic development of the region.

Most of the material under consideration comes from publications, such as *Aghios Stephanos: Excavations at a Bronze Age and Medieval Settlement in Southern Laconia* (Taylour and Janko 2008), *Sparta: Menelaion I: The Bronze Age* (Catling et al 2009), *ΛΑΚΕΔΑΙΜΩΝ* (Spyropoulos 2013), *Death in Mycenaean Lakonia* (Gallou 2020) and preliminary reports (E.g. Demakopoulou 2012; Moutafi and Voutsaki 2016; Vlachou 2017, 2018; Vasilogamvrou 2017, 2018; Kardamaki 2017). A significant portion

of the pottery analysis was based on published data (Coulson 1985; Margreiter 1988; Mountjoy 1999), but collections located in England<sup>1</sup> and Athens<sup>2</sup> were also examined. Furthermore, pottery from the excavations at Mt. Lykaion was kindly made available by Professors M. Voyatzis and D. Romano. Limited use of ancient written sources were used, as they present general difficulties due to their nature and over-reliance of past scholars on them to interpret the Laconian archaeological evidence during the period under study here.

## 1.1 The Laconian Landscape

The region of Laconia is largely defined by the Taygetos and the Parnon mountain ranges to the west and east, respectively. Accumulated marine and lacustrine deposits, alternating beds of limestone conglomerates, marls and sands are found on the fringes. Some sections, however, were eroded and replaced by deposits of alluvium and colluvium before human occupation (Fig. 1.4; Bintliff 1977: 373, 454; 2008: 528). Located between these mountain ranges are the Spartan and Helos plains (Fig. 1.1). Both plains are at the centre of a tectonic trough which runs in a south-eastern axis from the Sparta Plain to the Laconian Gulf. The main drainage line of the region naturally follows the trough, and this is where the Eurotas river and its main subsidiaries, the Kelephina and Magoula rivers, are located (Bintliff 1977: 372-375). The importance of the Eurotas system is attested by the number of Early, Middle and Late Helladic sites near or beside it, including Sparta, the Menelaion, Amyklai, Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi and Aghios Vasileios. (Fig. 1.2 and 1.3; Hitchcock *et al* 2020: 330-335).

The Spartan plain, as well as the Lower Eurotas valley and the plain of Helos, are some of the most fertile in the Peloponnese and were probably able to support a large population (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1960: 67). The soils were particularly favourable for the cultivation of dry-farmed

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<sup>1</sup> These include the collections from the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Museum of Classical Archaeology at Cambridge.

<sup>2</sup> Collections from the British School at Athens and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

cereals and olives (Bintliff 1977: 403). On the other hand, the Taenaros Peninsula, located in the southern end of the Taygetos mountain range, is mostly a dry and barren area. Consequently, a small number of sites have been identified in the region, including Krokeai. Yet, this is the only region where two types of rare stones - *lapis lacedaemonius* and *rosso antico* - can be found. The stones were particularly popular in Crete, during the Bronze Age, and were used for the production of stone vases and other objects. They were also widely exported during the Roman period, with examples distributed throughout the Empire, from Syria to Spain (Warren 1969: 132-133; Zezza and Lazzarini 2002: 259-261; Gallou 2008: 301-302; Janko and Tylour 2008: 586).

The last 50km of the Parnon mountain range forms the Maleas peninsula. While the eastern slope of the range falls abruptly into the sea, the western side of the peninsula is mostly formed of bare limestone hills. The hills are scattered with cultivable plains, mainly to the north of Apidia, and the Molaoi and Vatika plains (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1960: 68-69; Gallou 2020: 3). Moreover, sources of copper have been reported near Krokeai, Apidia and in the Spartan plain; while iron, lead, zinc and silver deposits were identified in the Vatika Bay area (Aggelopoulos and Konstantinidis 1988: 305-319; Gallou 2020: 2).

Communication routes were likely to have followed the Eurotas river by land.<sup>3</sup> A north-south route following the river valley connected Laconia from Pellana, to the north, to the southern settlements in the Helos plain. It is not surprising then, that a number of LH IIIA settlements can be found along this route, including at Sparta, Amyklai, Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi and Aghios Vasileios, in the Spartan plain. From the latter, the road would have split into three different routes (Fig. 1.3). The first crossing the Eurotas at the Skoura river ford towards Geraki, the second following the Eurotas towards the Laconian Gulf and Skala, and the third towards Krokeia via Aghios Vasileios to Aghios Stephanos (Hope Simpson 2009: 325-329). The route by the Eurotas river could also have been followed to the

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<sup>3</sup> It is unlikely, however, that the river was ever navigable to the sea from the Spartan plain seeing that it has a gradient suitable for kayaking or rafting and upstream navigation would require arduous towing (Hitchcock *et al* 2020: 330-335).

northern Peloponnese, until its source between the modern cities of Tripolis and Megalapolis in Arcadia. Approximately 15km from this point one can find the source of the Alpheios River, the longest river in the Peloponnese, which extends all the way to the northwest coast (Voyatzis 2017: 81; Romano and Voyatzis 2021: 13). Following this route, Laconian communities would have had access to sites such as the sanctuaries at Mt. Lykaion (Arcadia) and Olympia (Elis). Evidence of such contacts can be seen especially during the EIA period, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Sea routes were likely to have connected the Laconian harbour towns to each other as well as other areas of the Peloponnese and beyond. Sites in the Helos plain and Maleas Peninsula, for instance, undoubtedly took advantage of the sea routes which connected the area to the rest of the Aegean (Janko and Taylour 2008: 555). Such connections can be clearly seen from a number of imports, as can Cretan influences in the pottery production of southern Laconia during the LH IIIA to the LH IIIC period.

## 1.2 Past Scholarship

Sparta was one of the most important Greek *poleis* during the Archaic and Classical periods. It is thus not surprising that, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first systematic excavations at Laconia were undertaken in order to ‘ascertain the extent of the ancient city and the whereabouts of its cemeteries’ (Bosanquet *et al* 1905-1906: 278). These investigations, as with many others throughout Greece during the period, were heavily based on information from ancient texts, such as those by Thucydides, Herodotus, Pausanias, Plato and Plutarch. Texts were used as guides, as can be seen from the report of the 1906 excavations: ‘We naturally turn to Pausanias to see if he mentions any altar that can be connected with the platform on the banks of the Eurotas’ and ‘The city wall was found where Livy describes it, close to the river (...)’ (Bosanquet *et al* 1905/1906: 302, 279). The survey was followed by more intensive excavations at the sanctuaries of Artemis Orthia, to the east, and

Athena Chalkioikos on the Acropolis hill (Bosanquet *et al* 1905/1906; Dawkins *et al* 1906/1907, 1907/1908, 1908/1909; Dawkins and Woodward 1909/1910).

Following these initial explorations, a number of surveys were also undertaken in order to identify possible sites. The most extensive survey to date, including the whole of what today is defined as Laconia, was conducted by Waterhouse and Hope Simpson, in the 1950s. It detected more than 60 sites, of which at least 46 had some evidence of occupation during the LH III period. In the 1980s another project was conducted by British archaeologists (Cavanagh *et al* 2002), however, it investigated only a small area (approximately 70 km<sup>2</sup>), to the east of modern Sparta. Systematic excavations, on the other hand, have been undertaken in a small number of sites, including Sparta (mainly at the sanctuaries of Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos), the Menelaion, Amyklai, Aghios Vasileios, Vapheio, Pellana and Aghios Stephanos.<sup>4</sup> Until the discovery of a palatial site at Aghios Vasileios in 2010, it was believed that the Mansions at the Menelaion represented the Laconian version of a palatial centre (Kilian 1988: 293-97; Cavanagh *et al* 2002: 148-149; Catling *et al* 2009: 443). Catling emphasizes, for instance, how the architecture of the earliest structure at the Menelaion, Mansion I (LH IIB), was a 'forerunner' of the later Mycenaean palaces of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (2009: 444). Nevertheless, not once are the mansions referred to as 'palaces'; the term 'centre of power' was preferred. Kilian is also cautious in categorising the mansions as such since 'At the Menelaion distinctive features which can be related to the ideology of the *wanax* are less apparent (...)' (1988: 295-96).

Efforts to understand the SubMycenaean, Protogeometric and Geometric periods, however, have been impaired by the lack of archaeological evidence from the EIA. Most sites that have been systematically excavated consist of sanctuaries, in which finds are not distributed in chronological layers, but in mixed deposits that do not allow for reliable dating.<sup>5</sup> Hence, specialists identified a gap

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<sup>4</sup> For detailed information about these sites and their associated bibliography, see the Gazetteer in Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> The site at Pellana is likely to have been an important centre throughout the LBA and EIA, according to preliminary reports. Yet, the publication of the excavations is problematic and cannot be used. The site, and its publication, is discussed in detail in section 3.2.3.3.

in the Laconian pottery production between the SubMycenaean and the Protogeometric periods. Snodgrass, for instance, claimed that 'the style of the Protogeometric pottery owes nothing to Mycenaean' (1971: 131). Cartledge agrees with Snodgrass, concluding that 'The origins of Laconian Protogeometric are not to be found in LH IIIC or SM [SubMycenaean]' (1975: 96). Moreover, through comparisons with other styles, scholars argued that the Laconian Protogeometric would have started later than in other regions, no earlier than the mid-tenth century BC (Coulson 1985: 63-66). Together, the conclusion reached by these analyses and the overall lack of evidence from the EIA period, led to the conclusion that Laconia must have been abandoned during the post-palatial period until the mid-tenth century BC (Snodgrass 1971: 131; Cartledge 2002: 61).

In order to understand the possible abandonment of Laconia, scholars turned once again to the ancient literary sources. During most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the myth of the invasion of the Dorians was generally agreed to be the most plausible explanation for the destruction of the Mycenaean palatial sites and thus the end of the Mycenaean period in Greece (Hall 2014: 43-51). According to ancient sources, the Peloponnese would have been invaded by the Dorians and the Heraclidae after the Trojan War. The latter were the descendants of Hercules, who claim the land as their inheritance.<sup>6</sup> The invasion would not only explain the end of the palatial system, but also the introduction of practices such as cremation and single burials, the Protogeometric style of pottery and metal objects like fibulae and Naue II swords (Skeat 1934: 28-29; Huxley 1962: 22; Desborough 1964: 37, 56; Eder 1998: 89-110; Cartledge 2002: 65-68). In Laconia, however, it was suggested that the apparent gap of occupation and the discontinuity in its pottery style from the end of the Mycenaean period to the Protogeometric constituted evidence of the invasion by these groups (Cartledge 1979: 87-88; Coulson 1985: 65).

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<sup>6</sup> The fullest information for the arrival of the Dorians and the return of the Herakleidai are found in the accounts of Diodoros (7.9.1) and Pseudo-Apollodorios (*Bibliotheka* 2.8.1-2). Earlier versions of the story are found in Thucydides 1.12-13 and Herodotus 1.56 and 9.26.

Nowadays, most of the theories regarding the invasion by the Dorians and their role in the development of post-palatial Greece have been rejected (Hall 2014: 51). Firstly, with the advancement of archaeological theory based on the developments from other social sciences, scholars now emphasise that ancient sources are based on collective memories. Collective memories – the recollection of the past by a community – are built according to the importance given to events by living societies, and not through the accuracy of a particular memory (Panagiotopoulos 2017: 74-92). Consequently, ancient historians had a different conception of ‘truth’ than exists today. Unlike modern historians, they assumed that their predecessors were relating facts, which they could build upon, but not rectify. It was not their job to interpret the facts, but only to report them (Veyne 1988: 6). Therefore, ancient sources are composed of layered collective memories, which reflect the needs of different communities at different times. Secondly, studies have consistently shown that a number of practices described, for instance, by Homer, cannot be supported by the archaeological record. Dickinson, for one, argues that ‘the analysis of the weapons, armour, and tactics described in scenes of warfare reveals comparable mixtures of features of different periods’ (2017: 12).<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, some continue to rely on ancient sources to explain the development of Sparta’s socio-political aspects. The earliest sources about Laconia are the works of Tyrtaeus and Alkman, dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. In the case of Tyrtaeus’ poem, *Eunomia*, only excerpts mentioned by later authors are known, whose interpretations of the text continue to guide modern discussions (van Wees 2009: 1). Other sources, however, were written approximately 300 to 400 years after the events they describe, and most were written by Athenians. As a result, historians and archaeologists are faced with what has been termed a ‘Spartan mirage’: an ongoing tradition of an idealised version regarding the character and history of Sparta created by non-Spartan writers in antiquity (Hodkinson 2002: viii; Nafissi 2009: 118-133; Fragkopoulou 2010: 14-18; Powell 2018: 4-12). Further complications arise

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<sup>7</sup> The discussion about the veracity of ancient sources, and Homer in particular, is vast and rich cannot be discussed in detail in this dissertation. For more about this discussion see Sherratt 1990; Morris 1998; Dickinson 2017: 11-18; Hall 2014: 44-51; Snodgrass 2017: 3-5; Bendall and West 2020: 64-66.

from studies that show that Spartans themselves were likely to have had a role in creating their own past. It has been shown, for example, that Spartans used their supposed Dorian identity to legitimise their dominance over the inhabitants of the region and to eventually create a Lacedaemonian identity (Petersson 1992: 107-109; Hall 2000: 85; Nafissi 2009: 118-119). As a consequence, a number of scholars (including those in *Sparta Beyond the Mirage*, 2002, especially M. Flower and N. Luraghi) emphasise the subjective nature of ancient sources and thus denounce the practice of uncritically interpreting them. Yet, there are still some who persist in relying on such sources for their interpretation of the LBA and EIA periods. Cartledge, for instance, in the second edition of his book *Sparta and Lakonia: a regional history (1300 to 362 BC)*, from 2002, still names his chapter about period between c.1050 to 775 as 'The first Dorians'.

Another important topic under discussion by scholars is the possible inclusion of Laconia in what has been termed the West Greek *koine*. Coldstream, in his seminal book *Greek Geometric Pottery*, was the first to identify similarities between the pottery styles from areas of western Greece (including Achaea, Laconia, Elis and Messenia in the western Peloponnese, as well as Aetolia and Acarnania) and to describe the phenomenon as a *koine* (1968: 220). Some of these similarities had already been observed by Desborough between Ithaka and other regions, but especially between Traganes (such as zigzags and upright semi-circles on open bowls) and Amyklai (rectilinear decoration and concentric circles, incised ridges and perhaps twisted handles). However, at this time, he concluded that Ithaka was 'the nucleus of a local Protogeometric style' based on the local Mycenaean tradition (1952: 272-280, 301). Since the publication of these studies, a number of scholars have directed their efforts to examine these similarities and to the possible formation of a western *koine*. Coulson, for example, highlighted these connections in his publications on 'Dark Age' Messenia and Laconia, as did Eder in her examination of the material from Olympia and Elis. More recently, reports from excavations at Arcadia have also emphasised the similarities between the region and the Western Greek *koine* (Olympia: Eder 2001b: 54-76, 2006b: 141-246; Mt. Lykaion and Tegea: Voyatzis 2014a: 197-392, 2017: 65-90). In general, scholars agree that the similarities are particularly clear in

the choice of decorative motifs in Achaea, Messenia, Elis, the Ionian Islands and Laconia. This includes a predilection for cross-hatched decoration and reserved bands, of which cross-hatched triangles and lozenges were particularly popular (Voyatzis 2017: 66; Symeonoglou 2002: 56). The *koine* is also thought to be marked by a limited use of the concentric circle and semicircle motifs; in contrast to what has been observed in the Protogeometric Attic and in the Euboean *koine* (Coldstream 2008: 222; Cartledge 1975: 97; Coulson 1985: 38). Some similarities are seen as well in shape preferences, such as the kantharos and the continuous use of the kylix from the Late Helladic (LH) to the Early Iron Age (Eder 2006b: 562; Voyatzis 2017: 66).

It is clear that there are similarities between the pottery styles of regions of the western and southern Peloponnese during the Protogeometric period. Yet, these similarities alone do not justify the use of the term '*koine*', seeing that formal and stylistic connections can be found in almost any group of objects (Feldman 2006: 29-30). It is important then, to define the meaning of the term and how it has been used by archaeologists. Unfortunately, *koine* is not well defined by Aegean archaeologists in general and especially not by those examining the so-called West Greek *koine*. Considering this imprecise definition and the evidence so far provided for Laconia, I am not convinced that Laconia participated in such a phenomenon. This dissertation aims to better understand the development of the Laconian ceramic style from the LH IIIC to the Geometric period in order to assess Laconia's relationship to the West Greek *koine*.

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The dissertation is structured in four chapters. Chapter 2 consists of a survey of Laconian sites from the LH IIIA to LH IIIC periods. It examines the sites' distribution and their socio-political and economic relationships with the aim of offering an interpretation of Laconia's social organisation

during this time in face of new discoveries, such as that of the palatial site at Aghios Vasileios. Furthermore, Laconia's relationships with other areas of the Aegean, such as Crete, are explored to better understand the external influences at play during the LH IIIC period.

Chapter 3 analyses settlements, cemeteries and sanctuaries from the SubMycenaean to the Geometric periods. Section 3.1 examines the available evidence from the SubMycenaean period, including the role of the sanctuary at Amyklai. Section 3.2 introduces the evidence from the Protogeometric and Geometric periods, with a focus on sanctuaries, burials and their associated offerings.

Chapter 4 examines the pottery production of the period between the LH IIIC and the Geometric periods. Given the number of newly identified vessels now available, the chapter aims to re-assess the material as a whole and thus the established conclusions from past scholarship. It emphasises possible connections between Laconia and other regions of the Aegean by comparisons with other contemporary styles and the possible role of Laconia in the West Greek *koine*.

Lastly, Chapter 5 addresses how Laconian societies developed throughout the end of the LBA and the beginning of the EIA, and their connections with other areas. The distribution of sites, burial and cult practices (and their associated offerings), and the development of the Laconian pottery style suggest that occupation in the region was more complex and extensive during this period than previously realised. This chapter proposes an updated reconstruction of the socio-political and economic structures of Laconian communities during the period between 1200 and 700 BC based on this evidence.

This dissertation is complemented by a set of catalogues in the Appendices. Appendix 1 contains a site gazetteer with descriptions of all sites mentioned in the study, including bibliographical references. Appendix 2 contains details of all burials from the LBA and EIA referenced in the text and Appendix 3 includes the LH IIIC and EIA pottery analysed in Chapter 4.

# **Chapter 2:**

## **Late Bronze Age Laconia.**

### **A survey of Late Helladic IIIA to Late Helladic IIIC Laconia (1400-1100 BC)**

‘... Bronze Age Laconia has a peculiar capacity to frustrate expectations.’

(Dickinson 1992: 109)

In a 1992 article, Dickinson expressed the frustration that many feel regarding the gaps in the knowledge of Mycenaean Laconia (1400-1100 BC). However, since then, developments in the field are now helping to fill in important gaps. Perhaps the most exciting was the discovery of a palatial site at Aghios Vasileios. Its excavation and its preliminary reports reveal that Laconia had a more prominent role in the Mycenaean period than previously thought. Moreover, continuous work from the Greek Archaeological Service, as well as the publication of important sites, such as the Menelaion and Aghios Stephanos, have significantly increased the available evidence from the Mycenaean period. This chapter presents a survey of the settlements, cemeteries and cult places of the region in order to provide a picture of Laconia between 1400 and 1100 BC. This will allow for a better understanding of the beginning of the Early Iron age in Laconia, a topic discussed in the next chapter.

A gazetteer of the sites mentioned in this dissertation has been included with information which is not considered essential for the discussions in the main text (see Appendix 1). Furthermore, catalogues of pottery and other finds associated with burials can be found in Appendix 2.

## 2.1 Site Distribution

There are three main areas which were occupied in Laconia during the Mycenaean period: the Spartan plain, the Helos plain (including Vatika bay) and the southern end of the Maleas Peninsula. A total of fifty-nine sites from the period between 1400 and 1100 BC have been identified in the present study, using sources such as surveys (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1960 and 1961; Hope Simpson 1965; Banou 1996; Cavanagh *et al* 2002) and reports in archaeological journals. However, the number and extent of the Laconian surveys cannot be compared to those carried out in other regions of the Peloponnese, such as Messenia and the Argolid. The most extensive survey was undertaken by Hope Simpson and Waterhouse in the 1960s. Since then, the only official project was organised by Cavanagh and others in the 1980s in a small area (approximately 100 km<sup>2</sup>) to the east of Sparta (Cavanagh *et al* 2002). Consequently, there are sites that are probably yet to be identified and important information, such as sites' sizes through time, is lacking.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that 64.4% of the fifty-nine sites have been not excavated, but identified by surveys only. Settlement sites which have been systematically excavated comprise 7.6% of all identified sites (Aghios Stephanos (S25), Vrysika (S13), Menelaion (S03), Aghios Vasileios (S12) and Pellana (S63)). Consequently, information regarding the majority of the sites of Laconia are limited to surface finds collected by surveys.

Because of limited information, dating the occupation of most sites is challenging. Still, twenty-eight sites have shown to have been inhabited during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods.<sup>9</sup> By the LH IIIC Early, that number was reduced to twenty and by the end of the period to approximately seventeen sites (Figs 2.1 and 2.2). Continuity of occupation can be seen in the Spartan and Helos plain,

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<sup>8</sup> Messenia, for instance, one of the most investigated areas in Greece, has been the subject of two extensive surveys, the University of Minnesota Messenian Exploration (UMME) and the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project (PRAP). As a result, scholars were able to suggest a three-tier settlement hierarchy based on the approximate size of settlements (Davis *et al* 1997: 421-423).

<sup>9</sup> See the Site Gazetteer for information regarding these sites, in Appendix I.

where nine sites were occupied from the LH IIIA to the LH IIIC period, with some short abandonment periods (Sparta, Karavas (S02); Skoura (S09); Aghios Georgios, Skoura (S10); Cranae (S20); Aghios Stephanos (S25); Xeronisi (S28); Solaki (S29); Asteri, Karousi (S31) and Sykia (S37)). The site of Finiki, located in Cape Malea between Bozas and Sykia, is the only site which can be shown to have been established during the LH IIIC period. The location is not as fertile as the Spartan and Helos plains, but the existence of copper ores in the area could have been an incentive for settlers (Banou 1996: 66). The region further south, however, shows no sign of habitation during the LH IIIC period (Figs 2.1 and 2.2).

During the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods, settlements could be located on hills at the limits of the Taygetos and Parnon mountains ranges, where the mountains and plains intersect. This pattern can be seen throughout the region, including in the Spartan plain (e.g. the Menelaion, Skoura), the Helos plain (Peristeri, Lekas and Xeronisi) and at Cape Malea (e.g. Anemomylo, Bozas, Kamari). The majority, however, are located on the flat areas of the plains, including important centres such as Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi and Aghios Vasileios. Due to the lack of further information regarding the extension of sites, an in-depth analysis of site hierarchies in Laconia is not possible at this time. One can only assert that Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi, the Menelaion and Aghios Vasileios were the largest centres, occupying areas of approximately 20, 15-25 and 10ha, respectively (Cavanagh *et al* 2002: 144-146; Catling *et al* 2009: 444).

One interesting aspect of site distribution in Laconia during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods is the notable clustering of sites (Banou 2020: 305). The phenomenon is clearly seen in the Helos and Spartan plains, where the distance between sites does not exceed 6km. The case of the Spartan plain is even more striking, seeing that the area contains at least three of the most important centres of the LBA: Aghios Vasileios, the Menelaion and Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi. Consequentially, these centres were intervisible at least since the MH III period, when all three sites can be shown to have been established. Their intervisibility could have resulted in the creation of a network of support and trade between

them, suggesting a picture of cooperation at an early stage. This picture is further corroborated by the fact that there is no evidence of fortification walls surrounding any of the three sites and thus that outside attacks were not expected (Hitchcock *et al* 2020: 335-336).

The LH IIIC period is marked by significant changes in other areas of the Peloponnese, but in Laconia there seems to be a relative stability, at least during the LH IIIC Early period. Seventeen sites continued to be inhabited, including the Menelaion and perhaps even Aghios Vasileios. In comparison, excavations and surveys in Messenia point to depopulation on 'a massive scale' after the destruction of the palace during the first phase of LH IIIC, with estimates of a reduction of 90% of the population (McDonald and Hope Simpson 1972: 142-143; Davis and Stocker 2020: 677).

## **2.2 Settlements**

### **2.2.1 Aghios Vasileios**

Aghios Vasileios is located on the western bank of the Eurotas river, approximately 12km south of Sparta, in the vicinity of the village of Xirocambi. The site occupies approximately twenty-five acres on a hill of the same name. The hill is quite steep to the north, but slopes gently to the south and west (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1960: 80-81). It is strategically located on a route which connected communities of the Spartan and Helos plains, and which today is paved as the modern road from Sparta to Gytheio. This was surely an important route, seeing that it connected the landlocked Spartan plain to harbours to the south. The soil at Aghios Vasileios and its vicinity has been identified as a fine low marl hill-land, which today – and most likely during the Bronze Age – is occupied by cereal crops and olive trees. A nearby seasonal stream flowing from the Taygetos mountain range was most likely the water source for the settlement (Fig. 2.3; Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1960: 80-51; Bintliff 1977: 401). Recent studies have also highlighted the presence of copper deposits near Krokeai, just to the south of Aghios Vasileios. Copper was likely to have been a very important resource to the

site, especially during the LH IIIA period, when evidence suggests that weapons were being produced at the centre (see below for more details).

The fertility of the valley and the proximity to the Eurotas River were surely among the main reasons for the establishment of the site at some point during the Middle Helladic III period. Moreover, sources of *Lapis Lacedaemonius* (a type of stone which was especially popular in Crete, as was discussed above) was found to the south, at Krokeai. Yet, Aghios Vasileios' position, on an intersection which connected landlocked communities of the Spartan plain to the harbours in the Helos plain, was surely a decisive factor in the site's success and wealth. The main route from the Spartan plain would have followed the Eurotas river from at least the Menelaion, Amyklai, Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi to Aghios Vasileios. At the latter, there are two possible routes towards the south. One would have followed the Eurotas river valley through rugged terrain located between the Taygetos and Parnon ranges just to the east of Vron dama, towards Peristeri and Aghios Stephanos. This route is today paved as the modern road from Sparta to Gytheio. The other route would have headed south from Aghios Vasileios, also through rugged terrain, through Vrysika, Daphne-Louria and Lefkas to Aghios Stephanos (Fig. 1.3). The use of these routes and their importance for Aghios Vasileios' inhabitants is discussed further below.

At the present, five structures (Buildings A to E) have been uncovered, dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Vasilogamvrou 2012: 544).<sup>10</sup> Building A consists of an L-shaped structure dated to the LH IIIA (Fig. 2.4). Its rooms contained an array of objects which demonstrates Aghios Vasileios' wealth during this period. In Room 3, for instance, weapons including sixteen bronze swords, a dagger, a knife, spearheads, a bronze helmet and the remains of a boar's tusk helmet were found (Petra kou 2011: 33-38). A more diverse set of objects was found in Room 5, such as small gold sheet decorations of flowers, an elaborate neck of a stone vase, a bull figurine, the inlay from a sword and an Egyptian scarab (Fig. 2.5; Petra kou 2011: 33-38).

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<sup>10</sup> Building C was dated to the Byzantine period, and thus will not be discussed in this dissertation.

Excavations to the east of Building A have unearthed a number of features which suggest that rituals were performed in this area. At least seven pits were found to contain the remains of burnt animal bones as well as bronze arrow heads, a stone pommel of a sword, glass and cornelian beads, a seal stone, gold inlays and an Egyptian scarab seal of Amenhotep III (1386 to 1349 BC; Vasilogamvrou 2016: 26; Petrakou 2016: 24-26, 2017: 19-20). A limestone, cube-shaped altar (*βομίσκου*) was also discovered in the area, on which horns of consecration (also made of limestone) and a handmade horse figurine were still *in situ*. Wheelmade and handmade bull figurines were also associated with the altar, and a number of other fragmented figurines, dated to the LH IIIB period (Vasilogamvrou 2018: 146-147).

Building B is located to the north-west of Building A and it contained at least five rooms. Reports indicate that the rooms were decorated with wall paintings: fragments show a lower leg clad in a greave, a female head, floral and spiral motifs, part of a chariot's wheel, griffins and other animals (Fig. 2.6; Cavanagh 2010-2011: 23; Smith 2012-2013: 31). Carinated kylikes and a cooking tripod indicate that the building was in use during the LH IIIA2 period (Kardamaki 2017: 104-105).<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most unusual structure of the complex is Building D, an open courtyard flanked by two walls to its western and southern sides. Paralleled to the walls, there are three large stone bases with smaller bases between them (Fig. 2.7).<sup>12</sup> The courtyard was covered by a clay floor, remnants of which were observed at its north-west corner, and it showed signs of intensive burning. Above it, there were deposits containing fragments of a mortar floor surface, along with a large number of Linear B tablets and approximately fifteen sealings, most likely the debris from an upper storey (Petrakou 2013: 51-52; 2016: 24-26).

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<sup>11</sup> This date is provisory due to fact that a full report of the excavation's findings has yet to be published.

<sup>12</sup> The similarity of this structure to later examples of *stoas* has led researchers to name them the West and South *stoas*.

The last structure discovered in Aghios Vasileios is Building E. There are no published descriptions of this structure, apart from a possible occupation period between the LH IIA/IIB to the LH IIIA1/IIIA2 periods (Petraou 2011: 31).

Preliminary reports suggest that many of Aghios Vasileios' buildings were destroyed by fire, especially Building D (Petraou 2011: 50-53). However, due to the early stage of the analysis of the excavation data, there is still no full account of the construction phases of the complex, its destruction and abandonment. Nonetheless, sherds associated with the destruction of the second storey, in the so-called West *Stoa*, suggest that the structure might have been destroyed no later than the LH IIIB1 period. Furthermore, LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early ceramics found in secondary deposits indicate that the site was re-occupied (Kardamaki 2017: 113-114). The extent of such re-occupation remains to be determined.

From the features described above, it becomes clear that Aghios Vasileios was the location of an administrative centre. The architecture of the buildings, for instance, demonstrates comparable monumentality to other 'palatial' sites. Moreover, the presence of the large courtyard, associated with Building D, suggests that feasts and other gatherings could have taken place at Aghios Vasileios, as it is seen in other palatial sites, such as Ano Englianos (Bendall 2004: 112-126; Wright 2004: 169-170).

An indication of the site's politico-economic role in the Spartan plain is the presence of a number of prestigious items, such as weapons and imported *exotica*. Studies of Linear B archives from other sites have shown that these items were closely controlled by Mycenaean administrative centres (Halstead 1999: 38-41; Bennet 2007: 191-201; Schon 2011: 219-227). The tablets from Ano Englianos, for instance, have shown that the 'palace' closely controlled the manufacture of chariots, perfumed oils and textiles (Shelmerdine 1984: 81-95; Schon 2011: 220-223). In the case of Aghios Vasileios, the objects from Building A clearly indicate that weapons were stored in the complex, and possibly produced as well. This aspect of the site will surely be better understood once the analysis of its Linear

B tablets is complete. But at this point in time, scholars indicate that the tablets from Aghios Vasileios refer to the collection and redistribution of goods (including textiles and weapons), the submission of taxes in the form of commodities and offerings to a sanctuary, similar to archives from other 'palatial' sites.<sup>13</sup>

Contacts between Aghios Vasileios and areas outside the Peloponnese can be shown by the discovery of a red and silver mica fabric, observed mostly in closed shapes and cooking ware from deposits from Building B (Kardamaki 2017: 103-104). This fabric was first identified in Kastri, Kythera, dated to the period between the MM IB to the LH IIIA period. The technological choices and the firing practices of vessels with this fabric are typical of contemporary potting traditions from Central Crete. In Kastri, the fabric became more common for cooking vessels than that of the Oatmeal fabric by the MM IIIB period (Zerner 2008: 207-208; Kiriazi 2010: 689-691). Furthermore, petrographic and chemical analysis of the sherds from Aghios Stephanos determined that it is indistinguishable from samples from Kastri (Whitbread 2001: 367-377; Kiriazi 2010: 694-695).

The silver mica fabric thus indicates a link between Aghios Vasileios, Aghios Stephanos and Kythera. This link would have been particularly important to the elites of the 'palatial' site because of the connections between Kythera and Crete. The island had a particularly strong relationship with Crete between the MH and the LH IIB periods - so much so that some have debated whether Kythera could have been a Minoan colony (Coldstream and Huxley 1972; Broodbank *et al* 2005: 70-96; Broodbank and Kiriati 2007: 241-274). One could suggest then that a network formed between Aghios Vasileios, Aghios Stephanos and Kythera during the end of the MBA and the beginning of the LBA. Such a network would have enabled the elites of Aghios Vasileios access not only to Cretan goods, but also to the Near Eastern objects found in Building A.

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<sup>13</sup> A sealing was also found containing the word *wa-na-ko-to*, which is deciphered as 'of the wanax' (Fig. 2.8; Petrakou 2016: 24-26).

## 2.2.2 Menelaion

The site of the Menelaion is located over a ridge in the Eurotas valley, approximately 2km southeast from modern Sparta and 5km north from the Vapheio tholos tomb. The ridge consists of regular horizontal bands of conglomerate alternating with sandy/clayey marls. The marls were removed by natural erosion and, consequently, the conglomerate juts out, leaving a stepped ridge in a shape similar to a 'step pyramid' (Bintliff 1977: 380). The terrain to the north of the Menelaion is quite steep, and could have been used as grazeland. To the northwest, in the area today occupied by Aphyssou, there is a fertile sunken marl hill-land, while the eastern area is characterised by a number of parallel ridges separated by deep gorges, thus unlikely to have been used for the cultivation of crops (Bintliff 1977: 380-383). Finally, the site is located to the east of the Eurotas valley, which consists of good cultivable land – ideal for the cultivation of irrigated crops such as fruits and vegetables – as well as building materials like water worn boulders and schist stone (Catling *et al* 2009: 8-9). In summary, cereals could have been produced on the ridge plateau, but the most fertile areas were clearly located to the northwest, in the vicinity of Aphyssou and in the river valley below.

Due to the Menelaion's location on the ridge, water would have to be brought either from the Eurotas river to the east or the Doulaporema spring to the west. The site's excavators suggest that water could have been brought to the ridge's plateau either in pithoi or by collection of rain water (Catling *et al* 2009: 6-10). According to Bintliff, the journey from the site of the excavations to the river, at the south end of the ridge, could have been achieved in fifteen minutes thus making the trip feasible (1977: 381). However, Bintliff's estimate was based on the modern terrain's layout, which has undergone significant changes since ancient times through recent terracing and surface quarrying (Catling *et al* 2009: 9). Therefore, other routes to and from the Menelaion to water sources could have existed, which are now lost.

The site spread over three hills, the Menelaion, Aetos and North hills, during the period between the LH IIIA and LH IIIC periods (Fig. 2.9). The largest of these hills is that of the Menelaion,

which in its present state measures 82m north-south by 44m east-west (Catling *et al* 2009: 8-9). Excavations established that the site was inhabited from the MH to the beginning of the LH IIIC period. Below, the main structures from the LH IIIA to the LH IIIC period are discussed, together with the burials found in the hills.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.2.2.1 Menelaion Hill

#### *Mansions I and II*

Mansion I was most likely the first structure to be built on the northeast slope of the Menelaion Hill. Its construction is dated to the LH II B period and hence it is considered the first example of a corridor-type house in the Peloponnese (Fig. 2.10; Hiesel 1990: 208; Darcque 2005: 349, Catling *et al* 2009: 23, 448-449; Pantou 2010: 52-63, 2014: 369-400).<sup>15</sup> The building was erected over a terraced slope and it contained a megaron unit which included a main hall (Room 7), anteroom (Room 8) and a porch (Room 9). Terracing was a substantial undertaking which would have added time and labour to the construction of Mansion I. It thus indicates that its position near the eastern edge of the hill was considered important by its builders. The location would have afforded a view over the Eurotas valley, allowing for the detection of possible threats. Yet, the lack of fortification walls around the hills suggest that security was not one of the main concerns for those who lived there. Another possibility is that the location would allow for visual communication via signalling to other sites in the area, especially Vapheio. Such connections could have provided a support for trading as well as security (Hitchcock *et al* 2020: 335-337).

Mansion II replaced Mansion I during the LH IIIA1 period. Its plan followed a tripartite design, heavily influenced by that of its predecessor (Fig. 2.11). One notable difference, however, is the

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<sup>14</sup> Further information regarding the structures and findings from early periods can be found at the 'Site Gazetteer' section of this dissertation.

<sup>15</sup> A corridor-house was composed of square rooms encircled by long narrow corridors and/or stairways (Hitchcock 2012: 202).

absence of a megaron (Catling *et al* 2009: 32-36). The megaron was a core element of 'palatial' sites during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods and it was most likely a *locus* for feasting as well as for ritual practices. Such activities were organised by those who wished to display and assert their power, and thus could be associated with the role of the *wanax* (Rehak 1995: 95-117; Shelmerdine 1998: 84-85; Wright 2006: 37-40; Bendall 2004: 127). The disappearance of the megaron could then signal changes to the function of the site by the LH IIIA1 period.

Before analysing the possible ramifications of these changes, it is necessary to examine Mansion II's plan in detail to better understand its function. It should be noted, however, that much of Mansion II was excavated during an early 19<sup>th</sup> century campaign which was not fully recorded. Consequently, aspects of the construction of the structure and the context of many finds are unknown (Catling *et al* 2009: 52).<sup>16</sup>

The northern section of Mansion II probably consisted of three rectangular rooms (Rooms XI, XII and XIII) (Fig. 2.12). Stairs on the eastern side of this section would have led to a lower platform, where the central and southern sections of the building are located. The central section contained at least four rooms (Rooms I, II, III and IV; Fig. 2.12). Four smaller rooms (IV, VII, VIII and IX) formed the south section, which was connected to the rest of the Mansion by a corridor (Figs. 2.12 and 2.13). Unfortunately, there are no records regarding the finds from these rooms, which would help to determine their function. However, one could suggest that the number and size of the rooms on the lower platform indicate they were used for storage, since a similar distribution of rooms can be seen in other structures. At Ano Englianos, for instance, the Main Building (built probably during the LH IIIB period) consisted of a megaron flanked by two rows of small rooms (Fig. 2.14; Shelmerdine 1998: 81-96). Corridors gave access to these small rooms from the megaron. Inside, the rooms were found to contain household pottery (Pantries 19-22), the Archives (Rooms 7 and 8) and storage jars (Rooms 23,

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<sup>16</sup> According to the 2009 report the 1910 excavations 'removed whatever floor remains there had been at the start of the excavation, so that no trace of them remained anywhere in the building' (Catling *et al* 2009: 52).

24 and 27) (Shelmerdine 1998: 86-87). A corridor is also seen in the southern section of Mansion II (Corridor V) connected to the rooms of the central and southern sectors, indicating a similar use of the space as was observed in Ano Englianos.

The South and East Terraces provide further evidence to the function of the mansion's central and southern sections. On the lower platform, walls encompassed the eastern and southern ends of the building (Figs. 2.12 and 2.13). These were identified by the 1970s and 1980s excavators as terraces and thus named the East and South Terraces. In the latter, objects such as a spatula, whetstones, saddle querns, a bone tool, a bronze graver/drill as well as bronze waste suggest the presence of a bronze workshop (Tournavitou 1988: 459; Karageorghis and Kassianidou 1999: 174-178; Catling *et al* 2009: 46-47). A similar assemblage was observed in the Lower Citadel at Tiryns, for instance, in Room 78a and Building IX, which were also identified as a bronze workshop (Brysbaert 2014: 3-11). Moreover, workshops depended on the provisions of the central administrative building, thus the proximity of the Terraces to the storage rooms in the eastern and southern sections of Mansion II would be ideal. Lastly, craftspeople could have easily accessed the storage areas from the Terrace through an entrance in the eastern end of corridor V (Fig. 2.13).

Another building phase was identified over Rooms I to IX, in the central and southern sectors. For unknown reasons, at some point during the LH IIIA1 and LH IIIB periods, these rooms were severely damaged and required extensive repairs. This phase – Mansion III – was the one eventually destroyed by fire during the LH IIIB2 period (Catling *et al* 2009: 37-39, 452).

The discussion above indicates that Mansion II was a significant structure, most likely used for the production and storage of goods. The lack of a megaron is intriguing, but seeing that the structure remained an important centre, it is unlikely that its disappearance in this phase represents a decline of its associated elites. One could suggest that Mansion II represents an extension of Mansion I, and that a megaron could be situated at the top of the hill, now destroyed by erosion and agricultural practices (Catling *et al* 2009: 452)

### 2.2.2.2 Aetos Hill

Evidence shows that the Aetos hill was first occupied during the MH II/III period, and it remained in use until the LH IIIB2/IIIC period. The main structures from the LH IIIB2/IIIC period are Buildings A and B, the Great Terrace wall, the so-called 'Bastion' and 'Squatter's' building, and the Aetos stone mound. Each structure is described separately below, with emphasis on the features which illuminate their function.

#### *Building B*

Building B is located on the southern slope of the Aetos Hill. Four construction phases were identified, ranging between the LH IIB to the LH IIIB periods (Fig. 2.15). In Phase II, dated to the LH IIIA1 period, the building contained at least six rooms (Rooms 3 to 8). By Phase III, however, the structure was seemingly reduced to two rooms (Catling *et al* 2009: 198-207). Metals such as 'crucible droppings, excess metal trimmed off a raw casting, and the gassy metallic scum often generated in the crucible, in the melting furnace' were found associated with the northern sections of rooms 5 and 6, most likely dated to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century BC (Catling *et al* 2009: 207). As was discussed above, finds such as these can be characterised as waste material from work with metal. Thus, one could suggest that Building B was used for metalworking during the LH IIIA1 period.

There were no finds dated to the LH IIIA2 period, indicating a possible period of abandonment. Nevertheless, a large distribution of pottery dated to the LH IIIB period was found in the eastern section of Phase 4. The sherds consisted mainly of decorated deep bowls (approximately thirty fragments) and undecorated kylikes (approximately 140 fragments). The high number of vessels in this specific area could indicate that Building B housed a pottery workshop during the LH IIIB period. Interestingly, two Handmade Burnished Ware (HMBW) fragments were among these vessels, which suggest the structure was still in use during the LH IIIB2/IIIC period (Fig. 2.16; Catling *et al* 2009:

Appendix C).<sup>17</sup> Moreover, this implies that groups from the Adriatic coast could have been working or living in the area during this period.<sup>18</sup>

### *Great Terrace Wall*

The 'Great Terrace wall' is located on the edge of the scarp on the southern slope, between Buildings A and B (Fig. 2.17). It extends about 18m E-W, and its thickness is of 1.20m. A variety of materials were used in its construction, including unwrought stones, sundried bricks (some of which showed signs of burning), schist slabs and large sub-rectangular blocks of hard blue limestone (Catling *et al* 2009: 212-218). The function of the wall was, as its name suggests, to create a terrace in the slope, resulting in at least another 100m<sup>2</sup> of building area (Catling *et al* 2009: 184). Unfortunately, the terrace fill which would allow for the dating of the construction of the wall was eroded away (Catling *et al* 2009: 215). Yet, considering that Building B is located within the newly terraced area and that its earliest phase dates to LH IIB, it provides a *terminus post quem* of LH IIB for the construction of the Terrace wall.

The wall collapsed at some point towards the end of the site's occupation, during the LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early period. This is evidenced by a deposit isolated between the wall's debris and an E-W shingle road to the south of the wall (Fig. 2.18). What caused its collapse is unknown, but an earthquake, human agency or structural failure was suggested by the excavators (Catling *et al* 2009: 215-216).

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<sup>17</sup> See BWJr25-26, in Appendix 3, for details.

<sup>18</sup> More details regarding HMBW and its presence in the Menelaion are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

### *The 'Squatter' Building*

The so-called 'Squatter' Building is the only structure at the Menelaion whose construction is dated to the LH IIIB2/LH IIIC period. Although little remains of this building, archaeologists were able to recognise fragments of its walls erected directly over the walls of the Bastion and of the Great Terrace wall (Fig. 2.19). The fragments suggest that the structure had a rectangular shape, on an E-W axis, c. 12m long (Catling *et al* 2009: 236). A floor of schist slabs was found covering a levelled surface at the west end of the building and a stone threshold was located in between the western and southern walls (Fig. 2.19) (Catling *et al* 2009:237-38).

Decorated and undecorated fragments of pottery from the LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early period were found associated with the schist floor, including ten deep bowls, a stemmed bowl and twenty kylikes.<sup>19</sup> Coarse ware was also present, such as six beakers, five collar neck jars, four basins, five pithoi<sup>20</sup> and five HMBW examples<sup>21</sup> (Catling *et al* 2009: 237-238). The combination of drinking vessels and coarse ware indicates that the building was most likely a residence.

### *The Aetos Stone Mound*

The Stone Mound was a feature located at the peak of the Aetos hill, measuring c. 10m long and 8m wide (Fig. 2.20). It consisted of a significant deposit of ceramics, figurines and burnt animal bones, covered by stones.<sup>22</sup> Decorated and undecorated table ware was represented as well as coarse ware and HMBW. Together, they date the mound to the LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early transitional and to the LH IIIC Early periods.

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<sup>19</sup> Not included in the catalogue because it dates to the LH IIIB2/IIIC transitional period.

<sup>20</sup> Catalogue numbers KB15-KB20, CWJr28-CWJr31, Pit21-Pit24.

<sup>21</sup> Catalogue numbers BWBkr1, BWJr9- BWJr11 and BWUnk9.

<sup>22</sup> A total of 260kg of pottery was collected during excavation, of which 50kg was catalogued.

The most common shape found in the Stone Mound is the deep bowl, making up 23.43% of all catalogued sherds (Table 1, below). Closely following that number are kitchen/domestic ware (19.53%) and kylikes (18.16%). Other shapes include pouring vessels, such as jugs, and stemmed and shallow bowls. This assemblage is consistent to a pattern of feasting deposits seen in other areas of Greece. Large numbers of kylikes, for instance, were found in specific areas of the Ano Engliano complex dedicated to feasting, such as Court 63 and the Southwest Building (Blegen and Rawson 1966: 244-247; Whitelaw 2001: 52-62; Bendall 2004: 119-124). Kylikes were also a significant vessel in feasting activities outside 'palatial' centres, as can be seen in a refuse dump from the LH IIIA2 period at Tsoungiza (Dabney *et al* 2004: 202). Bowls are another shape commonly associated with feasting. Shallow bowls, especially, have been shown to be an ideal shape for serving hot food (Tournavitou 1995: 90).<sup>23</sup> Lastly, cooking pots were also represented in the Aetos Stone mound, and most likely were used for cooking meat in stews. Thus, one could suggest that the pottery from the Stone Mound is the debris of some type of feasting activity.

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<sup>23</sup> The prevalence of deep bowls in the Aetos Stone Mound, one could suggest, represent a local preference. The shape was particularly common at the Menelaion, as is shown by the excavations of Building B, during the last phase of its occupation, in the LH IIIB period.

Shape	Numbers (total)	Decorated	Percentage (total)
Deep Bowls	120	117	23.43
Kitchen/Domestic ware <sup>24</sup>	100	N/A	19.53
Kylikes	93	32	18.16
Stemmed Bowls	29	29	5.66
Jugs	28	28	5.47
Kraters	23	21	4.49
Stirrup Jars	13	6	2.54
Shallow bowls	12	12	2.34
HMBW	10	N/A	1.95
Cups	8	8	1.56
Dippers	5	2	0.98

**Table 1:** Shapes of pottery found in the deposits of the Aetos Stone mound.

Among the burnt animal bones, the majority were identified as sheep/goats (62.4%), followed by cows (23.8%) and pigs (13.4%). Their examination revealed a predominance of meat bearing bones (femurs and tibias; Jones 2009: CD-140-146).<sup>25</sup> The lack of mandibles is particularly interesting because it suggests that the butchering of the animals took place somewhere else. Studies show that mandibles were discarded at an early phase of butchering (Halstead and Isaakidou 2004: 144-145). Therefore, they would be expected to be found if the deposit from the Aetos Stone Mound was indeed ‘settlement detritus’, as suggested by the excavators (Catling *et al* 2009: 247).

Sixteen fragments of terracotta figurines were also found in the mound, including eight animal figurines, seven hominid figures and one of an unknown type (Catling *et al* 2009: 248, 291-293). Analysis revealed that the hominid figurines consist mostly of Psi figurines, with some examples of the

<sup>24</sup> Kitchen fabrics such as cooking pots and beakers, and domestic coarse wares, like basins and pithoi. The shapes are discussed in detail in section 4.1.3.

<sup>25</sup> Deposits containing burnt meat bearing bones can be found in other areas of Greece and are interpreted as the remains of feasting activities. Examples include Nestor’s palace in Pylos and more recently at Iklaina (Halstead and Isaakidou 2004: 144-147; Cosmopoulos 2015: 44-47).

Phi type (Catling *et al* 2009: 280-283). One particularly interesting fragment is that of the back end of a wheelmade bull figurine, with a round opening. The large opening on the back identifies the figurine as type B2, as defined by Guggisberg. Examples from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries are found throughout the mainland, including in Delphi, Berbati, Mycenae, Tiryns, Athens, Amyklai and most recently in Ano Englianos (Nicholls 1970: 3-10; Guggisberg 1996: 216-217, 2009: 125-130; Egan 2019: 421-446). The construction technique, however, can be traced to Crete in the MM II period (Muhly 2008: 159). In Laconia, the B2 type bull figurines appeared also at Amyklai during the LH IIIC Middle period, where they continued to be produced into the SubMycenaean period.<sup>26</sup>

The presence of figurines in general in the Aetos Stone Mound strongly indicates that the activities that took place had religious connotations. Terracotta figurines were dispersed in many areas of Greece after the establishment of 'palatial' complexes. Examples can be found in settlements, burials and sanctuaries, but they are particularly associated with cult practices (Wright 1994: 61-75; Haysom 2020: 319).

Altogether, the evidence discussed above suggests that the Aetos Stone Mound represents the remains of feasting activities with possible religious connotations, which took place during the LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early transitional and LH IIIC Early periods. Feasting was a common activity for many societies in the past, including those in the Aegean during the Mycenaean period. It can be used as a tool to create a sense of *communitas* by bringing together individuals from different levels of society: from the local household cluster to the regional political community (Dietler 2001: 68-69). In the case of Mycenaean Greece, many agree that feasting was an important activity for the maintenance of palatial authority (Bendall 2004: 105-126; Wright 2004: 136; Hamilakis and Konsolaki 2004: 143-46; Nakassis 2012: 2-23). Yet, it should be emphasised that it was not restricted to 'palatial' complexes only. Examples of feasting were found in Malthi, Tsounginza and Iklaina as well (Bendall 2004: 126-130; Dabney *et al* 2004: 197-215; Cosmopoulos 2015: 41-49). At Iklaina, for instance, a pit was found

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<sup>26</sup> See section 3.1.2 for details.

adjacent to Building X, possibly associated with a mud brick bench. The pit contained items comparable to those from the Aetos Stone mound such as burnt animal bones, drinking vessels and terracotta figurines (Cosmopoulos 2015: 41-49).

During the period in which the Stone Mound was created, during the end of the LH IIIB2 and beginning of LH IIIC periods, the Mansions had been abandoned, and habitation can be attested at the Aetos Hill ('Squatter' Building and possibly Building B) only. The feasting which occurred at the hill was thus unlikely to be associated with any palatial centre. Instead, one could suggest it was enacted by the inhabitants now left at the Menelaion as a way to bring together a community which had been scattered by the events of the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. It is thus interesting that HMBW vessels were found in the deposit. If these vessels represent newcomers into the Menelaion's community, they could indicate that they were included in important social events and were fully integrated into their new community. The possibility should not be dismissed, however, that the HMBW vessels were adopted by locals into their own practices.

### 2.2.2.3 Burials

During the excavations of the Menelaion and Aetos hills thirteen burials were found, ranging from the MH to the LH IIIC period (Table 2, below). At the Menelaion Hill, a cluster of three burials – Tomb 3 and Skeletons 2 and 3 – were located to the east of the NE corner of Mansion II (Figs. 2.21 and 2.22). Tomb 3 contained a badly preserved skeleton of a child between the ages of five and seven years old, most probably dated to LH IIB (Catling *et al* 2009: 79). Skeleton 2, that of a child of the same age, was found to the south of Tomb 3. The skeleton was laid on its right side and with flexed knees. The right arm was flexed but the position of the left was not clear.<sup>27</sup> Lastly, Skeleton 3 was that of a

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<sup>27</sup> The site's report describes the position of this skeleton in a much more dramatic fashion: 'the posture of [Skeleton 2] suggested a corpse tossed down, lying on the right side, with sprawling, outspread limbs' (Catling *et al* 2009: 79). In my opinion the only limb that seems 'sprawled' is the left arm, which could have moved when the child was being placed in the grave.

25- to 35-years-old female. The arms were folded with the hands resting on her neck while the legs were flexed with the knees resting on the chest. Both can be dated to the LH IIIB period by their location within layers of the same period (Catling *et al* 2009: 79).<sup>28</sup>

	<b>Menelaion Hill</b>		<b>Aetos Hill</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Period</b>	<b>Number of burials</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>Number of burials</b>	<b>Number of Burials</b>
<b>MH</b>	1		6	7
<b>LH II</b>	1		-	1
<b>LH IIIA</b>	1		-	1
<b>LH IIIB</b>	2		-	2
<b>LH IIIC</b>	-		1	1
<b>Unknown</b>	1		-	1
<b>Total</b>	6		7	13

**Table 2:** Distribution of burials by period and location at the Menelaion.

Tomb 2, a pit delineated with stones, was discovered in an area between the Northern Building and the Mansions (Fig. 2.23). It contained the skeleton of a child aged between 18 months and two years old and a monochrome spouted cup dated to the LH IIIA1 period (Fig. 2.23). The body was positioned on its left side, with elbows flexed and hands towards the skull.

On the Aetos Hill, the only burial from the Late Helladic period is that of Skeleton 1. The skeleton was found to the north of Building A's north wall, covered by the debris from the collapse of the Great Terrace wall (Fig. 2.24). The skeleton was identified as a male adult, with its head to the south, towards the wall; legs flexed and positioned to the left and arms alongside the body, also flexed, with both hands on the chest area. There were no signs of a grave and thus of an intentional burial.

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<sup>28</sup> The description of this burial in the site report suggests that the woman had been 'tightly trussed up' and that it could have been done while she was still alive (Catling *et al* 2009: 79). Recent studies on the decomposition of bodies have shown, however, that the pressure of the soil in which the body is buried can induce the flexion of the joints. Thus 'the discovery of a "hypercontracted" skeleton (...) does not imply that the body had undergone a pre-burial defleshing, nor that it had been tightly bound or placed in a sack' (Duday 2009: 43).

Consequently, it was posited that this individual was killed by the collapse of the wall (Catling *et al* 2009: 216-218).

Unfortunately, this small number of burials cannot be considered representative of the mortuary practices of the site. They do indicate, however, that adults were most likely buried outside the settlement while some infants were interred within. Adults were probably placed in chamber tomb or tholos cemeteries in the vicinity of the Menelaion. Yet, none has been discovered at this point. The burial of infants within settlements and separately from adults, on the other hand, was a common practice throughout Greece during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 62; Gallou 2004: 367). At Mycenae and Marathon, for instance, infant burials were found under the floor of houses which were still occupied, while in Tiryns, pit graves were dug in open spaces between the houses in the *Unterburg* (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 62, 111).

### 2.2.3 Aghios Stephanos

The site of Aghios Stephanos is located on a promontory in the Helos plain, approximately 4km south from the town of Skala (Fig 2.1). Today, the site is located within fertile alluvium, but studies show that during the Bronze Age the site was surrounded by the sea on its western, southern and eastern sides (Fig. 2.25; Bintliff 1977: 453-466, 2008: 527-550). The northern side would have been linked by a saddle to hills of hard limestones with little soil. Therefore, Aghios Stephanos had no access to agricultural land during the Bronze Age and it is unclear how the population would have sustained itself (Janko 2008: 555-556). Its location by the sea would suggest that fish and other sea animals would have played a major role in the diet. But fish bones recovered during excavations indicate that primarily small fish were consumed, all probably under one kilo in weight (Duhig *et al* 2008: 517). A large number of marine invertebrates were also found, consisting of the 'largest Bronze Age or later sample so far published from the Greek mainland' (Duhig *et al* 2008: 520). Among the most common species were *Donax* (wedge shells), *Glycymeris* (dog cockles) and *Cerastoderma* (cockles). Still, their

quantity is too small to be regarded as a main source of subsistence. For instance, 150-200 *Donax* individuals would yield approximately 0.5kg of meat. Thus, all of the 5776 individuals collected from the site would not have yielded more than 29-38.5kg of meat, the equivalent of one sheep or goat (Reese 2008: 519-524). Sheep/goats, pigs and cattle were also consumed at Aghios Stephanos during the Bronze Age, but on a small scale. Analysis of the age of the animals when killed, however, suggests an emphasis on secondary products, such as milk and wool, rather than meat (Fig. 2.26; Duhig *et al* 2008: 509-513).

Aghios Stephanos' location might not have been ideal for agriculture, but it had the advantage of being near important sea routes that connected Laconia to the Aegean. Evidence of contacts between the site and Crete can be seen, for instance, in their pottery: LH IIIA2 vessels, in particular, have clear Minoanising elements (Mountjoy 2008: 374). The site is also in close proximity to deposits of copper and lead and to the only known source of the volcanic stone *Lapis lacedaemonius* (Janko and Taylour 2008: 554-555).

### **2.2.3.1 Structures**

#### *The courtyard*

Excavations at Aghios Stephanos have shown that the site was occupied during the EH to LH IIIC periods, with a brief hiatus between the end of LH IIIA2 and the beginning of the LH IIIB2 period. During the LH IIIA period, occupation was concentrated on the south slope of the hill, in areas Beta and Epsilon. The largest and most complete structural remains were found in area Beta, that of a courtyard connected to a corridor (Figs. 2.27 to 2.29). Evidence indicates that both were constructed at some point between the MH III Late and the LH I periods and that they continued to be used until the LH IIIA1, when they were abandoned. A small fragment of wall where the corridor connects to the courtyard suggests an *anta* was erected at this location, most likely during the earliest phase of the

structure. The only change to the area is dated to the LH IIIA1 period, when a bench (ew, in Fig. 2.29) was constructed against the north-western wall of the courtyard (Janko and Taylour 2008: 49-51).

The courtyard measured 5.6 x 5.6 x 5.2m, and its floor was covered with slabs set in either hard mud-packed or over stony surfaces covered with light-coloured earth or plaster (Janko and Taylour 2008: 42-56). Courtyards are usually associated with palatial centres during the Mycenaean period, especially during the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC (Cavanagh 2001: 121). Nonetheless, they can also be observed outside palatial complexes, as in House I in the Panagia House complex in Mycenae and possibly House P in Korakou, for example (Blegen 1921: 88; Mylonas-Shear 1987: 150-154). In these two structures, courtyards are connected to narrow corridors, as can be observed at Aghios Stephanos.

The function of the courtyard can be suggested by the finds from its floor. They include terracotta figurines, earlier terracotta whorls (LH I-II), bronze tweezers, a copper ring, a stone conulus, a pounder, a saddle quern, a grinder, obsidian blades and pottery (dippers, a kylix, a goblet and a basin) dated to the LH IIIA1 period (Janko and Taylour 2008, table 1.28, Appendix 1). Interestingly, a kylix and a dipper were discovered still *in situ* over bench 'ew' (Fig. 2.29; Janko and Taylour 2008: 42-56).

The pottery consists of shapes commonly seen in a drinking set, and thus could indicate that the courtyard was a place for gatherings, where drinking also took place. Yet, the bench is an unusual feature for the architecture of courtyards of the period. Benches are a common component in cult buildings, where they are found against a wall and are thought to have received votives or offerings. Examples can be seen at the Cult Centre at Mycenae and at the sanctuary at Phylakopi (Fig. 2.30; Taylour 1983: 49-51; Renfrew 1981: 68-70; Bendall 2003: 186; Wright 1994: 62). But, at these locations, there is no indication of the presence of drinking or gatherings. Instead, scholars emphasise that their small size and restricted access would suggest small gatherings (Wright 1994: 61-62). Instead, one could suggest that the courtyard belonged to a domestic structure, and thus its use was

not as controlled as in a 'palatial' setting. It could have housed both social gatherings and those of religious character. Nevertheless, the religious use of the courtyard was short-lived, since the structure was abandoned shortly after the addition of the bench, during the LH IIIA1 period. The abandonment of the courtyard was most likely followed by the burial of a child (B28), whose grave was cut into the slab floor (Fig. 2.36; Janko and Taylour 2008: 42-56).

#### *Structure Lambda VI and unnamed structure*

The abandonment of the courtyard reflects the abandonment of the site in general during the LH IIIA2 period. Aghios Stephanos remained unoccupied until the beginning of the LH IIIC period, when a number of structures were erected on the south and north slopes of the hill. On the south slope, five structures were uncovered: an unnamed structure and Structure Lambda VI to the west, and structures Zeta IV, Epsilon I and Epsilon II to the east (Fig. 2.31). The structures to the west are better preserved and thus will be discussed in detail.

Structure Lambda VI was built over the remnants of earlier buildings, and was dated to the Middle Helladic to the Late Helladic periods. It consisted of at least two rooms, Rooms 2 and 4, where a number of finds were discovered over the stone slab surfaces (Fig. 2.32). In Room 2, tools used for grinding grains, such as stone pestles, stone pounders and a saddle quern were found, as well as pottery (Janko and Taylour 2008: 61-80).<sup>29</sup> In Room 4, apart from a small number of ceramic vessels,<sup>30</sup> there were objects associated with metalwork (bronze sheet fragments, a lump of metallurgical residue, terracotta crucibles and a bronze knife blade) and grinding equipment (stone pestles and pounders). These finds strongly indicate that both rooms housed workshops during the LH IIIC Early period, where metalwork and the processing of grains were the main activities.

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<sup>29</sup> Cup (Cp3), straight-sided alabastron (Al1), shallow bowl and a mug (Janko and Taylour 2008, Appendix 1: table 1.38).

<sup>30</sup> Pithoi, Amphoriskos (Amp6), a deep rounded cup and a stirrup jar (Sj2) (Taylour 1972: 256; Janko and Taylour 2008, Appendix 1: table 1.39).

Two distinctive features, however, are unusual for workshops of the period and could imply a different function for Lambda VI. First, fragments of terracotta figurines were discovered in Room 4, two of which were located near the doorway.<sup>31</sup> Although figurines are usually associated with cult or burial contexts, it has been suggested that they were also used as protective devices (Wright 1994: 75; Pakkanen 2009: 149-154; Tzonou-Herbst 2009: 162-172). At Tiryns, for instance, figurines were also found in doorways as well as hearths (Kilian 1988: 142). Thus, their presence does not preclude Room 4 from containing a workshop. The second element is the presence of a child burial underneath the floor surface of Room 2. This burial, and its significance, are discussed in detail below, in section 2.2.3.3.

An unnamed rectangular building was excavated to the east of Structure Lambda VI, in area Beta (Fig. 2.31 and 2.33). The relationship between these structures is not clear, since a baulk was left unexcavated between both.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the site's publication did not include a description of the area or its finds, for unknown reasons. The only feature described by preliminary reports is that of a pit cut into the floor surface of the rectangular building, containing four skulls, most likely dated to the LH IIIC Early period (Taylour 1964: 146-147, 1972: 255-256).

#### *Wall fragments in area Delta*

A number of walls were found on the north slope of the hill, but the report regarding the area is brief and its dating is uncertain. Among the associated finds there were three almost complete vessels (kylix (Ky9); deep bowl, HS 55 and amphoriskos (Amp1), dated to the LH IIIC Early period. They suggest that occupation of the site extended to the north slope of the promontory during this period.

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<sup>31</sup> Female figurine of Naturalistic type (7062), polos head of female figurine (7089) and body of bovid (7100).

<sup>32</sup> The location where these two structures could possibly join is an unexcavated bulk between trenches B12b and B11.

Further evidence of occupation of Aghios Stephanos during the LH IIIC period is indicated by a number of sherds from the period throughout the site, including areas Delta and Alpha, as well as in small sections of areas Gamma, Beta and in trial trenches III and VI (Fig. 2.31). The pottery could not be associated with any structures, but they suggest that the LH IIIC Early re-occupation of Aghios Stephanos was considerable, and possibly extended to most of the promontory.

### **2.2.3.2 Aghios Stephanos, Kythera and Crete**

An important aspect of Aghios Stephanos is its close connection to Crete. LH IIIA pottery from the site was particularly influenced by Minoan shapes and decorative motifs. This influence is so clear that some vessels from the LH IIIA2 period have been characterised by scholars as ‘hybrids’ of Minoan and Mycenaean types (Mountjoy 1999: 249-251; Janko and Taylour 2008: 374-375). One of the best examples of this phenomenon is a group of kylikes (Group II) that according to Mountjoy ‘correspond to the Minoan kylix except for the stem, which is not hollow, and the handles, which do not rise above the rims’ (2008: 374-357). Signs of Minoan influence can also be seen in their decoration, which combines Mycenaean and Minoan motifs, such as spirals with a thick outer coil (Fig. 2.34; Mountjoy 2008: 374-375).

A possible source of influence on the pottery from Aghios Stephanos is the island of Kythera. Kythera is located just to the south of cape Malea, approximately 15km of Elaphonisos. Excavations and surveys conducted in the island show that it was one of the most intensely Minoanised centres in the Aegean islands from at least the Middle Helladic to the Late Helladic IIIA2/IIIB transition (ca. 1875-1330 BC; Broodbank *et al* 2005: 71-80).

This level of Minoan influence over Aghios Stephanos’ pottery has led some to suggest that it was produced not by the local community, but by Cretans living in Aghios Stephanos (e.g. Rutter and Rutter 1976: 65). Identifying the ethnic identity of archaeological groups is an extremely challenging

exercise. Studies show that archaeological cultures are not the material expression of ethnic groups and that ethnicity is an active process, which can be manipulated. Groups consciously select artefacts which can act as indicia of ethnic boundaries, which can change according to time and place (Hall 1997: 129-135; Jones 1997: 106-110). Nevertheless, the hybridisation of material cultures is a well-known phenomenon, characterised as a highly selective process of translation and adaptation of foreign objects. When foreign objects are introduced, they are not used in the same manner as it would be expected in their place of origin. Instead, they are 'translated' by the local culture and adapted to their own needs, resulting in a hybrid of both traditions (Dietler 2005: 62-63; Maran 2011: 283-289). According to Maran 'aspiring Mycenaean elites probably did not have a first-hand knowledge of Crete, what counted was not what Minoan culture really looked like, but rather how it appeared to the Mainlanders and how they translated and reintegrated the foreign traits into their own culture' (2011: 286).

What attracted Cretans to southern Laconia is not entirely clear, but scholars agree that sources of *Lapis lacedaemonius* was one factor (Janko and Taylour 2008: 586). *Lapis lacedaemonius* is a volcanic stone whose only known source is located near the village of Krokeai, approximately 11km to the north-east of Aghios Stephanos. A number of objects made out of this stone have been found in Crete, as well as pieces of unworked stone. Examples of the latter were discovered in the Lapidary's Workshop in Knossos, the harbour town of Trypeti in Crete and at the peak sanctuary of Aghios Georgios in Kythera (Warren 1967: 198-199; Zezza and Lazzarini 2002: 259-261; Janko and Taylour 2008: 579-584; Koutsovitis *et al* 2016: 1903-1911). The distribution of *Lapis lacedaemonius* can thus suggest trade routes were active during the Middle and LBA (ca. 1850-1425 BC) from the Laconian Gulf to Crete, via Kythera. The route to Crete from the southern coast of the Peloponnese – through the Messianikos and Lakonikos Gulfs - can be treacherous, and nowadays it is advised that the route

should be undertaken by experienced sailors only.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, knowledge of local winds, costal currents and land sea breezes makes the journey possible (Conlin 1999: 191-208).

### 2.2.3.3 Burials

A total of 162 burials were excavated in Aghios Stephanos, ranging from the MH to the Medieval period. The largest proportion of the burials are dated to the MH period (36%), followed by the LH IIIA (15%) and LH IIIIC (3.6%) burials. All but four of the LH III burials are those of infants.<sup>34</sup>

<i>Period</i>	<i>Number of burials</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>EH</i>	5	3
<i>MH</i>	40	24.7
<i>LH I</i>	4	2.5
<i>LH II</i>	8	5
<i>LH IIIA</i>	29	17.9
<i>LH IIIIC</i>	9	4.3
<i>Medieval</i>	1	0.6
<i>Unknown</i>	66	42
<i>Total</i>	162	100

**Table 4:** Distribution of burials by period.

#### *LH IIIA burials*

Twenty-nine burials were dated to the LH IIIA period, distributed in trenches Nu/Gamma 1, Lambda, Beta and Zeta in the south slope (Table 4, Fig. 2.28). Two types of burial practices were observed, that of pits and cist graves. Both practices are equally represented except in trench Beta, where cists predominate (Table 5, Fig. 2.35).

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.sailingissues.com/sailing-greece.html>.

<sup>34</sup> For a full list of burials, their contents and location, see Appendix 2.

<b>Trench</b>	<b>Number of burials</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Beta</b>	6	20.7
<b>Lambda</b>	10	34.5
<b>Nu/Gamma 1</b>	12	41.4
<b>Zeta</b>	1	3.4
<b>Total</b>	29	99.7

**Table 5:** Distribution of LH IIIA burials by trench.

<b>Trench</b>	<b>Cists</b>	<b>Pits</b>	<b>Unknown burial type</b>
<b>Beta</b>	4	1	1
<b>Lambda</b>	3	2	5
<b>Nu/Gamma 1</b>	4	5	3
<b>Zeta</b>	-	1	-
<b>Total</b>	11	9	9

**Table 6:** Distribution of LH IIIA cists and pits by trench.

Most graves from this period were concentrated in Nu/Gamma 1 trench (12 burials, Table 6). The area was reserved for burials for much of the settlement's history, as is evidenced by graves from the MH to the LH IIA period.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, the burials from trenches Lambda and Beta are associated with structures from the LH IIIA period, such as Beta 28 which was found within the courtyard (Fig 2.36 and 2.39). The practice of burying infants in the vicinity of contemporary structures is not uncommon during this period, and can also be observed at the Menelaion.

78% of the burials contained some type of grave good, including pottery (jugs, askoi, cups, goblets and flask), figurines and beads. Pits and cists contained grave goods of equal relative value, hence burial type was likely not associated with one's social status. All but one burial (Beta 25),

<sup>35</sup> Graves no. Nu 3 (1977), 9161 and 9160 (Janko and Tylour 2008: 92).

contained infants, which indicates that adults were buried outside the settlement, as is the case of other settlements of the LH IIIA period in the Peloponnese.

#### *LH IIIC burials*

There are no burials dated to the LH IIIB period in Aghios Stephanos, which was to be expected, since it corresponds to a phase of abandonment of the promontory. The re-occupation of the site during the LH IIIC Early period is also reflected on the mortuary record with nine infant burials excavated in trenches Beta, Eta and Zeta (see Table 7 below; Figs. 2.36, 2.37-2.38). Cist tombs and pits continued to be the preferred grave types, as was observed in the previous period (Table 8). Unfortunately, in some cases the condition of the grave was extremely poor, and the type of burial could not be identified.<sup>36</sup>

<b><i>Trench</i></b>	<b><i>Number of burials</i></b>	<b><i>Percentage</i></b>
<b><i>Beta</i></b>	<b><i>7</i></b>	<b><i>77.8</i></b>
<b><i>Eta</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>	<b><i>11.1</i></b>
<b><i>Zeta</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>	<b><i>11.1</i></b>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>9</i></b>	<b><i>100</i></b>

**Table 7:** Distribution of LH IIIC burials by trench.

Grave goods were scarce, but most burials seem to have contained at least one object. Burial Eta 13 is thus unusual, since it was found to contain a LH IIIA2-IIIB lentoid seal as well as a faience bead (Janko and Taylour 2008: 458). The lentoid seal is of particular interest because it is the only grave good from Aghios Stephanos that could suggest the individual had a higher social status than the other burials. The seal was identified as belonging to the Mainland Popular group, which was common during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods. Most seals were most likely used for private tasks, such as sealing

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<sup>36</sup> For a full list of burials, see Table 2.1, in Appendix 2.

personal items and stored produce, but they could also have been used as identity markers, jewellery or amulets (Younger 2018: 339-340). It was not uncommon for seals to be buried with individuals during the Mycenaean period. In fact, the largest number of seals associated with a burial was found at the tholos in Vapheio (Wilkie 2000: 9-10).

Unlikely the previous period, the grave contains items that could signify status. Scholars argue that most were probably of personal use: as identity markers, jewellery or amulets (Younger 2018: 339-340). A number of seals from the LH IIIA2-LH IIIB period have been found in domestic and tomb contexts. At Nichoria, for instance, eleven examples were discovered in the LH IIIA2 tholos tomb (Wilkie 2000: 7-16).

<b><i>Trench</i></b>	<b><i>Cists</i></b>	<b><i>Pits</i></b>	<b><i>Unknown burial type</i></b>
<b><i>Beta</i></b>	1	1	5
<b><i>Eta</i></b>	1	-	-
<b><i>Zeta</i></b>	-	1	-
<b><i>Total</i></b>	2	2	5

**Table 8:** Distribution of LH IIIC cists and pits by trench.

An unusual grave (?) was discovered cut into the floor surface of the unnamed rectangular structure (burials Beta 12-15; Taylour 1964: 147). The only bones found within were the skulls of four adults (Fig. 2.40). The excavators proposed that the skulls belonged to victims of a massacre and that it was ‘perhaps no coincidence that this room was burned down, the sole location at the site known to have been heavily burned’ (Janko 2008: 605). Although an interesting theory, other interpretations can be suggested from known burial practices from the Mycenaean period. The use of human skulls is well known in the performance of second funeral rites and ancestor worship at the dromos of chamber tombs. It is theorised that relatives and other members of the community would take the remains – with their associated offerings – outside the chamber at least as far as the dromos. Afterwards, the bones would be returned to the chamber and placed into pits or on the floor of the chamber

(Cavanagh 1978: 171- 172; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 76-77; Gallou 2016: 406, 2020: 135). The skull seems to have received 'special attention' during this process (Cavanagh 1977: 176-177). Skulls have been found deposited on the floor or the filling of dromoi (e.g. chamber tombs 505, 515, 519, 520, 517 at the Argolid),<sup>37</sup> on the floor and fill of the chamber (e.g. Koroniou tomb 2, at Volimidia, Messenia),<sup>38</sup> in pits/cists-ossuaries in the chamber (e.g. Tombs I and II at Berbati),<sup>39</sup> and in niches and benches inside the chamber (e.g. Tomb 4, Voria, Volimidia and Tomb 3, Ismenion, Thebes).<sup>40</sup> At Laconia, this phenomenon is observed in Epidaurus Limera and Peristeri (chamber 7, at Aghia Triada cluster and chamber 5, respectively), where skulls were furnished with inverted vessels, including cups, alabastra, bowls and squat jugs (Gallou 2016: 411). Another example of the practice can be found within Aghios Stephanos itself, dated to the LH I-LH IIA period. The skull of child in grave Beta 19 was removed and replaced by the lower half of a pithos positioned upright (Taylour 1972: 235; Janko and Taylour 2008: 127; Gallou 2016: 408-409). One could suggest that in face of the differential treatment given to the skull in secondary burials in the Peloponnese, the skulls from the unnamed building in trench Beta (12-15) could represent a facet of a secondary burial ritual.

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In summary, during the LH IIIA and the LH IIIC periods it was common at Aghios Stephanos to bury infants within the settlement area. There does not seem to be a change in the type of objects used as offerings from the LH IIIA to the LH IIIC, however, the small number of LH IIIC graves is insufficient and thus not representative. The number of graves declined during the LH IIIC period, possibly suggesting a reduction of the number of inhabitants. Yet, the possibility that the interment

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<sup>37</sup> Gallou 2005: 114.

<sup>38</sup> Marinatos 1952: 475.

<sup>39</sup> Säflund 1965: 19-22, 29-31.

<sup>40</sup> Tsountas 1888: 147; Marinatos 1954: 302.

of infants took place somewhere else outside the settlement should not be dismissed. Burials continued to be placed in trench Beta, within structures (Beta20, Beta12-15) as well as closely associated with them (Beta22, Zeta3) during the LH IIIC period, as was seen in the LH IIIA period. Therefore, it can be suggested that the same burial practices were in place before and after the abandonment of Aghios Stephanos during the LH IIIB period.

## **2.2.4 Pellana**

The archaeological site of Pellana is located to the southeast of the modern village of the same name, on the west bank of the Eurotas River, approximately 30km north-west of Sparta. Excavations at the Palaiokastro hill have uncovered a possible settlement from the EH to the Medieval period as well as chamber tombs in the surrounding area. Although located in a seemingly remote location, separated from most other sites in Laconia, the site is located in a strategic position on the route to the northern Peloponnese through the Eurotas river valley. Control of such a passage would surely have given the elites at Pellana influence over the surrounding area.

The first excavations, during the end of the 19th century, concentrated on the chamber tombs at the site of Spelies or Pelekete, approximately 500m from the settlement site (Figs. 2.41-2.42) (Karachalios 1929: 41-44). Since then, three other campaigns took place in 1977, 1990-92 and 2000-02. Details from the earlier excavations are limited, but their work in the chamber tombs was better recorded than that of the settlement (the chamber tombs will be discussed in detail below). The publication of the more recent excavation at Pellana lacks detailed information about the location of trenches and finds, as well as a comprehensive catalogue of finds. Without this information, it is impossible to review the conclusions of the author, T. Spyropoulos. For instance, it is claimed that a Mycenaean megaron as well as a Protogeometric temple were found at the foot of Palaiokastro hill. Yet, no information is given on the methods used for dating the walls presumably associated with these structures. Furthermore, many of the stratigraphical levels mentioned seemed to be mixed with

material from later periods, namely the Hellenistic, Roman and Medieval periods (Spyropoulos 2013: 215-240). Thus, without a clear indication of finds, their locations and stratigraphical levels, it is not possible to ascertain whether contamination occurred, and hence the validity of the periodization given by Spyropoulos.

### **2.2.5 Amyklai**

Amyklai is located in the Spartan plain, approximately 3km southwest of the Menelaion, on the Aghia Kiriaki hill. The area around the site consists of nearly horizontal marls, with small conglomerate scarps; soils which are optimal for the cultivation of cereals and olive trees (Bintliff 1977: 388). The earliest evidence of occupation consists of a large Early and Middle Helladic settlement on the southeast slope, as well as possible MH III graves (Demakopoulou 2012: 105; Calligas 1992: 36). It was only during the end of LH IIIB2 that evidence and use of the site can be observed again.

Finds such as figurines, drinking vessels and burnt bones indicate that ritual practices took place at the Aghia Kiriaki hill between the LH IIIB2 and LH IIIC Early periods (Tsountas 1892: 1-26; Buschor and von Massow 1927: 1-85; Demakopoulou 2012: 105-106). The figurines include small Psi figurines of French's late B and C types, with one or two of the D type. Horse riders, birds, bovinds, horses, dogs, pigs, sheep and goat figurines from the same period were also represented (Fig. 2.43; Demakopoulou 2012: 105-108). An interesting type that appears during the LH IIIC period is the large wheelmade bovid and horse figurines. At least twenty-nine examples were found at Amyklai, of Guggisberg's types B1 and B2 (LH IIIB-LH IIIC; 1996: 54-61). Some are decorated with typical motifs of the LH IIIC Middle period pottery style, such as fringed semi-circles, zigzags and elaborate triangles

(Fig. 2.43). LH IIIC Late and Submycenaean examples have also been identified by their darkground decoration (Demakopoulou 2012: 108).<sup>41</sup>

Wheelmade bull figurines first appeared during the Middle Minoan II period in Crete, especially in small intramural shrines and open-air cult places. In the Mainland, they are found throughout the Peloponnese, including Delphi, Thebes, Kalapodi, Athens, Asine, Mycenae and more recently Ano Englianos (Nicholls 1970: 3-10; Guggisberg 1996: 216-217, 2009: 125-136; Egan 2019: 421-446). They were particularly popular during the LH IIIB and LH IIIC periods in Laconia, having been found not only at Amyklai, but also at the Menelaion and Aghios Vasileios (Demakopoulou 1982: 57-63, 2009b: 95-103, 2012: 105-111; Catling *et al* 2009: 279, TC7; Vasilogamvrou 2018: 146-149).<sup>42</sup> The origin of the Mainland examples is under debate, since a clear connection cannot be made between the Cretan and Mainland bulls from the LH IIIB and LH IIIC periods. Instead, it has been suggested that the Mycenaean bulls are descendants of zoomorphic vessels produced during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods (Guggisberg 1996: 216).

A small number of vessels from this early phase of the sanctuary were also discovered, mostly small drinking vases and large kraters. Kylikes from the LH IIIB2 were particularly common, as well as examples from the LH IIIC, characterised by their stems with linear decoration or ribbed stems (Demakopoulou 2012: 108). Most kraters date to the LH IIIC period, and are decorated with joining semi-circles, half-rosettes and antithetical spirals.<sup>43</sup>

Further indication of the importance of Amyklai is suggested by its mention outside Greece. At the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III (1386 to 1349 BC) there are five statues with bases that

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<sup>41</sup> The SubMycenaean examples are discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>42</sup> The example from Menelaion (TC7) is published in Catling *et al* 2009, but not mentioned by other studies of the topic. Nevertheless, TC7 can be identified as belonging to Guggisberg's type B2, by the size of the chest(?) opening. The figurine most likely dates to the end of the LH IIIB2 or LH IIIC Early period, since it was found in the Aetos Stone Mound. The bull figurine from Aghios Vasileios is only mentioned briefly in Vasilogamvrou's 2018 article. In this preliminary report, the context in which the bulls were found are dated to the LH IIIB period. However, a close parallel to TC7 was found at Phylakopi (SF 2670; SF 836): both have clay join of breast bone, ridges on lower legs, flaring feet and a tall thin neck (Renfrew 1985: 242, 247).

<sup>43</sup> The pottery from the site is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

name Bronze Age sites. One of these specifically names Aegean sites and regions, including Mycenae, Kythera, Amninos, Phaistos and Amyklai. The way in which these sites are ordered in the list is thought to represent the itinerary of an Egyptian expedition to the Aegean (Cline 1987: 1-36; Cline and Stannish 2011: 6-10). Although the notion of an expedition is still under debate, the transliteration of the toponyms of the Egyptian statues' bases seems to be accepted by most scholars. However, at this point, there is no evidence of the sanctuary having been established at this early date, during the LH IIIA period. There were, nonetheless, three chamber tombs used during the LH IIIA to the LH IIIC Early periods in Spilakia, approximately 500m south-west of the sanctuary. Walls from Mycenaean houses were discovered during the same excavations, on the southwest flank of the hill, dated to the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods. Moreover, a spread of LH surface sherds was found by a survey on the southwest slope of the hill and along the ridge to the west, over an area of approximately 24000m<sup>2</sup> (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1960: 74-76; Antonakos 1982: 31, 131; Spyropoulos 1988a: 126-129; Zavvou 2004b: 173; Hope Simpson 2009: 321-322). Together, these discoveries strongly suggest a settlement in the vicinity of the Aghia Kiriaki hill. One could suggest that it is to this settlement that the Egyptian bases refer to, rather than the sanctuary.

The sanctuary of Amyklai continued to be visited into the EIA, a phase which will be discussed in Chapter 3. But it is important to highlight that until recently, scholars believed that Amyklai was briefly abandoned during the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC. Recent excavations now suggest a continuous occupation, as can be seen by the identification of figurines and pottery decorated in the style of the SubMycenaean period (Vlachou 2015: 114). According to Vlachou 'if there was a gap on the Amyklaian hill, this should certainly have been narrow and the frequentations of the area would have very soon resumed' (2015: 114). The SubMycenaean and later use of the sanctuary are discussed in the following chapter.

## 2.2.6 Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi

The importance of this site during the Early Mycenaean period was made clear after excavations at the Vapheio tholos tomb in 1888 by Tsountas. Besides the famous gold cups, pottery and an array of valuable goods, including imports from Crete, were found (Tsountas 1889: 129-172). The tholos was most likely constructed during the LH IIA/IIB period, but it continued to be visited into the LH IIIA1 period (Banou and Hitchcock 2009: 1-10; Gallou 2020: 11-13). The location of this structure is also of significance: it sits on the top of the hill, rather than cut out of the base of the slope. Its position would then be clear to most travelling in the area. Furthermore, the building of the tholos strongly suggests the existence of a group with the ability and authority to gather the resources and manpower needed for its construction (Banou and Hitchcock 2009: 6-7). In other areas of Greece, such as Messenia, it is clear that tholoi were used by elites as a signal of their power and influence. Scholars have been able to track the rise of the elites at Ano Englianos, for instance, through the abandonment of tholoi within the palace's territory. Their abandonment is interpreted as 'restructuring its power within its immediate region, effectively demoting the local centres it had promoted in LH I-II' (Davis *et al* 1997: 421).

Although the tholos might have been abandoned during the late Mycenaean period, excavations to the south and southeast of the Vapheio hill revealed architectural remains and material culture dated to the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods (Spyropoulos 1989: 112; Gallou 2020: 11-13). Unfortunately, information regarding the excavations is limited to short preliminary reports. Nonetheless survey work carried out by Banou suggests that the settlement might have extended over an area of approximately 20-25 ha, encompassing Amyklai, the chamber tombs at Spilakia as well as the area north and south of the Vapheio tholos and Tsarkaleika, to the northwest of Palaiopyrghi (Banou 1996: 34-36).

## 2.2.7 Pavlopetri

The site of Pavlopetri is located in the southern tip of Cape Malea, just opposite the island of Elaphonisos. It is thus on an important sea route linking Laconia to Kythera and Crete. Most of the site now lays under two to three meters of water, but underwater projects have been able to determine that it extended probably to 8 ha (Henderson *et al* 2011: 207). A number of stone foundations, monumental structures, courtyards, streets, cist graves and chamber tombs have been identified, dated to a period between the EH to the LH IIIC periods (Harding *et al* 1969: 125-142; Gallou *et al*, forthcoming). Occupation through the LH IIIC to the EIA period is suggested by a number of sherds identified in a recent preliminary study (Gallou *et al*, forthcoming). Their identification is very important since it demonstrates that site might have survived, with Epidaurus Limera, into the end of the LBA and the beginning of the EIA.

## 2.3 Cemeteries

Scholars often emphasise that much of the available evidence of the Mycenaean period comes from cemeteries (Dickinson 2006: 6). The same is observed in Laconia, where a total of twenty-four cemetery sites have been recorded, representing 40.7% of all known sites from the LH IIIA to the LH IIIC period. They include chamber and tholos tomb cemeteries.

### 2.3.1 Chamber Tomb cemeteries

Nineteen chamber tomb cemeteries have been so far identified in Laconia during the LH IIIA and LH IIIC periods. They include: Amyklai, Spilakia (S05), Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi (S07), Melathria (S08), Aghios Vasileios (S12), Daphni, Louria (S18), Mavrovouni (S21), Peristeri, Solaki (S29), Sykia (S37), Epidaurus Limera (S38), Aghios Anargyroi (S40), Manolarianika (S42), Megali Spelia (S43), Aghios Georgios (S44), Adiakopos (S46), Kamari (S47), Anemomylos, Kostatinakeika (S48), Avlospeli, Neapoli

(S49), Angelona (S56) and Pellana (S63) (Fig. 2.44). Unfortunately, most of these cemeteries cannot be associated with any settlement, except Aghios Vasileios, Melathria and Pellana. Moreover, no sites have been fully published, and information regarding their excavations and finds is restricted to short preliminary reports. The evidence from Epidauros Limera, however, is better presented than the other cemeteries in a recent volume by Gallou (2020).<sup>44</sup>

Figure 2.44 demonstrates that chamber tombs were particularly common at Cape Malea, in the vicinity of Pavlopetri (Manolarianika (S42), Megali Spelia (S43), Aghios Georgios (S44), Adiakopos (S46), Kamari (S47), Anemomylos, Kostatinakeika (S48), Avlospeli, Neapoli (S49)). Unfortunately, most can only be dated generally to the Mycenaean period, with the exception of Kamari and Aghios Georgios. Interest in the area would certainly have heightened with the success of Pavlopetri and its connections with Crete. Deposits of iron, lead, zinc and silver have also been identified in the area.

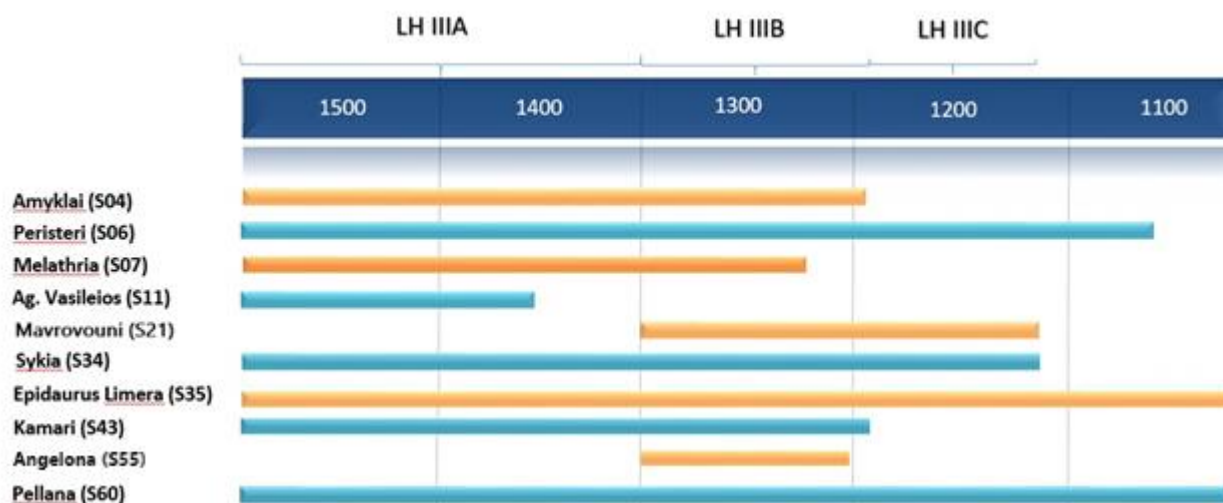
Seven cemeteries continued to be used during the LH IIIB and the LH IIIC period: Mavrovouni, Peristeri, Sykia, Epidauros Limera, Kamari and Pellana (see timeline below).<sup>45</sup> By the LH IIIC period, a large number of chamber tombs were abandoned, especially in the south of Cape Malea. The finds associated with the chamber tombs consist mostly of pottery, with a few examples of bronze weapons (daggers, spearheads, arrowheads, knives), beads of different materials (carnelian, glass, faience, amber, steatite), whorls, Phi-type figurines, an amber sealstone and gold foil.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, the pottery is the only group of objects that can be safely dated, through comparisons with other known examples. Most grave goods were found scattered and the excavators did not record their location. Therefore, the only object types discussed in detail below is the pottery.

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<sup>44</sup> For a full description of the cemeteries discussed in this section, see the Site Gazetteer (Appendix 1).

<sup>45</sup> Due to the lack of published evidence, not all can be dated precisely. Sites S18, S19, S33, S35, S41, S42, S43, S44, S46, S48 and S49, for instance, are dated vaguely as 'Mycenaean' and thus are not included in the table.

<sup>46</sup> For a list of see Appendix 2.



Timeline of use of chamber tombs (by the author).

### 2.3.1.1 LH IIIA pottery

Only a small number of vessels dated to the LH IIIA1 period were found in the Laconian chamber tombs. The majority of examples originated from Epidaurus Limera and Pellana, where the alabastron was the preferred shape (39.1% and 66.6% of their LH IIIA1 assemblage, respectively; Figs. 2.45 and 2.46)<sup>47</sup>. A larger number of shapes were represented in chamber tombs of the region during the LH IIIA2 period, with the stirrup jar as the most common shape in Epidaurus Limera, Melathria and Pellana (Figs. 2.47-2.49). In Sykia, however, the preferred shape was the jug (Fig. 2.50). Nonetheless, all four sites contained a similar repertoire (including kylikes, amphorae, jugs, alabastra and piriform jars), indicating a possible homogenisation of burial practices during the LH IIIA2 period in Laconia.

### 2.3.1.2 LH IIIB pottery

The LH IIIB period is marked by a significant decrease in the number of vessels deposited in Laconian chamber tombs. All sites, except Epidaurus Limera and Melathria, contained only one or two vessels per chamber tomb. At Epidaurus Limera, for instance, only 17 vases were found, when the

<sup>47</sup> For a list of the pottery and the associated sites see Appendix 2.

previous period was represented by eighty-six examples. The decrease is also seen in Melathria, where the number of LH IIIB vessels is less than half than that of the LH IIIA examples.

Another interesting aspect of the LH IIIB period is a notable heterogeneity of the shapes represented throughout Laconia. In Epidaurus Limera, for instance, the most common shapes continued to be the stirrup jar, followed by piriform jars, alabastra and dippers. In Melathria, however, cups, kraters and alabastra were favoured. Unfortunately, the small number of vessels from the other chamber tombs, such as Pellana and Sykia, do not allow to ascertain whether this was a Laconian phenomenon in general.

### **2.3.1.3 LH IIIC pottery**

The number of vessels in chamber tombs rose from the LH IIIB to the LH IIIC period. Yet, they never reached the same levels observed during the LH IIIA period. This trend can be clearly seen at Epidaurus Limera, Pellana and Sykia, the cemeteries from which a catalogue of finds is available (Figs. 2.51 to 2.53). Moreover, the shapes used as grave offerings during the LH IIIC period show a greater homogeneity than during the previous period. The preferred shapes were the alabastron, jug and the stirrup jar (Figs. 2.51 to 2.53). Again, as was stated above, the data which these observations are based upon is not sufficient for an overall description of practices throughout Laconia, but they can give an indication of possible trends.

There were particularly interesting developments in Epidaurus Limera during the LH IIIC Early to Late periods. For the first time imports were deposited in the chamber tombs, particularly Minoan and Argive stirrup jars (Sj13, Sj17, Sj18, Sj19-Sj20, Sj23, Sj25).<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, Minoan influence over the local production in Epidaurus Limera can be observed since the LH IIIA period in a number of

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<sup>48</sup> See Appendix 2 for details regarding these vessels, and Chapter 4 for a discussion of the shape.

vessels decorated with the rock pattern motif (FM 32), stacked triangles and almond-shape petals on flowers (Mountjoy 1999: 265, no. 85; Gallou 2020: 188).

The evidence thus indicates contacts between Epidaurus Limera and Crete at least since the LH IIIA period. However, the fact that imports start to appear during the LH IIIC period could be associated with the end of the palatial system in Greece. Scholars theorise that the collapse of palatial sites would have led to the disruption of trade routes which had previously been monopolised by their elites (Sherratt and Sherratt 1993: 361-362; Crielaard 2006: 278-281; Eder and Lemos 2020: 137). In the case of Laconia, important centres such as the Menelaion see a brief re-occupation during the LH IIIC Early period, to then be abandoned again until the end of the Geometric period. The socio-political relationship between Epidaurus Limera and centres such as the Menelaion are not clear, but one could suggest that resources were now available to other interested parties. Moreover, the rise of important coastal sites is a phenomenon of the LH IIIC period, as it is exemplified by Lefkandi, in Euboea, and Perati in Athens. However, unlike these areas, Epidaurus Limera was abandoned by the end of the LBA, in the SubMycenaean period.

#### **2.3.1.4 Amber objects from Pellana**

At least three amber objects were found in the chamber tombs in Pellana. In chamber tomb Pelekete 2 a sealstone with an indecipherable design was discovered and dated to the LH IIIA1 or LH IIIA2 (Harding *et al* 1974: 164). Two amber beads were found in Pelekete 4, of unknown date. However, studies show that the largest amount of amber objects originates from LH IIIA and LH IIIB contexts in the Argolid and Messenia (Harding *et al* 1974: 149-150; Czebreszuk 2013: 557-562). Thus, it is likely that the beads can be dated to the same period.

Sources of amber are not found in Greece, and infrared spectography has shown that most of the Aegean BA amber was of Baltic provenance (Beck 1966; Harding *et al* 1974: 145; Hughes-Brock 1985: 257; Palavestra 1992: 381). It is unclear how amber arrived in Pellana, but scholars suggest that

the material arrived in the Peloponnese through commercial intermediaries, possibly through Italy (Papadopoulos 1995: 207; Maran 2013: 148-149). From the Peloponnese, local trade routes or gift-exchange between palatial elites could have further distributed the amber. In the case of Pellana, the site is located on the northern end of Laconia, with relatively easy access to one of the areas with the highest number of amber objects in Greece, the Argolid. Coupled with the fact that amber has not been found anywhere else in Laconia, one could suggest that the origin of these objects in Pellana was one of the Argive administrative centres.

### 2.3.2 Tholos Tombs

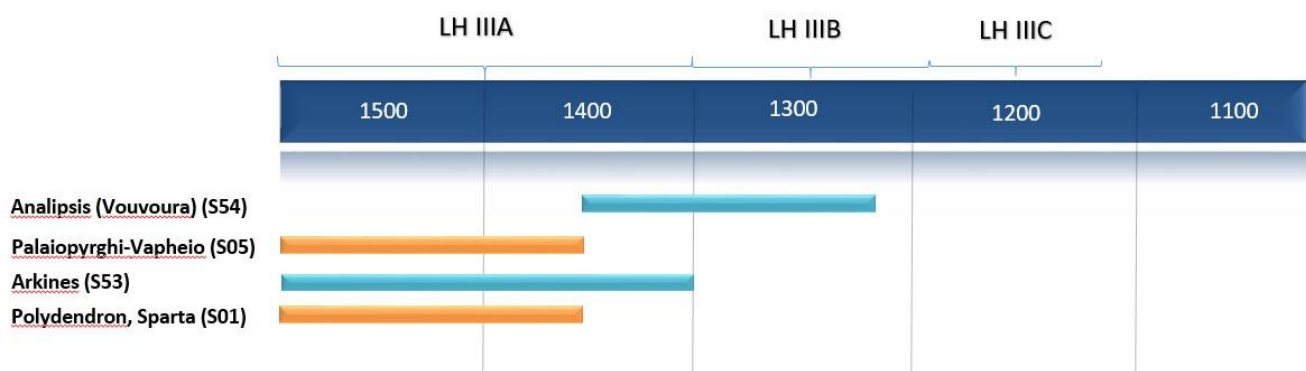
In contrast to the number of chamber tomb sites, tholos tombs were found in only four locations in Laconia: Polydendron, Sparta (S01), Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi (S07), Arkines (S56) and Analipsis (Vouvoura) (S57) (Fig. 2.44) All tholoi can be shown to have been in use during the LH IIIA period and abandoned before the beginning of the LH IIIB period. Gallou has suggested that the tholoi from Arkines might have been used for longer (2020: 15), into the LH IIIB period, but more evidence is needed to confirm this. One interesting aspect of the distribution of tholoi in Laconia is their absence in the Helos plain and the Maleas peninsula.<sup>49</sup>

The location of the tholos at Vapheio has already been discussed above in section 2.2.6 and its importance for the overall Laconian political landscape is clear. Little information, however, is available from the three tholoi in Arkines, approximately 9km to the west of Aghios Vasileios, within the Taygetos mountain range. All three are described as small, with chamber diameters ranging between 4m to 6m (Gallou 2020: 14-15). The associated settlement, dated to the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods, has been identified on the slope opposite the tombs (Banou 1996: 40). The site is located on an important route connecting Laconia and Messenia, the so-called 'royal road' and, consequently, it

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<sup>49</sup> Galanakis 2018 article corroborates this data. Over the past 25 years only one tholos tomb has been discovered in Laconia, at Sparta (2018: 88-89).

has been suggested that it marks the border between the two regions (Tsountas 1890: 22; Banou 1996: 40). Interestingly, a similar situation can be observed at Analipsis, located in modern-day Arcadia. Eight small tholos tombs (with chamber diameters ranging between 2.5m to 3.3m) and one large tholos (8.65m) were discovered in the mountains of the Parnon range. Although today the area is part of Arcadia, one cannot dismiss the possibility that the site was established by groups from further south, in Laconia, and therefore that Analipsis could have marked the border between the regions during the LH period. Yet, at this point, due the lack of information about the role of the Laconian centres in the region and the extent of their influence, one can only speculate about how borders were defined during the LBA in Laconia.



Timeline of use of tholoi (by the author).

Many of the tholoi do not have complete publications, but from the available information they contained a mixture of pottery, weaponry, toiletries and jewellery.<sup>50</sup> The tholos at Analipsis, for instance, contained a boar's tusk helmet and two ivory combs as well as amber beads and small pieces of gold and silver objects. Yet, undoubtedly the Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi tholos contained the most luxurious set of objects, recovered from an undisturbed cist grave within the chamber. They include the renowned gold Vapheio cups, silver cups, bronze scale pans, gold nails, ivory fragments, bronze

<sup>50</sup> For details see Appendix 2.

knives and daggers, seals and rings of bronze, gold and iron (Tsountas 1889: 129-172; Banou and Hitchcock 2009: 1-3; Gallou 2020: 13).

The most recent tholos tombs have been discovered at Polydendro, Sparta, located at the Kaouri and Xerouli plot alongside a shaft grave. The tholos contained pottery, bronze weapons, beads and spindle whorls, which date the use of tholos to a period between LH IIA and LH IIIA2 (Vasilogamvrou *et al* 2008: 330; Vasilogamvrou *et al* 2016: 511; Gallou 2020: 15). At the Papastratakos plot, the dromos of a second tholos has been identified, and the pottery from the excavations seem to indicate that it was in use during the LH IIIA period (Vasilogamvrou *et al* 2016: 511; Vasilogamvrou *et al* 2008: 330; Gallou 2020: 15-16). These are important evidence for the Mycenaean history of Sparta and its vicinities, since it further demonstrates the occupation of the area before the Protogeometric period.

## 2.4 Conclusions

Laconia during the Mycenaean period, although described as 'frustrating' (in the words of Dickinson), was as rich and complex as regions such as Messenia and the Argolid. The finds from the Vapheio tholos and the chamber tombs at Pellana demonstrate the presence of wealthy groups in the region at least since the LH IIA period. At the same time, significant structures were erected in Aghios Vasileios, followed not long after by Mansion I at the Menelaion. The evidence from this survey demonstrates the development of important centres into the 15<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and possible signs of competition between them.

The most important sites of the period between the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries were Aghios Vasileios, the Menelaion and Pellana. Studies of the Aghios Vasileios excavations are still needed before one can discuss in detail the centre's political and economic role in Laconia. Nonetheless, one could suggest that the rise and success of the site could be associated with its strategic location between the Spartan and Helos plains. Control over imported goods – or *exotica* – and their

redistribution was a strategy used by Mycenaean elites to reinforce their social status and secure ties with other local elites (Burns 1999: 38-41). In the Argolid, for instance, prestigious grave goods were mostly distributed among the graves in Mycenae during the Mycenaean period. The trend escalated and by the LH IIIB the diversity and quantity of valuable objects decreased in graves throughout the Argolid, but not at Mycenae. Some items were even restricted to the citadel, such as Minoan cultic accessories (Voutsaki 2001: 197-204). According to Voutsaki, the control of such items guaranteed that elites from Mycenae held a prominent position and, at the same time, prevented others from obtaining them. The distribution of prestige items was thus a strategy to maintain their social position and to induce collaboration from smaller centres (2001: 195-207).

Prestigious objects from Crete, in particular, were associated with Mycenaean elites at least from the MBA, becoming particularly common as grave goods during the beginning of the LBA (Voutsaki 1997: 45-48). Control of such imports by Aghios Vasileios is suggested by the fact that they are not found anywhere else in the Spartan plain during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods. Aghios Vasileios' location would have enabled its control over travel routes between the Spartan and Helos plains, and therefore access to harbour towns as well as trade routes to Crete and other areas in the Aegean.

In this case Aghios Stephanos, a site with close links with Kythera, was most likely an entryway for Cretan goods in Laconia. This survey has shown that Aghios Stephanos was heavily influenced by the Minoan style and possibly even the home for potters from Kythera. Moreover, the discovery of a specific type of fabric (red silver fabric) in Kastri (Kythera), Aghios Stephanos and Aghios Vasileios indicates there were contacts and exchanges between these sites until the LH IIIA1 period, when Kastri was abandoned.

The control of imported goods to the Spartan plain could explain the fact that none were found in Mansion II at the Menelaion. One has to take into consideration, however, the history of the site, and that erosion, agricultural activity and earlier excavations resulted in the loss of evidence.

Nonetheless, LM IB Minoan and 'Minoansing' tableware in the site indicates contacts with Crete during this period (before the rise of Aghios Vasileios). Cretan imports are observed again only in contexts from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Catling *et al* 2009: 339-340), and thus after the destruction of the 'palace' at Aghios Vasileios.

Further connections between Aghios Vasileios and the Menelaion are suggested by the development of these sites. One of the first significant structures from Aghios Vasileios, Building E, was built at some point during the end of LH IIA period and the beginning of the LH IIB period. It is also during this period that Cretan imports cease at the Menelaion. Moreover, when the palatial complex at Aghios Vasileios was most likely destroyed in the LH IIIB1 period, the site at the Menelaion was expanded with the construction of Buildings A and B. This sequence of events seems to indicate that there was competition between the two centres throughout the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods. This is not to say, however, that the Menelaion was responsible for the early downfall of Aghios Vasileios. But it certainly benefited from it.

Instead, the destruction of Aghios Vasileios could be associated with the abandonment of Kythera during the LH IIIA2/IIIB transitional period (Broodbank *et al* 2005: 11). The reasons behind this are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but upheavals were observed in Crete during the LM IIIA2 period, resulting in a shift of power. Some have theorised this led to the collapse of Knossos and the rise of a number of sites throughout Crete (Preston 2008: 316-318). These events would surely have affected trade and travel, thus affecting Kythera as well as Aghios Stephanos, which can be shown to have been abandoned at some point during the LH IIIA2 period. As a consequence, Aghios Vasileios would have lost access to Cretan goods and thus their advantage over other Laconian centres.

### 2.4.1 A Laconian kingdom?

Since the discovery of Aghios Vasileios, the idea of a Laconian kingdom has resurfaced (Cavanagh 2020: 652, for instance). The notion of a Laconian kingdom is based on ancient sources, which mention it as the seat of Menelaus.<sup>51</sup> Further evidence of the existence of such a kingdom, according to some, can be found by in the use of the term *ra-ke-da-mi-ni-jo*, from Linear B tablets from Thebes, which can be translated as Λακεδαίμων (del Frio 2010: 59). The Menelaion – as the only site in Laconia to have been found with monumental structures – was thus believed to be the capital of the ‘kingdom’. However, the notion was uncertain due to the lack of a Linear B archive at the Menelaion, or other finds which would demonstrate its function as an administrative centre. The excavations at Aghios Vasileios, however, have unearthed a site which seems to fill in these gaps and thus has been hailed as the centre of a kingdom comparable to that of Ano Englianos at Pylos (e.g. Cavanagh 2020: 652-653).

Many studies have been dedicated to the formation of the Pylian ‘kingdom’, and most seem to agree that power was centralised in the ‘palace’ by the end of the LH IIIA period. Voutsaki, for instance, argues that by then, the wealthiest tholoi were located near the palace of Pylos only. According to her, ‘the power and independence of the local leaders were curbed, as this arena of competition became the exclusive right of the palatial elites’ (1995: 62). Resources were now diverted towards the re-modelling of the palace instead of the construction of tholoi in a process of centralisation towards Pylos (Voutsaki 1998: 49-56). As a consequence, important centres such as Iklaina were destroyed and abandoned around the middle of LH IIIB (Cosmopoulos 2019: 370-374).

Unlike Ano Englianos, the establishment of Aghios Vasileios in the Spartan plain did not seem to have resulted in the centralisation of power. In the LH IIIA period, for example, a number of new chamber tombs were constructed in Melathria and Spilakia. Chamber tombs were not then restricted to ‘palatial elites’ and were likely a sign of status for local leaders. Thus, one can suggest that the

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<sup>51</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 2.581-7.

relationship between these groups and the 'palatial' elites was one of co-operation, instead of dominance. Co-operation compelled perhaps by the distribution of imported objects, such as those from Crete. It is then not surprising that with the destruction of Aghios Vasileios these new chamber tombs were abandoned. This co-operation, however, probably did not extend outside the area encompassed by Melathria and Spilakia. An opposite trend is observed at the Menelaion, which thrived after the destruction of Aghios Vasileios.

The evidence from the cemeteries coupled with the continuous occupation of the Menelaion during Aghios Vasileios' prime strongly suggests that Aghios Vasileios was not the centre of a Laconian kingdom. It is possible that Aghios Vasileios' elites had influence over the sites in part of the Spartan plain, but there is no evidence at this point that it might have extended further.

Further clues regarding the socio-political organisation of Laconia during the LBA are evinced by the close proximity of the region's most important sites: the Menelaion, Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi and Aghios Vasileios. Their close proximity was likely to have been part of a strategy of survival since their intervisibility would have facilitated the creation of a network of support between them (Hitchcock *et al* 2020: 335-336). By the LH II period however, these sites show signs that they were becoming important centres in the Spartan plain, such as the construction of Mansion I at the Menelaion, the Vapheio tholos at Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi and the 'palatial' structures at Aghios Vasileios. It is thus intriguing that there is no evidence of conflicts between them, such as fortification walls (Banou *et al* 2022: 29-30).

## **2.4.2 Burial Practices and Cult**

As it is seen in many regions of Greece, the study of mortuary practices in Laconia is made challenging by the lack of publication of excavations and their finds (Galanakis 2018: 86). The available information indicates that tholoi had a short-life span in Laconia, with their abandonment by the LH

IIIA period. Interestingly, no tholoi have been discovered associated with Aghios Vasileios, one of the wealthiest sites in Laconia during the LBA. Instead, the North cemetery shows a predilection for cists and pit graves, with at least one chamber tomb in use between the LHI/II to the LH IIIA1 period (Petraou 2011: 40; Vasilogamvrou 2016b: 596; Moutafi and Voutsaki 2016: 780-790).

The analysis of the grave goods from chamber tombs from other locations in Laconia also demonstrates a lack of prestigious items. The objects which better demonstrate wealth include bronze weapons (Epidauros Limera and Sykia), faience beads (Melathrias and Sykia), amber sealstones and beads (Pellana) and gold foil and sheets (Pellana). Yet, these assemblages cannot be compared to the array of objects which furnished tholoi and chamber tombs in Messenia and the Argolid, or the earlier burials at Vapheio. Thus, if the grave goods analysed in this dissertation are an accurate representation of the Laconian burial practices of the Mycenaean period, one could suggest that neither chamber tombs nor tholoi indicate the use of conspicuous consumption as a social strategy to increase status.

Unlike the burial practices, very little is known about the Laconian religious practices during the period between the LH IIIA and the SubMycenaean periods. More research is needed in order to suggest that Aghios Vasileios was used for religious festivals in the same manner as other palatial sites, such as Mycenae and Tiryns (Eder 2019: 28; Maran 2012: 149-160). Nonetheless, the discovery of the squared altar associated with figurines does indicate some form of cult practice was taking place in the vicinity of Building A. Gatherings with possible religious features can be suggested as well by the findings at the LH IIIA2 courtyard at Aghios Stephanos and the Aetos Stone mound at the Menelaion.

One interesting aspect revealed by this survey is the presence of wheelmade bull figurines in a number of Laconian sites, including Aghios Vasileios, the Menelaion and Amyklai. As was discussed above, these figurines are found in a small number of sites in Greece, such as Delphi, Thebes, Athens, and the Argolid; and they can be dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. At Laconia, the earliest wheelmade figurines are those from Aghios Vasileios, dated to the LH IIIB period. The type continues

to be produced during the LH IIIC period, as it is shown by the examples from the Menelaion and Amyklai. At the latter, the figurines continued to be used until at least the SubMycenaean period.

The sanctuary of Amyklai, however, is the only enduring cult site in Laconia from the BA to the IA. The site has been compared to other Mycenaean open-air sanctuaries which are not associated with a settlement, such as Kalapodi. Instead, these sanctuaries are located either on crossroads or on the peaks of mountains and thus are considered to be 'extra-urban' or not within a settlement.<sup>52</sup> It is suggested that they gained importance during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC as 'communal meeting points and places of interaction between dispersed groups of settlements' (Eder 2019: 34). Nonetheless, as was discussed above, sections of LH IIIA and LH IIIB houses were found in the south-west flank of the Aghia Kiriaki hill, as well as the chamber tomb cemetery of Spilakia, at approximately 500m from the sanctuary. In the case of Kalapodi, for example, the closest site to the sanctuary is Aghios Georgios – a cluster of chamber tombs located at least 1.5km to the south-west.<sup>53</sup> In both cases – Amyklai and Kalapodi – the sanctuaries are located outside a settlement, but is it really possible to compare their situations, seeing the proximity of Spilakia to Amyklai? Further investigations in the vicinity of Amyklai are needed in order to understand the relationship of the sanctuary with other sites of the Spartan plain, yet there is enough to caution against the assumption that Amyklai can be easily compared to other 'extra-urban' sanctuaries.

### **2.4.3 External contacts**

During the Mycenaean period, contacts between Laconia and Crete are clear. The evidence presented in this survey indicates that a network involving Crete, Kythera, Aghios Stephanos and Aghios Vasileios evolved during the LH II period and continued into the LH IIIA period. Moreover, it is

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<sup>52</sup> The term 'extra-urban' is usually a term used to describe sanctuaries located outside of urban centres. In this case, the term is being used in reference to sanctuaries which are not within a settlement.

<sup>53</sup> See Livieratou 2015: 93-101 for a comprehensive survey sites from Phokis during the LBA and EIA transition.

also clear that Kythera was the point of contact between Cretans and Laconia, via Aghios Stephanos. From this picture, one could suggest that the *exotica* and Minoan goods discovered at Aghios Vasileios were introduced through this network.

Contacts with northern Greece are also suggested by the finding of amber objects in the chamber tombs in Pellana. Although no palatial site has been found in the area and the publication of the site is problematic, its chamber tombs clearly demonstrate the presence of wealthy elites during the LH IIIA to at least the LH IIIB period. The location of Pellana at the border of Arcadia would have facilitated contact with the northern Peloponnese and thus other regions with access to amber, such as the Argolid.

By the LH IIIC period, travel routes seem to have changed from the southern Peloponnese to its eastern coast, via Epidaurus Limera. For the first time in the site's history imports from Crete appear, alongside Argive pottery; while Aghios Stephanos was abandoned after a short re-occupation during the LH IIIC Early period. The change of travel routes was most likely the consequence of the end of the palatial system in Greece. Without the 'palatial' centres the production and distribution of prestige goods were no longer controlled, allowing for new networks to be established.

Connections with other areas of the Aegean can also be suggested from the findings of HMBW at the Menelaion. Studies suggest that this pottery originated from the Adriatic Sea and was introduced to the Peloponnese by groups of specialised craftspeople working with metal (Eder and Jung 2005: 487). It is interesting then that some examples were found associated with a possible metal workshop in Building B. Moreover, HMBW was also discovered with local pottery in the Aetos Stone Mound, suggesting that the ware was integrated into the local assemblage.

Links with Crete and even the Adriatic Sea have been discussed in this survey; however it is interesting to note the lack of evidence of links between Laconia and its wealthy neighbour, Messenia. Contacts could be suggested, however, between the Messenian kingdom and Aghios Vasileios by the location of a possible road connecting the latter to Kardamyli, a site on the west coast of the Mani

Peninsula (pers. Comm. Dr. L. Bendall). The road follows the Gorani river, a tributary of the Eurotas river which runs between the villages of Arna and Gola.<sup>54</sup> The area around Arna is of particular interest because of the discovery of the Arkines tholoi and possibly an associated settlement from the LH III period (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1961: 128). Unfortunately, very little is known about these tholoi or the settlement, thus it is impossible to determine whether the site's pottery or burials reflect practices seen at either Messenia or Laconia or both.

#### **2.4.4 LH IIIC and the end of the Mycenaean period**

The LH IIIC period in Laconia was marked by destructions and the abandonment of sites, as can be observed in other areas of Greece. The reasons behind these events are unknown and debated among many scholars. In Laconia, the impact of the events at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC was not felt immediately. This survey shows that only eight sites were abandoned during the LH IIIC Early period, a decrease of 39% from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Furthermore, many chamber tomb cemeteries established during the LH IIIA period continued to be occupied throughout the LH IIIC period. Their continued use indicates that the settlements associated to them were not abandoned. Thus, apart from the south of the Malea peninsula, where all cemeteries were abandoned after the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC, there was some stability to the Laconian settlements. It certainly does not indicate an abrupt disruption to their way of life.

A number of coastal sites continued to be inhabited, such as Mavrovouni and Asteri, Karousi, and Aghios Stephanos is briefly re-occupied during the LH IIIC Early on the Helos plain. On the east coast of the Maleas Peninsula, Epidaurus Limera not only continues to receive burials, but its sea routes seem to thrive, as is seen by the Argive and Cretan imported stirrup jars deposited in its

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<sup>54</sup> According to Tsountas, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while Sparta and the northern villages used the Langada route to Kalamata to go west, all the southern villages used the route by Arkines (Tsountas 1889: 132).

chamber tombs. In the Spartan plain, a number of sites survive the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, including the Menelaion and Amyklai. However, the only chamber tombs which were still in use during this period were those located at Peristeri, Tsasi. Finally, to the north, finds from the settlement and the chamber tombs of Pellana demonstrate the continuity of the site well into the EIA.

# **Chapter 3:**

## **The end of LBA and the beginning of the EIA.**

### **The SubMycenaean, Protogeometric and Geometric periods**

#### **(1100-700 BC)**

### **3.1 The SubMycenaean period**

The SubMycenaean period was first identified in 1934 in the Salamis cemetery, in Attica, as a ceramic phase which had closer resemblance to the style of the late Mycenaean than to the Protogeometric period (Skeat 1934: 28, Lemos 2002: 7; Papadopoulous *et al* 2011: 187). Since then, the style has been recognised in other areas of the Aegean, including the Argolid (Tiryns, Asine, Mycenae), Phthiotis (Elateia-Alonaki, Kalapodi, Mitrou), Lokris (Mitrou), Euboea (Lefkandi) and Elis (Olympia) (Lemos 2002: 7-8; Eder 2009: 139; Deger-Jalkotzy 2014: 42-46). However, the use of the term and whether it represents a separate cultural phase continues to be disputed by scholars (e.g. Desborough 1964: 17-20; Snodgrass 1971: 31-40; Rutter 1978: 58-65; Mountjoy 1986: 194; Lemos 2002: 7-8; Coldstream 2003: 252; Ruppenstein 2003: 183- 188; Dickinson 2006: 15; Papadopoulos *et al* 2011: 187; Deger-Jalkotzy 2014: 41-50).

In Laconia, the discussion is complicated by the small number of vessels from the period. Earlier studies, such as Desborough's seminal book *The Greek Dark Ages*, have claimed that the pottery from the 'Dark Age' period at Laconia is divorced from Mycenaean antecedents and isolated from other contemporaneous styles (1972: 243). Moreover, that 'we seem to lose all archaeological touch with the Dark Ages until the 10<sup>th</sup> century' (1972: 84). Coulson closely followed Desborough in his analysis and created a specific chronological phase for Laconia, based on his work at Nichoria in

Messenia. In this classification, the first phase (DA I) would have begun c. 950 BC (1985: 63-66). Consequently, there would be a gap between the end of the Mycenaean period and the beginning of the Protogeometric/DA period in Laconia's ceramic sequence. In the thirty-five years since Coulson's publication, new evidence has been introduced by a number of studies (Margreiter 1988; Stibbe 1994; Demakopoulou 2009; Vlachou 2015, 2018) and excavations. This evidence now indicates the existence of a local SubMycenaean period between ca. 1100-1050/1000BC, a period which is defined by means of stylistic comparisons with vessels from other areas of Greece (Vlachou 2018: 101).<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the phasing created by Coulson is not closely followed by those studying the period. This dissertation does not follow it either, favouring instead the prevalent terms (Protogeometric and Geometric periods) used in other areas. This is not to say, however, that the equivalent dates of these periods in other areas of Greece are also followed in Laconia (Table 1; E.g. Margreiter 1988; Demakopoulou 2009a, 2009b; Voyatzis 2014; Vlachou 2015, 2018).

Dates (BC)	Laconia (Coulson)	Messenia (Coulson)	Attica (Desborough & Coldstream)
1050/40	LH IIIC	LH IIIC	LH IIIC
	DA I	DA I	Submycenaean
EPG			
1000			MPG
950	DA II	DA II	LPG
900			EG I
850			EG II
800	DA II/III	DA II/III	MG
750	DA III	DA III	LG
	LG	LG	

**Table 1:** Phasing in Laconia and Messenia, according to Coulson, and the prevalent chronology, in this case in Attica (by the author).

<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 4 for more details about the Laconian SubMycenaean vessels and how they can be compared to examples from other regions.

Only four sites in Laconia have yielded material that can be dated to the SubMycenaean period: Pellana to the north, Amyklai in the Spartan plain, Peristeri in the Helos plain and Epidaurus Limera in Cape Malea (Fig. 3.1). This section analyses the available evidence from the period, including burial and cult practices. The pottery is discussed separately, in Chapter 4.

### 3.1.1 Burials

Four chamber tomb cemeteries continued to receive burials during the SubMycenaean period: Pellana, Epidaurus Limera, Peristeri and Pavlopetri. However, evidence is limited to one or two vessels in each site, with the exception of Peristeri. At Pellana, for instance, a jug (Jg21) was found in chamber tomb Pelekete 2 (Demakopoulou 1982: 113-117; Gallou 2020: 17). At Epidaurus Limera, one amphoriskos (Amp17) was among the finds from Karachalios Tomb B (Drandakis 1953; Gallou 2020: 40). At Peristeri, on the other hand, an intact burial was found in the upper level of chamber tomb 5. It contained a small jug (Jg22) and a large neck-handled amphora (Am1) dated to the SubMycenaean period, and three bronze pins and a ring (Themos and Zavvou 2007: 260-261; Demakopoulou 2009: 121-122; Gallou 2020: 30-31). Lastly, preliminary reports from the survey undertaken by the Pavlopetri Underwater Archaeology Project indicates that cist tombs could have been used, or re-used, during the SubMycenaean period (Gallou 2020: 76; Gallou *et al*, forthcoming).

In summary, there is a marked decrease in the number of burials in Laconia from the LH IIIC to the SubMycenaean period. Yet, evidence clearly demonstrates the continuity of important Late Bronze Age sites such as Pellana and Epidaurus Limera.

### 3.1.2 Terracotta Figurines

At the sanctuary at Amyklai, two bull terracotta figurines have been dated to the SubMycenaean period. Both are wheel-made, with short, hollow bodies decorated in darkground with common SubMycenaean motifs, such as stacked triangles, semi-circles executed in free hand, cross-hatching and vertical zigzags in between short vertical lines (Fig. 3.2, Demakopoulou 1982: 57-58, 2009: 100-101; Vlachou 2015: 114). Although not as common as handmade figurines, wheel-made bulls were not new to the SubMycenaean period at the sanctuary. As was discussed in Chapter 2, similar examples of bovids and horses from the LH IIIC period were also found at Amyklai. Some of these have elaborate decoration, which can be closely compared to examples from the Argolid (Fig. 3.3; Demakopoulou 2012: 108). Parallels to the SubMycenaean examples are rarer, nonetheless, Demakopoulou argues that their short body and decoration are reminiscent of a Protogeometric stag from the Kerameikos (2012: 108).

Other possible influences can be suggested by the inclusion of genitals in one of the SubMycenaean figurines from Amyklai (Fig. 3.4). Detailed representation such as this can be traced to a Minoan tradition, where bulls are depicted in a more naturalistic approach than the Mycenaean figures (Kourou 2002: 14-15). The figurine's short, barrel-like body, however, clearly follows the Mycenaean tradition. Together, these characteristics indicate that this example represents a local production.

### 3.1.3 Personal Ornaments

Three fragmented bronze pins accompanied the burial in Peristeri's chamber tomb 5 (Demakopoulou 2009: 122; Gallou 2020: 30-31). The pins were located near the shoulders of the skeleton, which could suggest they were used for fastening the individual's clothing or shroud. All three pin heads have a ribbed decoration, which assigns them to Kilian-Dirlmeier's type A, a type that

appears during the SubMycenaean and Protogeometric periods in the Peloponnese (Fig. 3.5; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 66-69; Demakopoulou 2009: 122). Unfortunately, the pins are too corroded to be compared to other examples. A simple bronze ring was found in the same burial, on the deceased's right hand which, according to Demakopoulou, has parallels from SubMycenaean tombs in the Kerameikos (2009: 122; Ruppenstein 2007: 206-207, fig. 11).

It is interesting to note that pins and rings were not used as grave goods during the LBA at Laconian sites. Before the SubMycenaean period, the latest examples of pins are dated to the MH III to the LH IIA periods, in burial Alpha 23 in Aghios Stephanos (MH III/LH I; Tylour 1972: 217), in a cist tomb in Geraki (MH III/LH I; Wace 1909/1910: 75) and in the tholos in Vapheio (LH IIA; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 54-56). Similarly, only two rings were found in burials in Laconia before the SubMycenaean period: one dated to the MH III/LH I period, from burial Alpha 23 in Aghios Stephanos, and the other to the LH IIA period, from the tholos in Vapheio (Tylour 1972: 217; Popham *et al* 1974: 217-218; Gallou 2020: 123).

### 3.1.4 Comments

Ultimately, evidence of the SubMycenaean period in Laconia is still limited and only a few comments can be made. First, continuity of burial practices is suggested by the use of chamber tombs, although in a smaller scale than in the previous period. Aspects of the LBA cult practices must also have continued into the SubMycenaean period, as is suggested by the dedication of animal figurines from this period in Amyklai. Examples of wheelmade bull figurines, for instance, are observed in Laconia from at least the LH IIIB period in Aghios Vasileios and the Menelaion. They continued to be produced during the LH IIIC and the SubMycenaean periods and were dedicated at Amyklai (Demakopoulou 2009b: 97-100).

Pins, nevertheless, are a new feature introduced to Laconian burials during the SubMycenaean period. It is unlikely that the lack of pins during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods could be explained by a lack of burial evidence: at least six tholos tombs, thirty chamber tombs and forty-seven pit and cist tombs have been excavated from this period.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the type of pins represented can be shown to have been first introduced to the Peloponnese (Argolid, Elis and Messenia) during the SubMycenaean and Protogeometric periods (Kilian-Dirmeier 1984: 66-69).

Considering the above, one can suggest that the Laconian SubMycenaean period followed a similar trajectory to what has been observed in the Argolid and Attica. At the former, a mix of new and old traditions are seen in the introduction of long pins and fibulae in both chamber and cist tombs. In Attica, the use of chamber tombs probably continued for a short period of time after the appearance of cist tombs. Moreover, examples of LH IIIC Late pottery were discovered in SubMycenaean tombs in the Kerameikos cemetery (Lemos 2002: 8). Consequently, Lemos has characterised the SubMycenaean period as 'an intermediate stage between the Late Mycenaean period and the following Protogeometric period' partly because it combines features from both periods (2002: 8). A similar phenomenon can be seen in Laconia, where chamber tombs continued to be used and new grave offerings were introduced in the shape of pins and rings during the SubMycenaean period. Finally, EIA pottery shapes can be shown to originate from LH IIIC examples,<sup>57</sup> and animal figurines continued to be offered, decorated in the SubMycenaean style.

Nevertheless, the small number of SubMycenaean sites and associated material culture should be a reminder for caution. Even though evidence from the period continues to rise, it still cannot be considered representative. Therefore, the above discussion aims only to offer suggestions, which should be revisited in the future.

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<sup>56</sup> For a comprehensive description of burials from the Mycenaean period see Gallou 2020: 9-82. For a list of burials from Ag. Stephanos see table 1, in Appendix 2.

<sup>57</sup> The continuity of pottery shapes is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

## 3.2 The Early Iron Age: The Protogeometric and Geometric periods.

### 3.2.2 Site Distribution

A total of thirteen sites were occupied in Laconia during the Protogeometric and Geometric periods (see timeline 1 below, Figs. 3.6 and 3.7). Systematic excavations have been undertaken, however, in a small number of sites including Sparta, Amyklai, Geraki and Pellana. The remaining sites were identified by surveys or rescue excavations only (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1960 and 1961; Cavanagh *et al* 2002). The majority (11) were established during the Protogeometric period and continued to be inhabited in the Geometric period. Therefore, the number of sites more than doubled from the SubMycenaean into the Protogeometric period.

In the Spartan plain, the most significant change from the LBA into the EIA was the (re)establishment of Sparta during the Protogeometric period.<sup>58</sup> Its location was likely attractive to settlers due to its fertile soils and rich water sources. Natural defences could have been provided by a sheer scarp of approximately three to four meters high to the south, by the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia. Furthermore, a natural elevation between three to six meters runs to the south of the former mentioned scarp (Bintliff 1977: 392). It is also important to note that the site is on a route to Messenia through the Taygetos range to the west, known today as the Langada pass. The road leads to Methoni, via Kalamata and Pylos and scholars agree that the route was also used during the Mycenaean period (Banou 1996: 40). Yet, the relationship between Laconia and Messenia during the EIA is difficult to determine. The events of the First Messenian War, which according to ancient sources led to the subjugation of Messenia by Sparta, are traditionally dated to the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (roughly the Late Geometric period).<sup>59</sup> However, investigations by PRAP on the western side of Messenia have discarded

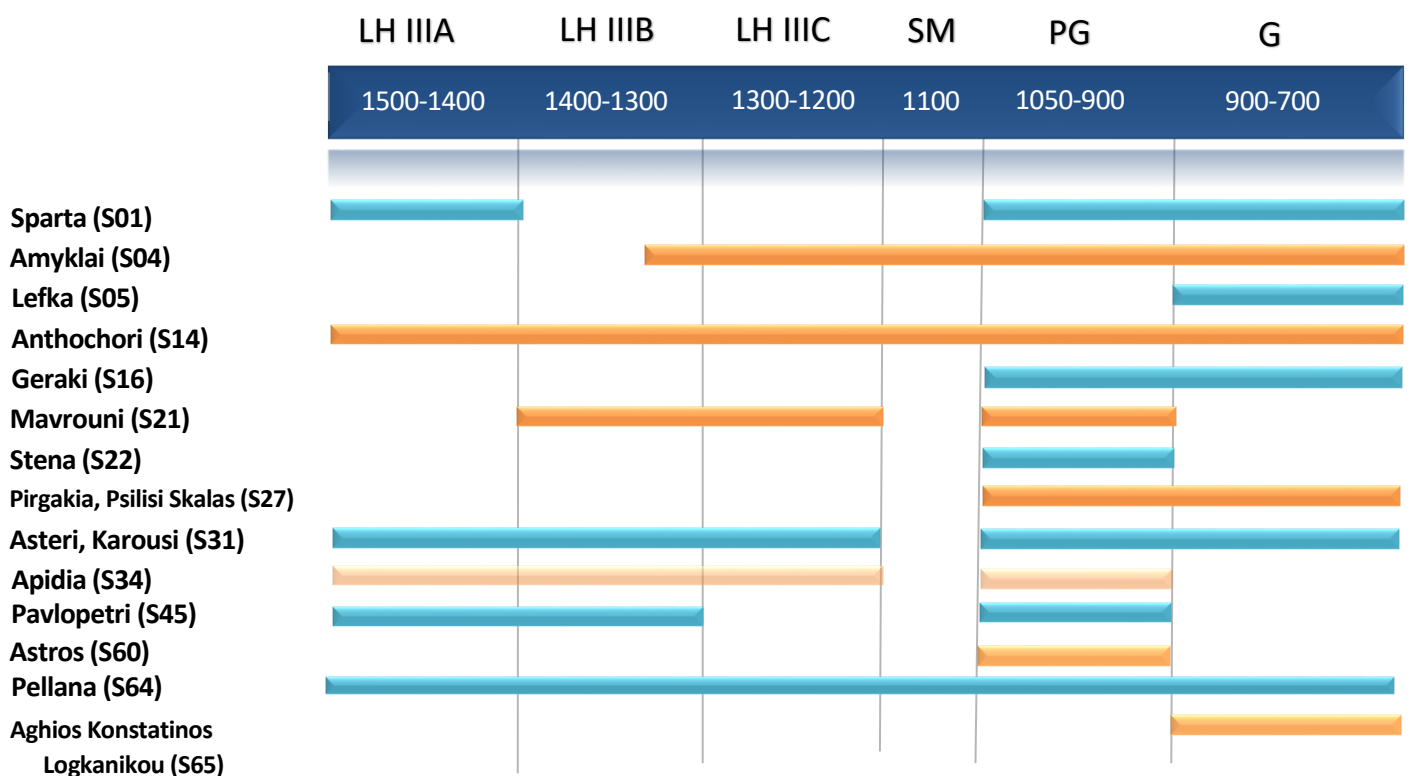
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<sup>58</sup> The term (re)establishment is used here because of evidence of the area of Sparta being occupied during the Mycenaean period. However, at this point it is unclear whether it represents more than isolated dwellings (see Gazetteer in Volume II for more details).

<sup>59</sup> Pausanias Book IV.

the notion of ‘Spartiate inhabitants’ during this period (Alcock *et al* 2005: 158). The eastern side, on the other hand, was sparsely occupied throughout the Geometric period (ca. 900-700BC; McDonald and Hope Simpson 1972: 144; Alcock *et al* 2005: 158).

Unfortunately, occupation of Sparta during the Protogeometric and Geometric periods is attested by burials and scattered sherds only. Architectural remains are rare due to the area’s occupation during the period between the IA and the Byzantine period, and now by the modern city of Sparta. Consequently, layers found to contain material from the EIA periods are usually disturbed by the foundations of later buildings (Themom and Zavvou 2010, note 13). Further evidence of settlements in the Spartan plain was discovered in Amyklai and Anthochori. These are the only sites in the area in which occupation can be shown to be continuous from the end of the Mycenaean period into the Geometric period (timeline 1).



Timeline 1: Occupation of sites by period at Laconia (by the author).

Occupation during the EIA can also be demonstrated in the Parnon mountain range, in Geraki and Apidia. It is likely that sources of copper in the region of Apidia were one of the reasons groups were attracted to the area (Janko and Taylour 2008: 554-555; Hitchcock *et al* 2020: 337). Contrary to previous suggestions, bronze continued to be an important metal during the EIA. Scholars now theorise that iron objects did not replace those of bronze completely, but both metals continued to be used during the EIA (Morgan 1995: 17; Kayafa 2006: 222-226; Papadopoulos 2014: 181-183). In fact, in Laconia bronze was still preferred for a number of objects, including the production of animal figurines (see section 3.2.4.1.1). Furthermore, both Geraki and Apidia are located on a possible route linking the Spartan plain to Cape Malea, which sees the short re-occupation of coastal sites such as Pavlopetri.

On the west of the Helos plain, Pigarkia is located close to fertile lands and uplands which could have been used for herding (Bintliff 1977: 460-461). Moreover, the site is the only one in the region in close proximity to the Eurotas river, which suggests that the hilltop settlement could have controlled the river's route inland (Zavvou 2011-2012: 10; Hitchcock *et al* 2020: 333). Proximity to the sea seems to also have attracted settlements, as is evidenced by the site of Asteri, Karousi. Today the site is located inland, but according to the reconstruction of sea levels discussed in the previous chapter, part of the Helos plain remained underwater during the LBA and EIA periods (Fig 2.25). Therefore, Asteri, Karousi would have been located on the shore and could have functioned as a port. At the same time, it is interesting to note a possible re-occupation of Pavlopetri. New studies have revealed a number of Protogeometric sherds at the site (Gallou *et al* forthcoming). Coupled with the continuous occupation of Mavrovouni in the Laconian Gulf, one could suggest a possible revival of sea travel in the southern Peloponnese. In any case, it was not long lasting, seeing that all sites (with the exception of Asteri, Karousi), were abandoned once again by the Geometric period.

Lastly, to the north, Pellana shows signs of continuous occupation from the LBA into the Protogeometric and Geometric periods. This is attested to by evidence from graves as well as pottery from a settlement (Spyropoulos 2013: 229-382).

### 3.2.2.1 Distribution of sites in Sparta

Although large areas of Sparta have not been systematically excavated, reports from the Greek archaeological service can give an overall indication of which areas were occupied during the Protogeometric and Geometric periods. First, however, it is important to emphasise that a large proportion of the archaeological record has been lost by the establishment of modern Sparta. The first buildings were erected in 1834 to the south-east of the town, by the Evaggelistrias hill (Fig. 3.8).<sup>60</sup> By 1956, the town had expanded into much of the area it occupies today, but it was not until the 1960s that an archaeologically protected zone was established by the Greek authorities (Koropouli and Mela 2016; Christesen 2018: 309). Even then, the protected zone was restricted to a small area to the north of Sparta, including the Palaiokastro hill and its vicinity. As can be seen in Figure 3.8, by then much of the modern town had already been built. The protected zone was eventually extended to cover most of modern Sparta in 1994, resulting in a considerable increase of information about early Sparta.

The available evidence reveals that the area surrounding the Acropolis and Palaiokastro hills were occupied since the Protogeometric period (Fig. 3.9). Pottery of this date has been reported on excavations along the Orthias Artemidos road (Zavvou 2012a: 179; Themis 2006: 168, Zavvou 2014: 270, Souchleris 2020: 456), as well as on the foot of the southern slopes of the Acropolis hill (Zavvou and Themis 2009: 111; Themis 2014b: 282-286). Moreover, this area is also where the largest numbers of Protogeometric burials were uncovered (Fig. 3.13). It suggests, thus, that burials were in close vicinity to habitation areas, probably no more than hamlets at this point. The same pattern is observed in the west side of modern Sparta, on Alkamanos and Kallikratida roads, where layers containing Protogeometric pottery were found in the same area as at least two burials (B14-B15; Tsouli et al 2016a: 440-441; Kakourou 2016: 178-79; Fig. 3.9 and Fig. 3.13). There are, however, areas

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<sup>60</sup> Publication by the Archaeological Museum of Sparta (2020), *Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο Σπάρτης. Μνημείο & Μνήμες*.

where occupation is suggested by pottery deposits only: to the south-east of the Palaiokastro hill, and further to the south-east, on Orthias Artemidos road (Souchleris 2020: 460-461).

Pottery sherds from the Geometric period have been reported mostly in the same areas described above (Fig. 3.10). On the road towards Megalopolis, in Limnai, there is a considerable increase in the number of deposits dated to the Geometric period, indicating that the area was now more densely occupied (Zavvou and Themis 2006: 166; Themis 2012a: 224-226; Themis 2006: 168; Zavvou 2014: 271; Zavvou 2012a: 179; Themis 2003: 167-169, Themis 2012b: 272; Themis and Padou 2001: 123; Maltezou and Giannakaki 2016: 430-433; Maltezou 2016a: 451). The same can be observed to the south of the Acropolis hill (Christou 1962: 133; Zavvou and Themis 2009: 111; Themis 2014a: 282-286; Themis 2014b: 276). The western area of modern Sparta continued to be occupied, and the area in the south-west limits of the modern city shows signs of habitation, where in the previous periods there were only burials (Tsouli et al 2016a: 440-441; Zavvou 2006: 164-165; Zavvou and Themis 2009: 112). Furthermore, for the first time in the EIA occupation can be attested in the suburbs of modern Sparta in Afisio, Magoula and Kamares (Tsiaggouris 2016a: 518; Tsiaggouris 2016b: 501-502; Kakourou 2016: 512; Fig. 3.11).

### **3.2.3 Cemeteries and Burial Plots**

Laconian burials from the Proto-geometric period have been identified at Sparta, Sklavochori (Amyklai), Pellana, Aghios Ioannis and Mavrovouni. Burials dated to the Geometric period, on the other hand, are limited to Sparta and possibly Pellana. The cemeteries and burial plots from both periods are described below by site.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Tables with details of each burial and their associated grave offerings discussed can be found in Appendix 2.

### 3.2.3.1 Sparta

In the last thirty years rescue excavations carried out by the Greek Archaeological Service have uncovered twenty-nine pits, cists and pithos tombs from the Protogeometric and Geometric periods in Sparta (table 3.1, in Appendix 2). The majority of burials (69%) were located in the area of Limnai, on the west bank of the river Eurotas. The remaining burials were distributed to the west and centre of the modern town (Figs. 3.13, 3.15-3.16).

#### *Limnai*

Twenty burials dated to the Protogeometric and Geometric periods have been excavated at Limnai. Limnai, located in the northeast area of modern Sparta, is the name of one of the so-called four original villages (including Kynosoura, Mesoa and Pitana) that would have made up the core of the polis of Sparta (Paus. 3.16.9; Christesen 2018: 314). Seven pits, one cist tomb and one pithos burial can be securely dated to the Protogeometric period in this area. The burials were distributed either in small clusters of two or three or by themselves. Unfortunately, sex and age of the deceased are not mentioned in reports, apart from the infant in B02 (Table 3.1, Appendix 2). Burials B06 to B08 belonged to the same cluster, adjacent to modern building block 103 (Fig. 3.13).<sup>62</sup> All three consisted of pits, in which only the back of the deceased, placed in a crouched position, was lined with stones, and a stone was placed under the skulls (Fig. 3.14; Steinhauer 1976: 244-245; Raftopoulou 1996: 273-274, 1998: 133; Zavvou 2012a: 178-179).

Approximately 150m to the northwest of this cluster, in building block 102, archaeologists uncovered burial pits B02 and B09, and pithos burial B16 (Fig. 3.13). Pit B02 contained an infant with seven lekythoi, a cup and a bronze ring, and it is the grave with the largest number of offerings from the Protogeometric period. Moreover, the grave seems to have been covered with large sherds from

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<sup>62</sup> The town of Sparta is divided into numbered building blocks, which are commonly used in reports to help locate excavations (Fig. 3.12).

jugs or pithoi (Themom and Zavvou 2010: 111). The individual in B09, however, was interred in the same manner as B06 to B08 described above, in a pit delineated with stones (Steinhauer 1972: 245; Raftopoulou 1996: 273, note 3). Lastly, B16 represents the only pithos burial of the Protogeometric period and thus it is regrettable that reports give no details regarding its contents (Themom 2012a: 226).

Three pits – B10, B13 and B17 - were excavated in the western side of the Orthias Artemidos street, in modern building block 98 (Fig. 3.13). B10 and B17 further demonstrate the popularity of the stone lined pit practice during the Protogeometric period. However, unlike burials of the same type, B10 contained grave goods, namely a skyphos and a stone axe and scraper (Zavvou 2012a: 178-179). Cist tomb B12 was located to the southeast of the group described above, in building block 97A. No information is given about the deceased or their burial gifts (Themom 2012b: 272; Zavvou and Themom 2009: 111-113).

Limnai continued to receive burials into the Geometric period, as is evidenced by a cluster of five burials (B17-B20, B23) in building block 97. All burials are orientated to the northwest-southeast, as can be seen in a published plan of the excavation (Fig. 3.13 and 3.15). B17 and B18 consist of pits of the stone lined type, in a similar fashion to the Protogeometric examples described above (B06-B10 and B17), showing that the practice continued into the Geometric period. B19 and B20, however, contained individuals in a crouched position in simple pits (Zavvou 2003: 160-63). Finally, B23 was the only burial in this cluster in which the deceased was placed in an extended position within a cist, accompanied by two pyxides and two pins (Zavvou 2003: 160-63).

Another two cist tombs from the Geometric period, B26 and B27, were excavated at Limnai within building block 99 (Fig. 3.16). Little information is available about them, except that B27 contained a bronze ring (Vlachakos 2016: 491-496). To the southeast, in building block 98, yet another burial pit (B24) was excavated. B24 is noteworthy because it was covered by stone plaques and a stone cairn. Moreover, a number of Geometric vessels were deposited in between the layers of stone, which

has been interpreted as evidence of grave cult (Cavanagh 2020: 68). The skeleton was placed in an extended position, with only a bronze ring dated to the Geometric period as a grave good (Flouris 2001: 123-125).

The last two burials in the area consisted of pithos burials B22 and B29, in building blocks 102 and 99, respectively (Fig. 3.16). It is reported that B22 might also have been covered by a stone cairn and it contained a bronze pin dated to the Geometric period (Steinhauer 1972: 242-245). On the other hand, the individual in B29 was accompanied by a large array of grave goods from the Late Geometric period, including a sword, knives, bronze rings and cylinders of unknown function (Fig. 3.17, Table 3.1, Appendix 2) (Raftopoulou 1996: 275-76, 1998: 13).

#### *Other areas*

Isolated burials or small clusters of two to three burials were excavated in the central and western areas of modern Sparta. Five burials dated to Protogeometric period were discovered in the western side of Sparta (Fig. 3.13). A pit (B04), a cist tomb (B05) and an unknown type (B03) were uncovered in block 130 (Tsouli *et al* 2016a: 442; Panagiotopoulou and Themis 2014: 290-91). B04 and B05 contained the remains of infants, however, B05 is the only one reported to have grave offerings (an amphora, a skyphos and a cup; Tsouli *et al* 2016a: 442).

Two burials from the same period were discovered to the southwest: a cist tomb (B14) and an unknown type (B15) (Fig. 3.13). Cist tomb B14 is reported to have included two iron pins with bronze knobs (Zavvou 2004a: 154). No details are given about the excavation of B15, but it is classified here as belonging to the Protogeometric period due to its close proximity to B14 and the lack of any Geometric graves in the area (Zavvou 2004a: 154). Finally, at the centre of Sparta (building block 17), cist tomb B01 contained the remains of an infant accompanied by a an oinochoe and a skyphos (Efsthathiou 2006: 174; Zavvou and Themis 2009: 111; Themis and Zavvou 2010: 229).

B25 and B28 are the only two burials from the Geometric period found outside Limnai. Located to the south of the Acropolis, between building blocks 125 and 135, B25 consisted of a pithos burial containing an impressive number of objects, including six bronze rings and at least twelve bronze spirals (Fig. 3.16 and 3.18). The large amount of jewellery and the lack of weapons included as offerings has led excavators to suggest that the deceased was most likely a female (Raftopoulou 1996: 276-278). The pithos burial (B28) was discovered in modern building block 93, and it belonged to a small infant, with a bronze pin, a bronze cylindrical object, a two-handled cup and miniature vessels (Tsouli *et al* 2016b: 474-475).

### *Magoula, Sparta*

The last known burial from the area of Sparta is located to the west of the main town, in the district of Magoula. A cist tomb (B11) from the Protogeometric period contained the remains of an infant as well as a carinated skyphos, a miniature skyphos, two lekythoi, a bronze ring and a bronze spindle (Fig. 3.11; Tsiaggouris 2016c: 503).

### *Comments*

In summary, most Protogeometric burials in Sparta were distributed in clusters of two to four burials. The largest concentration is located in the area of Limnai, to the north-east of modern Sparta. This is a pattern seen in other settlements of the period. At Mycenae, for instance, between twelve to twenty burials were discovered in clusters of two or three. They were scattered over a large area, mostly associated with the ruins of the Mycenaean buildings (Hägg 1974: 66-98). EIA burials at Tiryns were also distributed in small groups around the Acropolis and in the vicinity of residential areas (Papadimitriou 2003: 724). These patterns of grave distribution have been interpreted as representing the burial plots of small communities or family groups (Hägg 1974: 98; Lemos 2002: 187-188). The

distribution of graves in Sparta could thus represent the same pattern. Nonetheless, it should be noted that no evidence of EIA dwellings has been found in Sparta, except for remains of a wall in modern building block 130, in the same area as burials B03 to B05 (Panagiotopoulou and Themis 2014: 291).

All types of burials – pits, cists and pithos tombs – contained grave goods of similar wealth until the Late Geometric period. The diversity of burial practices is likely to reflect individual/family identity and/or beliefs. This phenomenon is particularly clear during the Geometric period, when specific burial types were located within the same cluster. For instance, the majority of graves (6 graves or 75%) are of the stone lined pit type, and examples were distributed within building blocks 98 and 103. It is arguable that the different burial practices could indicate different residential groups<sup>63</sup> within the same area. Such groups would have interacted in gatherings and also intermingled through marriage, but maintained practices associated with their communal identity, such as burial preferences (Ensor 2013: 40).

Due to the lack of detailed information about most graves, it is not possible to arrive at any conclusions regarding differentiation of gender in burial practices. Nonetheless, five burials from the Protogeometric period were identified as infants. Studies regarding the mortality rate of children in pre-industrial societies differ in their results, but recent analysis suggest that children represent 15% to 30% of burials per cemetery (Scott 1999: 90). Following this study, the Protogeometric child burials can be placed on the higher end of that spectrum.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, one can suggest that there was no special burial plot for infants during the Protogeometric period, but that they were buried together with adults. In fact, this seems to be a feature common to the mainland, especially in Athens, Argos and Mycenae (Lemos 2002: 153-160). Another interesting aspect of these child burials is that they contained the largest number of grave goods as well as the most conspicuous. B02, for instance, in Limnai, was accompanied by seven small lekythoi, a handmade cup and a bronze ring. In the vicinity

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<sup>63</sup> Defined here as a collection of people brought together through marriage strategies along with unmarried individuals born into the group.

<sup>64</sup> Five infant burials out of seventeen, a total of 29.4%.

of Sparta, in Magoula, another infant burial (B11) was found to be accompanied by a skyphos, a miniature skyphos, two lekythoi and a bronze ring and spindle.<sup>65</sup>

Limnai continued to receive burials into the Geometric period. However, unlike the Protogeometric period, different burial practices seem to be separated in specific areas. Figures 3.13 and 3.15 show that the majority of Protogeometric burials consisted of pits distributed in modern building blocks 103, 98 and 102, with a pithos burial and a cist tomb in blocks 102 and 97A, respectively. By the Geometric period, another two pithoi were found to the north-west of Limnai, in modern blocks 102 and 99, a pit in block 98 and a cist in 97A. Seeing that there is no marked differentiation of wealth between the pit and cist tombs, the formation of clusters of different burial types could represent the preferences of different family groups. Family groups are more likely to have shared the same beliefs and norms about the treatment of their dead.

### 3.2.3.2 Sklavochori, Amyklai

In 1997, a cemetery containing twelve graves from the Protogeometric period was excavated by the Greek Archaeological Service at Sklavochori, today known as the area of Amyklai (Zavvou 2001: 129-131). The exact location of the cemetery has not been published, thus it is not possible to determine its distance to the sanctuary on the Aghia Kyriaki hill. Nonetheless, one can assume that these two sites were in close proximity, since the distance between the sanctuary and the centre of modern Amyklai is no more than 1km. The distribution of burials on the plot, as well as the orientation of graves, are also unknown. Lacking this information, the interpretation of the site relies on the contents of the graves.

Pit and cist tombs were equally common, with each type representing 33.4% of burials. Other burials included two pithoi, an *enchytrismos* and an unknown type (Fig. 3.19 and Table 3.2, Appendix

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<sup>65</sup> See Appendix 2 for bibliography.

2; Zavvou 2001: 129-131). Grave goods consisted mainly of pottery and metal objects, with all burials accompanied by at least one object, except two pits (graves 5 and 9) that likely received no offerings. The number of metal objects is particularly notable: 58.3% of graves contained at least one or more. A diverse group of pottery vessels were observed, including a jug, a kantharos, a trefoil jug (Jg75), a cup, a feeder and a lekythos (Fig. 3.20). The only recurring shape is that of the skyphos, of which three examples were found.

The sex of the individuals is not described in the excavation report, but in another article, Zavvou indicates that an anthropological study was undertaken on the skeletons from this cemetery. It confirms that a large percentage of individuals were women and that 30% of them were children (Themom and Zavvou 2010: 230).<sup>66</sup> Three of the infants were found within cists tombs and one in a handmade cooking pot. Their burial alongside adults indicates that children were considered members of the community that could be buried. Moreover, it also indicates that cists were the preferred grave type for them.

### 3.2.3.3 Pellana

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the publication of the excavations at Pellana is problematic, and this is particularly true in the case of the EIA evidence. According to Spyropoulos, three pithos burials surrounded by a line of stones can be dated to the Protogeometric period. They were located in trench D, to the northwest of the so-called 'megaron' (Fig. 3.21; table 3.3, Appendix 2). However, two of the pithoi were truncated by later structures and thus were found empty. The third pithos, on the other hand, was found to contain one skeleton with its legs bent. Five ceramic vessels from the Protogeometric period accompanied the deceased, including two jugs (Jg73), a cup (Cp52) and two

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<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, Zavvou does not give any information about the authors of the study or whether it has been published. Thus, details of how the study was undertaken and their results are unknown.

skyphoi (Sk280-Sk281; Fig 3.22 and 3.23; Spyropoulos 2013: 240-241, 264, 379-383). Therefore, only one pithos burial can be dated safely to the Protogeometric period.

Further excavations to the north-east of Palaiokastro hill, at the Triporrachis hill cemetery, revealed two pits and one pithos burial. The pithos was found in the south of the hill, and was sealed with a stone plaque. Inside, there were only badly preserved human bones. This burial is dated by the excavator to the Geometric period, based on the material found in the layers associated with the pithos (Spyropoulos 2013: 388). No description is given of the pit burials, except that each contained a lekythos. The dating of these lekythoi (Le2 and Le3) to the Geometric period, however, is questionable.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, a cup from the Classical period was found in one of the pits, which Spyropoulos explains as a possible contamination from later levels (2013: 388).

#### **3.2.3.4 Aghios Ioannis**

Aghios Ioannis is located approximately 1.5km to the east of Palaiokastro hill, in Pellana. Occupation of the area during the Mycenaean period can be attested to by a number of chamber tombs, which were discussed in the previous chapter. Three pithos burials dated to the Protogeometric period were also discovered in the site, indicating that the area around Pellana was inhabited during this period as well (Table 3.4, Appendix 2). Pithos burial 1 contained the remains of two individuals. One was placed in a supine position, with its legs bent, and was associated with two iron pins. The second individual was found in the same position as the first skeleton, but below it. After the removal of both skeletons, a bronze pin and fragments of a kalathos were recovered, which were most likely deposited at the same time as the bottom burial. Pithos 2 was located immediately to the south of pithos 1, but was found to be empty. Unfortunately, no bones or grave goods survived. Small stones were placed around both pithos 1 and 2, as was seen in the Pellana pithoi tombs (Fig.

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<sup>67</sup> For the discussion regarding these vessels see section 4.2.2.3, in Chapter 4.

3.24). The third pithos was found to the north of pithos 1 and 2 and it contained the remains of at least three individuals, many fragments of iron pins, beads (bronze and electrum) and an unidentified piece of metal (Souchleris 2017: 134-137).

### **3.2.3.5 Mavrovouni**

A possible Protogeometric burial was discovered by Waterhouse and Hope Simpson in the vicinity of Gytheion (approximately 3km to the south-west of the town). There is no information regarding the type of burial, but an amphora (Am6), a hydria and fragments of an iron weapon, most likely a spear, are reported to be associated with it (1961: 115-117). The presence of the weapon suggests that the burial could represent a 'warrior grave', a phenomenon common to the EIA which will be discussed in further detail below (Cavanagh 2020: 657).

### **3.2.3.5 Grave Goods**

#### **3.2.3.6.1 Metals**

##### *Pins*

Bronze and iron pins were the most common metal objects offered in burials during the EIA. The number of pins deposited in burials increased considerably from the LBA to the EIA period in Laconia, a trend which is observed throughout Greece (Kilian 1988: 80-81). During the Protogeometric period, pins accompanied 33.4% and 66.7% of graves at Sklavochori and at Aghios Ioannis, respectively. At Sparta, however, pins were less common, included in only 9.5% of burials. They became dramatically more popular during the Geometric period, having been found in 41.7% of the Spartan burials (Fig. 3.25).

Due to their poor state of preservation and lack of information from excavation reports, the identification of pin types from burials is extremely challenging. Kilian-Dirlmeier's Type B3 can be identified in burials B14 and B18 in Sparta (a cist and a pit, respectively), and in pit burials 11 and 15 in Sklavochori. The type has an iron shaft and a bronze globe, and it first appeared during the Middle Protogeometric period in Athens and the Argolid. By the Geometric period, Type B3 pins were the most popular type in Greece (Fig. 3.26; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 69-78; Lemos 2002: 104-106). Other pins discovered in Laconian burials include a type made fully of iron (found in both pithos tombs from Aghios Ioannis and in burial 7 at Sklavochori) or fully of bronze (pithos 1 in Aghios Ioannis and burials 12 and 15 in Sklavochori).

The increase in the popularity of pins during the EIA has been associated with the emergence of a new type of dress, the *peplos*. The *peplos* consisted of a large fabric rectangle pinned to the body around the shoulders. In burials where the location of pins can be determined on the body, it is not uncommon to find one on each shoulder, suggesting that the deceased was buried wearing a *peplos* (Kilian 1988: 80-81; Lemos 2002: 108; Luce 2011: 416-423). Graves containing pair of pins in the shoulder area were particularly common with females in the Argolid during the Protogeometric period (Lemos 2002: 103-106). In Laconia, burial 7 from Sklavochori is the only example in which the position of pins on the skeleton's chest is clearly described in the excavation report. Other examples in Sparta and Sklavochori mention the inclusion of two pins, but their position on the body is not stated in the reports. Although unconfirmed, it is possible that these pins indicate that similar dress types to those observed in the Argolid were introduced in Laconia during the EIA.

### *Bronze Rings*

Rings had been a popular grave offering in Greece since the Mycenaean period, and the practice continued into the EIA. During the Protogeometric period there were two types, which were particularly popular: a simple band or a spiral, both made out of a twisted flat metal band of iron or

bronze (Lemos 2002: 115-116; Konstandinidi-Syvridi 2020: 619). However, these simple forms do not allow for regional or chronological differences to be identified (Desborough 1972: 303-304; Lemos 2002: 117). Nonetheless, excavations have shown that bronze rings were common in the Argolid, while Athens is marked by their absence (Lemos 2002: 115-117).

In Laconia, rings were included as offerings during the Protogeometric period, especially in Sklavochori where 33.4% of graves contained at least one ring (Fig. 3.27). In Sparta, however, only 11.7% of burials had rings. It is interesting to note that rings seem to be particularly associated with infant burials. In Sparta, for example, all of the burials with rings belonged to infants (B02 and B11), while in Sklavochori half of all rings were given to them (burials 10 and 14; Tables 3.1-2, Appendix 2).

By the Geometric period there is a considerable increase of the number rings in Sparta, as they are found in 33.4% of burials from this period. Moreover, a type of ring with spirals was introduced as a grave offering during the same period. The main body of the rings consist of a wire spiral, with spiral ends (Fig. 3.28; Kilian-Dirlmeier's type A, variants 2d or 2e, 1980: 251) and the wires can have either a round or triangular cross-section (Kilian-Dirlmeier's variants 2d and 2e, 1980: 251). The origin of the type is debatable, but evidence suggests that it has a Mycenaean origin. These rings continued be used through the end of the BA to the IA, becoming particularly popular during the Geometric and Archaic periods (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1980: 258-259). At least six bronze spiral rings were discovered in pithos B25, between modern building blocks 125 and 135; and in B29, in modern building blocks 99 and 102.

### *Hoops or Spirals*

Hoops or spirals were made by the twisting of a thin wire, in the shape of a ring (Fig. 3.29). Their function is not clear, but they could have been used as earrings, hair ornaments or even finger-rings (Lemos 2002: 126-127). Spirals were common during the LBA, with examples reported in a number of sites in the Argolid, Thessaly, Macedonia, the Cyclades, the Dodecanese and Crete

(Konstantinidi 1998: 55).<sup>68</sup> They remained popular during the Protogeometric period, as can be seen by the gold examples from tombs in Athens, the Argolid and Lefkandi. At this time, they seem to have been strongly associated with females (Lemos 2002: 126-127, 2007: 276-277; Konstantinidi-Syvridi 2020: 608-620). There are fewer examples available from the Geometric period, nonetheless they were included in burials in Athens, in the Kerameikos and Agora cemeteries, Tiryns (Tomb 2) and in a tomb from Klenia, Corinthia (Higgins 1961: 91-93).

In Laconia, at least nineteen bronze and gold hoops were found in the Sklavochori burials, dated to the Protogeometric period. They were distributed in different grave types, including cist tombs (numbers 4 and 7), a pit (11) and a pithos burial (12) (Table 3.2, Appendix 2). All examples were located near or on the skull, suggesting they were used as hair-spirals. Furthermore, an osteological study of the skeletons from the site identified the majority as infants and females.<sup>69</sup> Thus, one can suggest that the majority were associated with women, as is observed in other areas of Greece. Evidence of their use in the Geometric period at Laconia is restricted to pithos burial B25, in Sparta, in which twelve bronze spirals were included (Table 3.1, Appendix 2). The skeleton was identified as a female, suggesting that spirals might still been associated with women during this period.

### *Weapons*

Weapons were a common offering in a number of EIA graves in Greece, yet only two EIA burials in Laconia contained weapons. A possible example from the Protogeometric period containing a spear was reported in Mavrovouni (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1961: 117). In Sparta, the

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<sup>68</sup> Argolid: Mycenae, Kato Phournos, Prosymna, Tiryns, Krines; Arcadia: Kleidi - Kato Samiko; Attica: Eleusis; Perati; Boetia: Lamia-Elateia; Phokis: Agnanti-Lokris; Thessaly: N. Ionia-Volos, Dimini; Macedonia: Drama-Nevrokopi; Cyclades: Naxos-Aplomata; Dodecanese: Ialysos (Rhodes), Arkasa (Karpachos); Northern Aegean: Kastri-Larnaki (Thasos), Thasos-Theologou; Crete: Phylaki Apokoronou, Amnisos-Kartero, Phourni-Archanes, Ag. Syllas, Kyparissi Temenous, Mavro Spelio (Konstantinidi 1998: 108-118, 129-130, 148-164, 176-180, 206-207, 210, 253-256, 270-296, 302-304, 310-312, 321, 326-328, 330-346, 348, 357-359, 394, 417-418, 420-425 and 433-440).

<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, the study is only briefly mentioned in an article by Themom and Zavvou (2010: 230) and therefore it is unknown which specific graves belonged to females.

individual buried in pithos burial B29 was accompanied by one iron sword and at least three daggers from the Late Geometric period (Table 3.1, Appendix 2). Due to the poor preservation of these objects, however, it is not possible to identify their types (Raftopoulou 1996: 275-276, 1998: 133).

The offering of weapons as grave goods was not a phenomenon unique to the EIA. The so-called 'warrior' burial was also a feature of the LBA, which became more pronounced particularly during the LH IIIC period (Deger-Jalkotzy 2006: 151-152). During the Geometric period the warrior *ethos* became prominent throughout Greece, reflected especially in the decoration of vases and bronze and terracotta figurines (Averett 2007: 210). Scholars suggest that the unstable nature of the socio-political organisation of EIA societies required individuals who could offer security to others, a 'big-man'. The 'big-man's concept, developed by Sahlins, proposes that some residential groups are dominated by individuals who achieved authority through competition or the demonstration of skills (1963: 285-303). Thus, in the case of EIA Greece, the 'big-man' would have defined himself through military prowess (Deger-Jalkotzy 2006: 151-176; Pappi 2006: 232-237; Lemos 2007: 275-279; D'Onofrio 2011: 645-659). In some areas of Greece, this *ethos* is more pronounced, such as in Argos, where a number of 'warrior' burials were discovered (Pappi and Triantaphyllou 2011: 675). However, there is little evidence from EIA Laconia, including the burials described above, to suggest such social organisation.

### **3.2.3.6.2 Pottery**

The most common grave goods of the Protogeometric and Geometric Laconian burials was pottery. Eleven out of the thirty-three Protogeometric burials contained at least one vessel, including pits, cists and pithos burials. Closed shapes outnumbered open shapes by a small margin (57.6% and 42.4%, respectively, Fig. 3.30), consisting mostly of pouring vessels, such as jugs and lekythoi. These shapes were accompanied by at least one drinking vessel (skyphoi, cups, kantharoi and kalathoi), most often skyphoi.

The pottery distribution in Protogeometric graves in Laconia suggests that there were local rather than regional preferences. For instance, in Sparta, lekythoi represent 52.2% of all vessels, followed by skyphoi with 23.5% (Fig. 3.31). By contrast, at Sklavochori the skyphos was the most popular vessel (33.4%), with other shapes represented by one example each (Fig. 3.32). Evidence from the Geometric period, however, is limited to a few vessels, mainly from Spartan burials. They include two pyxides, a two-handled cup and an unknown number of miniatures (Table 3.1, Appendix 2). Their small number cannot be considered representative, therefore more examples are needed in order to analyse the preferences of the period.

### **3.2.3.6 Comments**

The analysis above shows that Laconian EIA burial practices were marked by diversity. The absence of recurring patterns in burial types and their offerings strongly indicate the lack of a standardized Laconian burial practice. This is particularly clear during the Protogeometric period, when pits, cists and pithos burials were used concurrently throughout the region, and even in the same cemeteries, as was observed in Sklavochori. Nonetheless, drinking and pouring vessels were favoured as grave goods in most areas, including Pellana, Sparta and Sklavochori.

Unfortunately, the Geometric period is represented by a very small number of burials, mostly from Sparta. These demonstrate that burial practices continued to be diverse, with the preference for pits, cists and pithos tombs. There was, however, an increase in the number metal offerings: during the Protogeometric period metal objects were found within 18.7% of Spartan burials, while in the following period this number increased to 61.5% of burials. Yet, it is only during the Late Geometric period that considerable wealth is observed, in pithos burials B25 and B29.

## 3.2.4 Sanctuaries

### 3.2.4.1 Amyklai

Amyklai is one of a few sanctuaries which can be shown to have had been established during the LBA and continued to be visited in the EIA in Greece. Evidence of activity during the Protogeometric period consists mainly of pottery, but a small number of metal offerings were also found. By the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, there is a dramatic rise in the number of votives, indicating an increase in the number of visitants (Vlachou 2018: 101-104). The number of offerings continued to grow during the Geometric period and, for the first time, there is an influx of imported vessels as well as the introduction of bronze tripods (Vlachou 2018: 118-119). Yet, it is only during the Late Geometric period that the sanctuary's territory is demarcated with the construction of a *peribolos*. The remnants of the wall were found during the most recent excavations on the east (5.60m long) and south (21m long) limits of the Aghia Kyriaki hill (Fig. 3.33). Their foundations consist of two parallel courses of large and medium unworked limestone blocks, with small rocks in the interstices.<sup>70</sup> The majority of finds from the Geometric period were associated with these walls, including pottery, pins, fibulae, tripods, bronze and terracotta figurines and jewellery (Vlachou 2015: 113). The votives from both periods – the Protogeometric and Geometric - are discussed below.

#### 3.2.4.1.1 Votives

##### *Metal Offerings*

A small number of metal objects can be dated to the Protogeometric period, including a bronze globe-headed pin and bronze spirals. The pin can be identified as an example of a Kilian-Dirlmeier type B1c (Fig. 3.34), a type found also in Corinth (Agora), the Argolid (Argos, Tiryns) and

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<sup>70</sup> <https://amyklaion.gr/en/sanctuary/precinct-walls/>.

Messenia (Karpophora) (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 69-75, no. 207). During the Geometric period, however, there is a marked increase in the number and variety of dedicated metal objects. Pins continued to be offered and at least five examples have been discovered. Two belong to Kilian-Dirlmeier Type IIIA2, characterised by a rod with a disc at its head, followed by three globes - a type common in the Peloponnese during this period (1984: 109-112, nos. 989 and 1003). Pin 1003, for instance, can be closely compared to examples dated to the Middle Geometric II period from Olympia, Tegea, Argive Heraion and Lousoi (Fig. 3.35, Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 110-112). The remaining pins (Fig. 3.36, nos. 1139, 1259 and 1920) cannot be dated precisely, but their contexts are dated to the Geometric period. Pin number 1920 belongs to an uncommon type (Type XIX), with a cone-shaped head and a smaller globe in its shaft, and it is found mostly in Arcadia (Tegea, Asea and Lousoi) and in the Argolid (Argos, Argive Heraion and Tiryns) (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 151-152).

The most significant introduction during the Geometric period, however, is that of bronze tripods. At least two cast and six hammered legs were among the sanctuary's offerings, as well as a small rod for the fastening of a larger circular handle, a horse figurine and other decorative attachments (Fig. 3.37; Calligas 1992: 42). Among the latter, an interesting example is that of a winged bull from the Near East (Fig. 3.38). Similar examples have been observed throughout Anatolia and North Syria as well as in Greece, in Olympia and Samos.<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, the majority of examples from Greece have been shown to be local imitations. Only six bulls can be shown to be imports: one from Amyklai, two from Olympia, and three from Samos (Muscarella 2013: 737-750).<sup>72</sup> Ceramic versions of the tripods have also been discovered, from as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC. Some were finely decorated as can be seen in figure 3.39 while others seem to imitate the patterns of bronze tripods with double T sections (Benton 1934-35: 128-129; Vlachou 2018: 118).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Nos. A24 and A24a from Olympia, and BB740, B1266 and B348 from Samos in Muscarella 2013: 737-750.

<sup>72</sup> It should be noted that the identification of the Amyklaian example as an import is widely accepted amongst other specialists such as Herrmann (1966), Kyrieleis (1977) and Maas (1978).

<sup>73</sup> Clay tripods are discussed in detail in section 2.2.3, in Chapter 4.

Another common offering during the Geometric period was that of double-axe pendants. At least six of these objects have been found, of which four can be identified as a type with straight-sides and a thickened blade centre (Fig. 3.40, Kilian-Dirlmeier 1979: 248-253, nos. 1595, 1596, 1617, 1645, 1671, 1672). The pendants were not uncommon votives in sanctuaries in the Peloponnese during the Geometric period; however their function is not clear. They might have been used as purely ornamental attachments seeing that they are also found in necklaces, chest jewellery or attached to belts in graves. In fact, most examples from sanctuaries show signs of wear in the suspension holes, indicating that they were used before being dedicated (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1979: 44, 248-261).

A very small number of weapons were amongst the dedications at Amyklai, including an iron sword and two bronze spearheads, but their poor state of conservation and the mixed context of the deposits make the dating of the material challenging. The iron sword has been dated to the Protogeometric period by Calligas and Demakopoulou, but Kilian-Dirlmeier suggests that the sword's shape is comparable to a Late Geometric example from Vitsa in Epirus (Calligas 1992: 41; Demakopoulou 1982: 74; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1993: 162). The date of the bronze spearheads is equally contested, as Demakopoulou dates them to the Protogeometric period based on associated finds from the same context, and Snodgrass to the Geometric period because of their shape (Fig. 3.41; Demakopoulou 1982: 75-76; Snodgrass 1971: 290).

### *Terracotta Figurines*

Fragments of terracotta figurines were not uncommon at the sanctuary; however, two deserve special mention. These are the heads of two figurines, a female and a male, dated to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Fig. 3.42; Demakopoulou 1982: 139; Calligas 1992: 34; Langdon 1998: 253-254; Vlachou 2017: 25-26). The female head (8cm high) wears a *polos* decorated with abstract motifs and had small dotted circles painted on the lower part of the ears, likely representing earrings. These are

characteristics that can be compared to a number of other female figurines from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC from Kastro (Siphnos), Lindos (Rhodes), Samos and Chios (Averett 2007: 194).<sup>74</sup>

The male head (11.5cm high) has a conical helmet with a painted crest, which identifies the figure as a warrior. Furthermore, the helmet, face and hair are decorated with Geometric motifs (Averret 2007: 84; Vlachou 2017: 26). Warrior figurines were very popular during the Late Geometric period, seen in many sanctuaries such as Lindos (Rhodes), Olympia and Kombothekra (Elis), mostly in bronze. But the Amyklaian example has no close parallels in the Mycenaean or Geometric statuette tradition (Averett 2007: 207-209; Vlachou 2017: 26). Nevertheless, similar features can be observed on a bronze figurine from Athens, dated to the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, as well as to an example from the sanctuary of Hephaistia, in Lemnos.<sup>75</sup>

A closer examination of the fragments suggests that these figurines should be studied together, as a pair, rather than individual offerings (Langdon 1998: 252-269; Vlachou 2017: 25-27). For instance, both were produced and decorated using similar techniques. The heads are handmade, while the necks are wheelmade, an indication that the bodies were also wheelmade. Moreover, they have distinct brows and incurving chins, large eyes and pointed noses (Averett 2007: 84-85). Scholars were initially unsure about the dating of these figurines, since both combine Mycenaean forms with Geometric decoration. However, subsequent studies have compared the Laconian heads to examples from Cyprus, where figurines continued to be produced during the LBA into the EIA and have typical features from both periods, such as prominent noses, a dominant chin and circular eyes (Kourou 2002: 18-33).

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<sup>74</sup> *Kastro*: Kourou 2005: 227-242; *Lindos*: Blinkenberg 1931: 459-502; *Samos*: Jarosch 1994: 1-4, Guggisberg 1996: 106-107; *Chios*: Boardman 1967: 23-29.

<sup>75</sup> Athens: NAM 6613, De Ridder 1896: 247-248, no. 702, fig. 219; Lemnos: NAM 19242

### *Miniature spindle whorls*

Preliminary reports by Vlachou indicate that a number of conical and biconical miniature spindle whorls, dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC, was dedicated at Amyklai (Fig. 3.43; 2017: 31-32). All examples are of clay, either undecorated or decorated with painted or incised motifs, similar to those observed on the ceramics of the sanctuary. Their size ranges between 2.5 and 3cm in diameter and all have a central perforation (Vlachou 2017: 32).

Spindle whorls are thought to have been dedicated by women, because of their association with the production of textiles. During the LBA, for example, women weavers were mentioned by a number of Linear B tablets from Pylos and Knossos (Nosch 2003: 12-21; Olsen 2014: 69-88). Fewer data are available from the EIA, but studies from Thrace have emphasized this association where securely sexed female burials were found to be accompanied by spindle-whorls (Dimova 2016: 670-671).

### *Pottery*

The recent excavations at the sanctuary have unearthed ceramics dated to the Protogeometric and Geometric periods. The shapes are described in detail in Chapter 4, but in general, the Early Protogeometric period is represented by a small number of vessels, mostly shapes associated with drinking and possible dining. Among them are kylikes with high ribbed stems, skyphoi, a cup with a tall vertical handle (arytaina) and cooking vessels, including fragments of tripod stands (Vlachou 2017: 114-115, 2018: 101).

By the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century there is a marked increase in the number and types of pottery. The majority consist of small and medium open vessels, mainly used for the consumption of food and drink (Vlachou 2018: 102). Furthermore, Vlachou identifies a standardization of the drinking and dining sets, in which skyphoi, kantharoi, bowls (lekanides) and one-handled cups were the most common shapes.

Closed vessels were less frequent, including a few sherds of lekythoi, oinochoai and hydriai (2015: 114-115, 2018: 102-13). The early 9<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the beginning of a SubProtogeometric phase of pottery, of which most common shapes include skyphoi, cups, kraters and kantharoi (Vlachou 2015: 116-118).<sup>76</sup> It is also during this period that strong influences from the Argive and Corinthia can be detected.

Imports became prominent during the Late Geometric period, mostly from the Argolid, Attica and Corinthia (Vlachou 2015: 116-12). New shapes were introduced, such as shallow skyphoi, tripods, lakainai, deep cups, dishes, amphorae, pyxides and globular aryballoi, as well as new types of decoration (Vlachou 2015: 117; 2018: 105-110). Most notable is the appearance of figurative decoration, depicting male dancers, females, horses, battle scenes and armed men (Fig. 3.44 and 3.45, Vlachou 2015: 120, 2018: 111-112).

### **3.2.4.2 Artemis Orthia, Sparta**

The sanctuary of Artemis Orthia is located in Sparta, on the west bank of the Eurotas river, in the area of Limnai (Fig. 3.46). It lies within a natural hollow which, due to its proximity to the river, was probably subjected to periodic flooding, much like the rest of Limnai (Fig. 3.47 and 3.48; Dawkins 1929: 2-5). The site is located on the main route connecting southern and northern Peloponnese, including other sanctuaries/cult sites such as the Heroon and Amyklai.

The site was excavated by members of the British School at Athens in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who identified at least four occupation phases during the EIA to the Roman period (Figs. 3.49 to 3.51; Dawkins 1929: 2-51). The earliest phase of occupation consists of a layer of 'dark earth' containing 'Geometric' pottery, bronzes and burnt bones (Fig. 3.50 to 3.51; Dawkins 1929: 6). The term Geometric is used here in quotes since evidence of the Protogeometric ceramic style was still

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<sup>76</sup> The identification of this phase now invalidates Coulson's phasing, which is not used in this dissertation. See Chapter 4 for more details.

sparse when the sanctuary was excavated. The existence of the period was only truly accepted after Kraiker and Kübler's 1939 publication of the finds from the Kerameikos cemetery at Athens. Consequently, Dawkins and other excavators dated all EIA material to the Geometric period. Since then, studies have identified the Protogeometric style in Laconia and examples have been located within the sherds from the sanctuary (Coulson 1985: 29-84). Yet, a comprehensive analysis of the finds from the sanctuary is not possible due to the lack of a catalogue of the pottery or other finds. Thus, the objects discussed in this section are mostly dated on stylistic grounds.

### **3.2.4.2.1 Votives**

#### *Metal Offerings*

The sanctuary is particularly remarkable for its number of votive double-axe pendants. Thirty-six examples were discovered and later catalogued by Kilian-Dirlmeier (1979: 243-258, nos. 1586, 1587, 1602, 1604-1616, 1623, 1635, 1638, 1656, 1659, 1663, 1664, 1666, 1667, 1676-1683, 1719, 1728 and 1743; Fig. 3.52 and 3.53). The majority (86%) consist of a type with straight-sides and thick blade centres, popular during the period between the 11<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1979: 252-253). Although common throughout the Peloponnese, the number of pendants at Artemis Orthia is higher than elsewhere. For instance, only fifteen examples have been found in Olympia and three in the Argolid (Voyatzis 1990: 195). However, at least twenty-three pendants were recovered from the sanctuary at Tegea, of which 96.6% are of the same type as those from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (Voyatzis 1990: 195).

A large variety of metal votives were introduced during the Geometric period, of which pins were the most popular. In her study of Greek pins, Kilian-Dirlmeier identified 640 pins from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (1984: 80-203). While most can be dated to the Geometric period in general, over 90% were produced during the end of the period. The most popular type has a vertical

row of beads (Kilian's *Mehrkopfnadeln*; Jacobsthals Group 3), and it accounts for 76.7% of pins (Fig. 3.53 to 3.55). This type occurs in almost all Greek sanctuaries, but it is especially common in Artemis Orthia and the Argive Heraion (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 200-203). The second most popular type (Type XII; 4.5%), is characterised by a long row of beads separated by spirals, above and below a disc. Besides Artemis Orthia, Type XII is found also at the sanctuary at Tegea, in Arcadia (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 135; Voyatzis 2014b: 468-478). Common also at Artemis Orthia and Tegea are Type IX pins, with beads separated by spirals above and below a disc; and Type XVI, with a row of beads in between two larger biconical beads (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 129 and 145; Voyatzis 2014b: 468-478).

Fibulae were also included amongst the 8<sup>th</sup> century dedications at Artemis Orthia. The exact numbers of examples are unknown, but the excavators report that two types were particularly common. The first are the arched fibulae, described by Droop as 'a simple wire bow, (...) engraved with a spiral line' (Fig. 3.56a; Droop 1929: 198-199). The second consists of spectacle fibulae, or Blinkenberg's Group XIV, which have safety-pin fasteners attached to the back of wire spirals or ivory plaques (Fig. 3.56b; Blinkenberg 1926: 253-255). Variations of the spectacle fibulae with spirals were dedicated in other sanctuaries in the Peloponnese during the Geometric period, namely the Argive Heraion, Olympia and Tegea (Alexander 1965: 7-23; Phillip 1981: 295-298; Voyatzis 1990: 209-218).

Possible connections with the Mediterranean are suggested by the finding of two fibulae of the Italian leech type (Blinkenberg's Type XI; Fig. 3.57). Fibulae and other Italian objects, such as weapons, began to appear in Greek sanctuaries around the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, particularly at Olympia, but also at Delphi, Samos and Dodona (Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1978: 118; Philipp 1981: 263; Naso 2000: 196; Aurigny 2011: 151-168;).

Lastly, a small number of animal figurines were offered at Artemis Orthia. The figurines represent mainly animals, such as horses, birds, deer and a dog. Horses seem to predominate with seven examples dated to the period between the third quarter to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Fig. 3.58; Zimmerman 1989: 124-135, nos. 70, 106, 107, 109-111, 168). It is interesting to note, however,

that the majority of Laconian horse figurines dated to the Geometric period were offered outside of Laconia: 57.5% of all known specimens were discovered in Olympia, while two to three figurines were recovered at Athens, the Argive Heraion, Bassae and at the Heraion at Samos (Zimmerman 1989: 124-135). Birds are the second most common animal figurine, nine of which were catalogued by Kilian-Dirlmeier (Fig. 3.59; 1979: 129, 155-156, 160-163, 170-171, 178-179 and 183-185, nos. 717, 905, 918, 950, 956, 1008, 1080, 1113 and 1115).

### *Imported objects and materials*

During the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC a number of imported objects were introduced to the sanctuary. These included Egyptian amulets, such as scarabs. Two examples can be classified as Gorton's Type I (1996: 168-169, no. 4) and Type XXII (1996: 169, no. 45; Fig. 3.60). Type I is among the classical Egyptian types; those produced since the Middle Kingdom period onwards and exported to the Aegean and Mediterranean during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. They were widespread throughout the west Mediterranean, with examples from Carthage, Sardinia, Syracuse, Granada, Etruria, Cyprus and Rhodes. In Greece, scarabs of the classical Egyptian type were uncovered, apart from Sparta, in the Heraion of Perachora, the Argive Heraion and Paros (Gorton 1996: 9-20). Type XXII, on the other hand, is uniform, of poor quality, and bears formulaic hieroglyph messages without any specific meaning. It was a common type in Greece, probably made specifically for the Greek market. Consequently, its distribution is wide and examples are found in the Heraion of Perachora, the Argive Heraion, Paros, Delos, Rhodes, Chios, Aegina and Ephesus (Gorton 1996: 64-72).

Ivory objects, such as figurines, fibulae, seals and plaques were also dedicated at the sanctuary during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Since there are no sources of ivory in the Aegean, it had to be imported from the Eastern Mediterranean. At least five ivory plaques have been associated with the 'Geometric' deposit at the sanctuary, where most were fastened to bronze fibulae of the safety-pin type (spectacle fibulae; Blinkenberg 1926: 276). Stylistic analysis of the iconography of the plaques has shown close

parallels with Cretan examples. For instance, women are depicted wearing Cretan garments and jewellery. In fact, the St. Andrew's cross motif with triangles decorating dresses has been observed in many Late Geometric period ivory items from the Idaean cave (Figs. 3.61 and 3.62; Kopanias 2009: 129-130). The hairstyle, depicted with parallel vertical lines, is also typical of Cretan styles. Male figures, on the other hand, wear the Cretan short chiton with short sleeves, comparable to figures on Cretan pithoi (Kopanias 2009: 124-128). Especially close parallels to the plaques from Artemis Orthia are observed at the Idaean cave, leading scholars to suggest that they are the work of the same workshop, most likely located in Crete (Sakellarakis 1992: 115-117; Kopanias 2009: 129-130).

### *Pottery*

The Protogeometric period is represented by a small number of sherds.<sup>77</sup> Nearly all sherds (87.1%) belong to open vessels, of which 74.1% comprise of skyphoi. The remaining shapes include kraters and oinochoe. One ribbed stem, however, suggests that kylikes were still in use during the period (Fig. 3.63). 75% of the skyphoi are decorated with common rectilinear Protogeometric motifs, such as cross-hatched panels, triangles and lozenges divided by horizontal lines in metopal panels. Kraters, on the other hand, were decorated with compass drawn circles, another common motif of the period (Coulson 1985: 55; Lemos 2002: 42-44, 48-49). During the Geometric period, a larger variety of shapes were used, but open vessels remained the most popular. The cup seems to have become the favourite drinking vessel (43%), but skyphoi were still represented in a considerable number (13.9%). 27.8% of sherds belong to closed shapes, including amphorae, oinochoe, lekythos-oinochoe and pyxides.

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<sup>77</sup> For catalogue, see Appendix 3.

### 3.2.4.3 Athena Chalkioikos, Sparta

The sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos is located on the western spur of the Acropolis hill of Sparta, which would have afforded those attending the rituals a view of the Spartan plain and much of the area of modern Sparta itself (Fig. 3.64 to 3.66). The earliest deposits at the site – a black layer containing carbonised bones and fragments of pottery and bronzes - suggest that it was established during the Protogeometric period (Fig. 3.67; Dickins 1906/1907: 142-145). The sanctuary remained active throughout the IA until the Roman occupation of Sparta, when it was levelled for the construction of the late Roman settlement. The successive occupation and natural erosion of the summit of the Acropolis resulted in the washing of the soils and thus significant disturbance to the earliest layers of the site (Dawkins 1906/1907: 138-142, 1908: 143). Consequently, little evidence remains of the EIA cult practices or of any domestic structures.

#### 3.2.4.3.1 Votives

##### *Metal Offerings*

Very few metal votives dated to the EIA have been recovered from Athena Chalkioikos. Among them are at least two fragments of large, solid cast tripod handles. Both handles were decorated with open zigzags, but one also had an animal figurine set above, most likely a horse (Fig. 3.68; Benton 1934-1935: 128-130; Strøm 1995: 51). Pins were also dedicated during the Geometric period, represented by only four examples (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984: 93-146).

## *Pottery*

A small number of Protogeometric sherds indicate that some activity was taking place at the sanctuary during this period.<sup>78</sup> Out of the twenty-eight Protogeometric sherds, 55.5% consist of open shapes. The most common is the skyphoi, representing 48.1% of all sherds. The only closed shapes found are oinochoai and jugs (Fig. 3.69). During the Geometric period, open shapes still predominate, representing 65.8% of the total assemblage. However, cups seem to be preferred over skyphoi, unlike the previous period (Fig. 3.70). The range of closed shapes became more varied, with the inclusion of amphorae and pyxides. Jugs were no longer the preferred closed shape, having been replaced by amphorae.

### **3.2.4.4 Menelaion**

After a period of abandonment of nearly five hundred years, the Menelaion hill sees the establishment of a new sanctuary during the Late Geometric period. Approximately 80m to the southwest of the Mycenaean mansions, a deposit of dark earth was found underneath the later shrine of Helen and Menelaus (Figs. 3.71 and 3.72). The deposit contained offerings such as pottery and bronzes, of which some are dated to the Late Geometric period (Catling 1976: 34-35). Unfortunately, no further details regarding these finds have been published.

### **3.2.4.5 The 'Achilleion'**

Remnants of a cult place were discovered at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the modern road towards Megalopolis, on the main route which connects Sparta to the northern Peloponnese as well as to southern Laconia, to sites such as Amyklai and Lefkas. The sanctuary was identified as a cult

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<sup>78</sup> For the full pottery catalogue see Appendix 3.

to Achilles due to a description of such a place by Strabo at the same location (3.20.8; Dickins 1906/1907: 169-173; Stibbe 2002: 207-208). It should be noted that the shrine(?) is situated in close proximity to two other religious sites, namely the Heroon (c. 500m) and the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (c. 1km), but at a distance of any known burials or hamlets.

Among the most prolific votives are miniature vases from the Orientalizing and Archaic periods: 10,000 examples were distributed in a 0.5m thick black stratum containing a mixture of charred bones (Dickins 1906-1907: 170; Stibbe 2002: 210). Nonetheless, a recent analysis of the offerings has uncovered a Mycenaean stirrup jar as well as a skyphos (Sk406) and two cups (Cp123-124) of the Late Geometric period (Stibbe 2002: 212). Together, these finds indicate that the cult most likely began during the very end of the Geometric period, perhaps even in the beginning of the Archaic period.

#### **3.2.4.6 The 'Heroon'**

During the first explorations of Sparta in 1906, a stone altar was discovered on the west bank of the Eurotas river, approximately 650m to the north of the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (Bosanquet 1906: 279). According to the reports, stratification ranging from the 'Geometric to late Greek times' was associated with the altar, including small terracotta hero-reliefs and miniature vases (Wace 1906: 288-291). Unfortunately, no further analysis of the finds and the purpose of the altar have been produced. Coulson was able to identify in the storage of the Sparta Museum a few sherds which are thought to be associated with the altar. They include three skyphoi (Sk30, Sk259, Sk260) and a jug (Jg58) from the Protogeometric period and two jugs (Jg88, Jg114), one krater (K119) and one cup (Cp70) from the Geometric period. The amount of evidence available is thus too small in order for one to interpret it, but it could suggest that yet another altar was established at Sparta during the Protogeometric period.

### 3.2.4.7 Comments

From the discussion above, it is clear that the EIA period is extremely important for the development of Laconian ritual practices. At Sparta, clearly demarcated cult areas were established in Artemis Orthia and Athena Chakioikos, most likely during the late Protogeometric period. The pottery from these sanctuaries suggest that ritual practices were based on drinking and dining activities. Although Amyklai can be shown to have been established earlier, evidence from the Protogeometric period indicates similar practices. The Geometric period sees a considerable increase in the number of votives in general in all three sanctuaries. Drinking was still a significant aspect of the cult practices taking place, but metals became more common, especially at Amyklai and Artemis Orthia. Nonetheless, the types of metal objects vary from sanctuary to sanctuary. At Artemis Orthia, for instance, the most common metal votive type was pins, represented by at least 640 examples. At Amyklai, by contrast, a larger variety of objects was found in smaller quantities, including bronze tripods, weapons (?), pins and double-axe pendants.

The analysis of the votives has shown that Laconians had contact with and access to other areas of the Greek world, and perhaps the wider Mediterranean during the Geometric period. The introduction of bronze tripods during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC in Amyklai and Artemis Orthia indicate that Laconians were aware of trends taking place outside Laconia. The first bronze tripods were likely to have had been dedicated during the late 11<sup>th</sup>, early 10<sup>th</sup> century BC at Olympia and Delphi.<sup>79</sup> But by the late 8<sup>th</sup> century they can be found in twenty-six sanctuaries throughout the Aegean (Kiderlen 2010: 94-97). With the development of new techniques, the tripods became increasingly elaborate and thus one of the most prestigious offerings at sanctuaries (Coldstream 2005: 316-317). It was also during the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC that goods from the Near East appear mainly at Artemis Orthia. Objects such

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<sup>79</sup> These tripods are identified as Type 2 by Kiderlen, a type which can be compared to clay examples from Tomb 4, at the Kerameikos. The front section of their legs is divided by ridges with handles from the wreath group (Kiderlen 2010: 99-100).

as the ivory plaques and scarabs suggest that Spartans had access to foreign trade routes, either directly or indirectly.

Furthermore, the increase in the number of metal offerings and the introduction of foreign objects strongly imply that elite groups were participating in the activities at these sanctuaries. Although bronze was slowly being replaced by iron, high-quality bronze remained relatively limited until at least the very end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, and thus can still be considered a luxury material (Morgan 1995: 17). Finally, it is interesting to note that the increase of wealth deposited in the sanctuaries is mirrored in the burial offerings of Late Geometric graves in Sparta.

## 3.2 Conclusions

The transitional period between the LBA and the EIA in Laconia still represents a challenge for scholars. The abandonment of most LBA sites during the SubMycenaean and Protogeometric periods suggests the decrease and movement of populations. Asteri (Karousi), Anthochori, Amyklai and Pellana were the only sites which most likely remained occupied, while the western coast was completely abandoned. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the west coast was the point of contact between Laconia and the wider Aegean and Mediterranean world. These contacts are exemplified specially at Epidaurus Limera, a site that received imports from the Argolid and Crete up to the LH IIIC Late period. Therefore, the abandonment of these sites indicates that travel routes via the west coast had ceased at some point during the SubMycenaean period.

The Protogeometric and Geometric periods saw the reoccupation of most areas previously occupied during the Mycenaean period, with the exception of Cape Malea. The western coast remained deserted during the EIA, indicating that travel routes by the sea remained closed. Evidence of other possible port towns are limited to the Helos plain, in the Laconian Gulf. The gulf could offer better protection against attacks by the sea, but, at the same time, would have made the route to the north of the Peloponnese more treacherous, due to the dangers of Cape Malea's waters.

### 3.3.1 The EIA social organisation

It is unclear how Laconian communities were organised during the SubMycenaean period due to the small amount of evidence available. Chamber tombs continued to be used in a few sites, indicating that some communities remained in place. Nonetheless, the inclusion of pins and rings as grave goods in Peristeri signals that some changes were introduced. By the Protogeometric period the changes were significant, with the abandonment of chamber tombs in favour of single burials.

Unfortunately, only a small number of Protogeometric burials have been excavated in Laconia, and most are concentrated in two sites: Sparta and Sklavochori. These are the only locations that contained more than five burials. As was seen above, more than one burial type was represented in both sites, mainly pits and cist tombs. Children were buried alongside adults in numbers that suggest that no other burial area was used for their interment. There are, however, important differences between Sparta and Sklavochori. Firstly, while at Sklavochori burials were found together in one location (a cemetery), in Sparta they were distributed throughout the modern town, in groups of two to three. A number of studies suggests that this distinction is significant and can indicate social organisation (Goldstein 1981: 53-70; Carr 1995: 165, 182). Cemeteries, for example, are communal areas allocated specially for the interment of members of the community. Thus, being buried within this area indicates affiliation with the community. In the case of Sparta, however, burials were located in proximity to individual households, suggesting that household affiliation was considered more important than that of a larger, Spartan, community (Ensor 2013: 157-158). In other words, the burial practices observed in Sklavochori suggest the existence of a sense of group identity, while at Sparta individuals likely identified more closely with their individual households.

Another important difference between the burials from Sklavochori and Sparta is the wealth demonstrated by grave offerings. In the former, a stratified society is indicated by the number of metal offerings in graves. At this point, one can only speculate how this community acquired such prosperity,

but the proximity of the cemetery to the sanctuary at Amyklai suggests that the activities taking place at the latter could be one of the sources.

By the Geometric period, evidence of burial practices is limited to Sparta. There seems to be a reduction in the number of burials during this period, which could indicate a decrease of the population. This is unlikely, however, since excavations and the distribution of Geometric sherds suggest an extension of the occupied areas in modern Sparta. Moreover, there was also an increase in the number of offerings dedicated at the sanctuaries of Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos. Instead, it seems likely that another area which is yet to be excavated or has been destroyed by later occupations was used for burials.

Regardless, Limnai continued to receive burials during the Geometric period. Burials were distributed according to type in specific areas, suggesting that groups (families?) within the community continued to emphasise their household's identity, a practice observed during the Protogeometric period as well. Nevertheless, it is likely that at the same time social hierarchies begin to be signalled by the increase in the number of metal offerings. The practice is particularly clear during the Late Geometric period, with burials B25 and B29.

Burial B29, as was discussed above, is the only burial to contain weapons as grave goods, and therefore can be considered a 'warrior burial'. 'Warrior burials' were not a new phenomenon in Greece. They can be observed throughout the Mycenaean period, but they became more popular during the EIA. At the Toumba cemetery in Lefkandi, for instance, eight out of the thirty-two LPG burials were found to contain weapons. Other examples have been excavated in Athens, Tiryns, Atalanti and Knossos (Lemos 2002: 151-190, 2007: 276). At the same time, the warrior was highlighted in the shape of bronze figurine votives in the sanctuary at Olympia, and extended to other Greek sanctuaries during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Averett 2007: 211-213). By the Geometric period, 'warrior burials' were not as common, represented by a few examples in the Argolid, especially in Argos, as well as Eretria and Athens (Hägg 1983: 27-31; Blandin 2007: 113-115; D'Onofrio 2011: 645-

659). Yet, the warrior *ethos* started to be reflected in other ways, such as in the decoration of vessels<sup>80</sup> and the offerings of weapons and armour at a number of sanctuaries during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Coldstream 2003: 51, 125; Eder 2006a: 564-565; Averett 2007: 210-217).

The popularity of the warrior *ethos* during the EIA in Greece has been interpreted by many as the rise of elite groups which identified themselves and secured their status through their prowess in war. In this context, the masculine ideal was represented by the figure of the warrior (Whitley 2002: 218-220; Langdon 2008: 10-11, 243-246; Pappi and Triantaphyllou 2011: 675). This is unlikely to have been the case in Laconia. Besides burial B29, warriors were represented at the sanctuary at Amyklai only during the Geometric period. Even then, the evidence is not conclusive, since the weapons cannot be dated securely to the Geometric period and only one warrior figurine has been found.

### 3.3.2 The role of sanctuaries in EIA Laconia

Studies dedicated to EIA cult practices generally highlight two aspects. One is that cult practices must have taken place within domestic spaces, since clearly demarcated cult spaces are famously elusive during the EIA (Morris 1987: 189-190; Mazarakis Ainian 1997: 376-381; Haysom 2020: 329-336). Other studies concentrate on the later stage of the period, and emphasise a perceived connection between the appearance of 'extra-urban' sanctuaries and the development of the *polis* (De Polignac 1994: 3-12; Cartledge 1998: 40-44).

Interestingly, neither aspect is represented in Laconia. Yet cult spaces within settlements dating to the Protogeometric period have been identified within the area of modern Sparta, at the sanctuaries of Athena Chalkioikos and Artemis Orthia. Why were these sanctuaries established so early, in comparison with the rest of Greece? Answers to this question can be suggested by the way in which Spartan communities were organised during the period. As was seen above, Protogeometric

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<sup>80</sup> The first vessels decorated with warriors and warfare scenes are found in Athenian vessels dated to the end of the MG II period, where the theme became particularly common (Coldstream 2003: 51).

and Geometric burials indicate the presence of small groups within what today is known as modern Sparta. The location of the burials, the preferred practices and general lack of conspicuous consumption suggest that kinship or familial identity was emphasised. Therefore, it is unlikely that there was sense of a unified Spartan community during most of the Protogeometric and Geometric periods. Nonetheless, these families were co-existing in close proximity, and contacts between them would have been essential for their survival. Ethnographic studies emphasise that the subsistence of agricultural groups is made possible by the establishment of connections between them. It is through their social connections that strategies concerning trade, defence and investments can be organised (Kolb and Snead 1997: 610-611). It is then interesting to note that commensality was the main focus of the festivities taking place at Artemis Orthia and Athenas Chalkioikos during the Protogeometric period. I suggest that one of the main reasons for the early establishment and continuous success of the Spartan sanctuaries was their role in providing a space in which different groups could gather and make arrangements for trading, alliances, weddings etc. The success of this practice is indicated not only by the continued use of the sanctuaries during the Geometric period, but also by the establishment of a number of new sanctuaries in Sparta during the Late Geometric period, such as the 'Achilleion' and the Menelaion.

The Spartan sanctuaries received an even greater number of dedications and continued to host feasting activities during the Geometric period. Nevertheless, changes can be observed in the type of votives offered. At Artemis Orthia, imported objects from the Near East and possibly Crete and Italy were introduced as offerings. The deposition of Near Eastern imports is not unique to this sanctuary, but a phenomenon observed in other Greek sanctuaries throughout Greece in the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. In fact in some locations, such as Lefkandi and Athens, these imports were first introduced as graves goods during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Strøm 1992: 48; Whitley 2018: 589-601; Manolova 2020: 1185). The escalation of Near Eastern imports to Greece can be associated with the increase of communications between the two areas during the Geometric period, and the development of elites who had the means to access such distant areas (Manolova 2020: 1185-1206).

It is likely that the 'exotic' nature of these imports, and the relative difficulty in acquiring them, would have been associated with prestige in most Greek communities of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the introduction of imported votives at the sanctuary at Artemis Orthia, together with the increase of wealth reflected in burial goods, can indicate the establishment of elite groups in the Spartan communities of the Late Geometric period.

Although no imports such as those described above have been uncovered at Athena Chalkioikos, there are other offerings that indicate the importance of the sanctuary during the Geometric period, such as bronze tripods. Recent studies indicate that tripods were first dedicated at Olympia, during the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC. During the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, they are observed in a limited number of sanctuaries in Greece, including the Athenian Acropolis, the Argive Heraion, Isthmia, Amyklai, Kalapodi, Lefkandi, the sanctuary of Athena in Lindos, the Heraion of Samos and Zeus Dikataios in Crete. Yet the largest numbers were found at Olympia (ca. 1000) and Delphi (ca. 200) (Coldstream 2003: 336; Maass 1981: 17; Kinderlen 2010: 93-97). Kinderlen has proposed that their limited distribution to a small number of sites reflects the importance of such sanctuaries, and thus further validates their status as focal points of elite interaction, where, consequently, regional and supra-regional networks were formed (2010: 97-99). This theory clearly fits well with cases such as Olympia and Delphi, which eventually became Pan-hellenic sanctuaries. But how can the deposition of tripods be explained at sanctuaries such as Athena Chalkioikos?

Before trying to clarify this question, it is necessary to discuss the role of one of the most important sanctuaries in Laconia, that of Amyklai. Its location outside a settlement has led scholars to classify the sanctuary as 'extra-urban'. Consequently, studies about Amyklai tend to revolve around its role in the development of the Spartan *polis*. Yet, the discovery of the Protogeometric cemetery at Sklavochori demands that Amyklai's status as an 'extra-urban' sanctuary be revised. Visitors to the sanctuary most likely included people from the communities in its vicinity, including those associated with the burials at Sklavochori, similarly to the case of Artemis Orthia. At this point, however, the

extent to which the area surrounding the sanctuary was occupied is unknown, due to the lack of systematic surveys in the region.

Nonetheless, the catchment area of the sanctuary was most likely widened during the period between the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century and the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when there was a qualitative and quantitative increase in the offerings. During the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, among the new offerings introduced to the sanctuary the most telling are the bronze tripods. Their presence at both Amyklai and Athena Chalkioikos indicates that visitors to both sanctuaries belonged to a supra-regional network in Greece connected by sanctuaries, especially Olympia. It is not surprising then that imported pottery from the Argolid and Corinth are observed among the vessels from Amyklai.

Contacts between Laconians and other Greek sanctuaries can also be attested by Laconian objects in other sanctuaries. Networks between Laconians and Arcadia, for instance, were already established during the Protogeometric period. As will be seen in the next chapter, a significant number of Laconian vessels from this period were uncovered at the sanctuaries at Tegea and Mt. Lykaion. Moreover, the distribution of other votives, such as double-axes and pins, indicate possible connections between Laconians and Arcadians. By the Geometric period, Laconian bronze horse figurines suggests that the Laconian network had extended to Olympia, as well as to the Argive Heraion. It is also probably through this network connecting Peloponnesian sanctuaries that Laconians first had access to Mediterranean imports, since there are no known port towns in Laconia during the EIA.

These networks could be established due to the accessibility created by routes along the Eurotas and Alpheios river valleys. As was seen in Chapter 2, at least since the LBA period, Laconian sites took advantage of river valleys to navigate within Laconia and to the northern Peloponnese. However, easy access to routes was not the only factor which led to the contacts and influences observed. The establishment of networks also relies on the social component (Knappett 2011: 124-125; Wilkinson 2014: 28). Sociological studies, such as those by Bourdieu, emphasise that individuals

are embedded within their own specific cultural context and thus have personal and collective value systems (what Bourdieu describes as *habitus*) (2013: 72-87). And those are the factors which determine what is desirable and/or socially acceptable (Knappett 2011: 137-139). Consequently, the intensity of contacts and influences created by them are dependent on how culturally similar communities are. One can suggest, therefore, that in order for these networks to be formed during the EIA the communities associated with them were likely to share perceived commonalities.

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Pottery is a vital component for many of the discussions raised in this chapter. The available data will be revisited in the next chapter, which analyses EIA Laconian pottery production and how it relates to the so-called West Greek koine.

## **Chapter 4:**

# **The LH IIIC, SubMycenaean and Early Iron Age Pottery**

The LH IIIC period is marked by the destruction and abandonment of important centres in the Aegean, and consequently by a high mobility of populations. In Laconia, as was seen in the previous chapter, important sites continued to be used or were re-used, such as Epidaurus Limera, the Menelaion and Aghios Stephanos. And it is mainly from these centres that the LH IIIC pottery discussed here originated. The span of time between the SubMycenaean and Early Protogeometric periods (mid/late 11<sup>th</sup> century BC), on the other hand, has a small number of known vessels. The study of this period and the subsequent EIA is further complicated by the fact that a large quantity of the material comes from unstratified deposits from sanctuaries, namely Amyklai, Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos.

The dearth of vessels from the SubMycenaean to the Early Protogeometric period led some to suggest a gap of occupation in Laconia between the end of the BA and the beginning of the IA. According to some scholars, the picture indicated the abandonment of the region after the end of the LH IIIC period and its reoccupation in the EIA by newcomers, most likely the legendary Dorians (Buschor and von Massow 1927: 1-23; Cartledge 1975: 89, 1992: 49-54; Coulson 1985: 63-65; Dickinson 1992: 114; Eder 1998: 100-110). Hence, according to Desborough, the beginning of the Laconian Protogeometric period should be dated to the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC. Based on the work of Desborough and the apparent similarities he observed between the ceramics from Laconia and Messenia (mostly from Nichoria), Coulson divided the Laconian material into three phases, Dark Age I to III (c. 950-775 BC). Like Nichoria, the Laconian DA I (ca. 950-? BC) was relatively short, followed by a long second phase (DA II; ca. ?-850 BC) and a 'poorer' third phase (DA III; ca. 850-775). However, Coulson could not define the end of Laconia DA I and thus the beginning of DA II. Consequently, the

Laconian Protogeometric period would have had started approximately one century after the latest LH IIIC examples.<sup>81</sup>

In the past thirty years, however, a number of discoveries and important studies have challenged this notion. Demakopoulou, for instance, has shown the existence of a SubMycenean period in Laconia, which has bridged the so-called gap significantly (1982: 79-96, 2009a: 117-123, 2012: 105-112). Further evidence has been produced by the latest excavations at the sanctuary of Amyklai, where a number of sherds from the Early Protogeometric period were identified (Vlachou 2018: 100). Moreover, excavations led by the Greek archaeological service in modern Sparta continue to reveal new sites which broaden the Laconian pottery repertoire.<sup>82</sup> Together, these discoveries now suggest that such a gap in the Laconian ceramic production most likely does not exist or was very short.

Further challenges to the phasing established by Coulson were proposed in 1988 by Margreiter, who identified a SubProtogeometric phase characterised by the appearance of Early and Middle Geometric Attic influences (1988: 24-25).<sup>83</sup> Coupled with the new evidence from Amyklai, the beginning of the Middle Geometric period can now be dated to the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, thus approximately 75 years earlier than suggested by Coulson (Vlachou 2018: 93-124).

Lastly, an important aspect of Laconian Protogeometric pottery is its possible association with the West Greek *koine*. Although archaeologists recognize the heterogeneous nature of this *koine*, they are reticent to include Laconia because of the idiosyncrasy of its style (Eder 2006b: 561-562; Voyatzis 2017: 65-85). Among the its most distinctive features are the shiny 'metallic' black paint that

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<sup>81</sup> Boardman also revised the material from Artemis Orthia in the 1960s, suggesting that the so-called 'Geometric' layer was dated to the period between the 9<sup>th</sup> century and 675 BC. His study, however, lacks much of the insight provided by further discoveries, such as those from Amyklai (1963: 1-7).

<sup>82</sup> The reports are published mainly in the volumes of *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον*, as well as in Zavvou and Themou 2009 (See Gazetteer in Appendix 1 for a detailed description).

<sup>83</sup> The existence of a SubProtogeometric phase at Amyklai has now been confirmed by the recent excavations (Vlachou 2018: 106-107, personal communication).

coats a large number of vessels,<sup>84</sup> the use of grooves, a preference for tapering shapes and for decoration divided into panels (metopes divided by triglyphs). It is important, therefore, to define the meaning of *koine* and how it has been used by archaeologists before analysing the EIA Laconian pottery.

*Koine* is a term coined to denote 'common' or 'shared' and was first used to describe a particular linguistic dialect common between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD in the Eastern Mediterranean. It consisted of a hybrid form of Greek, a simplified version of an Ionianized-Attic dialect, which could be easily understood by the communities within the Macedonian regime. Yet, it did not represent spoken language, but rather the written language of government and education (Dietler 2017: 18-19; Colvin 2016: 36-42). Between the 1960s and 1980s the term *koine* was introduced as a concept in sociolinguistic studies to describe dialects which had a similar function. In this context, the definition of *koine* is a 'hybrid dialect with a simplified structure that emerges from prolonged contact between two or more mutually intelligible dialects of the same language and that served as a common *lingua franca*' (Dietler 2017: 19-20). These types of dialects then are not only the result of prolonged interaction between participant groups, but also of their interest in changing and adopting their language in order to facilitate communication. For instance, the communities from North Malaita, in the archipelago of the Solomon Islands, spoke a number of different dialects and languages. However, when these groups immigrated to Fiji, group solidarity dissolved the boundaries between the dialects and a unique variety of Fiji, Wai, was created (Siegel 1985: 366).

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<sup>84</sup> The metallic appearance is attributed to the firing of the pots at a very high temperature to ensure that the black paint did not crack or rub off, since the vases were not slipped (Dawkins 1929: 66, note 16; Cartledge 1975: 87). According to Dawkins: 'The metallic gleam of the paint was proved in 1927 to be due, as had been suspected, to very hard firing by the discovery of two sherds which joined, one of which had been burnt after fracture, the other not. The burnt sherd only showed the characteristic gleam' (1929: 66, note 16). The preference for this decoration is not clear, but it has been suggested that it was an attempt to imitate metal vessels. This is unlikely as one does not see other aspects common to other skeuomorphs observed in Greece. In Crete, for instance, a number of clay vessels dated to the Middle Minoan period, have been found with features reminiscent of metal vessels, such as the join between handle and body, thin strap handles and lobed rims (Knappett 2002: 109).

Since then, the term has been widely adopted by a number of disciplines in order to define a variety of phenomena, such as ‘visual *koinai*’, ‘mythological *koinai*’ and ‘material *koinai*’. The latter was adopted by archaeologists to describe observed commonalities in the material culture of some groups (Dietler 2017: 21).<sup>85</sup> Perhaps the best example is that of the ‘Mycenaean *koine*’, which refers to shared administrative, religious and material similarities during the period between LH IIIA and LH IIIB. Nevertheless, being that the term *koine* originally referred to a linguistic phenomenon, should it still be used by archaeologists to refer to material culture? According to the post-processual school of archaeology, this usage should not be problematic. Based on Structuralist concepts developed by anthropologists such as Lévi-Strauss,<sup>86</sup> post-processual theory proposed that archaeological evidence can be interpreted as a body of signs that, just like texts, encode and communicate past human actions and ideas (Hodder and Hutson 2003: 166-170). Accordingly, practices are governed by an underlying structure which is also embodied in material culture (Patrick 1985: 40-41). In other words: ‘understanding material culture is more like interpreting a language because it is dealing with meanings which are loosely, if at all, connected to the physical properties of the objects’ (Hodder 1995: 10). Thus, according to this perspective, the use of a term designated to explain a linguistic phenomenon – such as *koine* – is acceptable for the study of material culture.

This opinion, however, is not shared by all. One of the main sources of criticism is that this interpretation equates objects and symbols:

Material culture is embedded in systems of symbolic expression but also in systems of practical action on matter. Hence, although material culture participates in processes of *signification* (objects may provoke emotional and intellectual responses and be invested with significance of various kinds by users and makers) it is not primarily a system of *communication* like language’ (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 244).

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<sup>85</sup>More recently the term was used as the title of a conference held at the Danish Institute at Athens in 2015, now also a book (2018): *Material Koinai in the Greek Early Iron Age and Archaic Period*, S. Handberg and A. Gadolou (eds).

<sup>86</sup>See, for instance, *Structural Anthropology* (1959) and *The Savage Mind* (1962).

Consequently, the emphasis on the symbolic aspect of archaeological evidence results in the dismissal of the importance of materials and techniques (Dietler 2017:22). Emphasis is placed on the analysis of style, which is understood as a superfluous aspect of the object itself, since it does not affect its function. Style, then, is believed to have a social function, such as communication of information (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 237-244; Wobst 1977: 1-44; Sackett 1977). Hodder, for instance, proposed that material culture can be used to indicate ethnic boundaries in his anthropological study of the Baringo area of Kenya (1979).

Many have now emphasized the importance of the study of materials and techniques for the interpretation of the archaeological record (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 233-263; Dietler 2017: 22, Ingold 2007; Lemmonier 1990). Accordingly, each step in the production of an object represents a choice made by a craftsperson, including style. These choices express and reinforce some of the cultural concepts which individuals have learnt through their socialisation within their communities (Reeves 2003: 42-43, Dietler and Herbich 1998: 237-239). These scholars propose that an object can be understood as the material expression of one's *habitus*. The concept of *habitus* was first introduced by Bourdieu in order to explain the formation of societies' structures. The term describes the 'dispositions' which people develop as a result of living within the structures of their societies; those actions which one feels are 'natural', 'normal'. As a result, there are patterns that can be observed in material culture as if its producer was following certain pre-determined social rules. However, it is important to emphasize that individuals are not ruled by the *habitus* and individual trajectories have the capacity to create variations within the same *habitus*. Therefore, the *habitus* connects all individuals in similar living conditions without restricting their actions (Bourdieu 2013: 72-87).

One of the main issues regarding the use of the term *koine* by archaeologists is the lack of a clear definition. For instance, common characteristics in the Mycenaean *koine* include public architecture, artistic style and technologies, political, economic and administrative structures, cult paraphernalia and mortuary practices (Mac Sweeney 2008: 105). On the other hand, the so-called

West Greek *koine* is formed mainly of common ceramic shapes and decorative motifs. It seems clear that these phenomena are not comparable in their range: while the Mycenaean *koine* encompasses a large number of similar cultural elements, the Euboean and west Greek *koinai* are limited mostly to ceramic comparisons. Therefore, it would be misleading to describe both definitions as *koinai*.

As a consequence, *koine* can come to be misunderstood as a synonym to 'culture', a problematic term in itself. 'Culture' was first developed as a concept in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was mainly concerned with identifying different peoples based on certain types of remains which re-occur together, such as pottery, burial rites and houses. These 'cultures' not only shared similar material culture, but the same language, traditions and social organisation:

'Culture is a social heritage; it corresponds to a community sharing common traditions, common institutions and a common way of life. Such a group may reasonably be called a people... It is then a people to which the culture of an archaeologist must correspond' (Childe 1935: 198-9).

Hence, the term culture came to signify what today can be defined as ethnicity (Trigger 2006: 244-308; Jones 1997: 17-24). By the 1960s, these definitions were heavily criticised due to a number of anthropological and historical studies, which demonstrated the complexity of the relationship between material culture and the expression of ethnicity (Jones 1997: 16-38, 105-106). Barth, for example, emphasised that these earlier definitions of ethnicity and culture reinforce the notion that social groups develop in relative isolation and that their societies are determined mainly by ecological factors. Instead, ethnic groups should be understood as self-conscious groups which are based on the perception of real or assumed cultural differences. Thus, they cannot be identified objectively, through a list of determining traits (Barth 1970: 9-15; Jones 1997: 108-109). Moreover, many studies have demonstrated the role of agency of groups in the creation of their own identities as well as their fluidity.

Material culture, for instance, can be used to reflect specific aspects of one's perceived identity. This fact becomes particularly evident in burial practices. They are an occasion for the community to observe the social and political standing of the deceased and his/her family (Cavanagh 2008: 338). Warrior burials from the LH IIIC period, for instance, can be characterised as the burial of an individual with a number of weapons and armour. Seeing that during this period there is a marked increase of the decorative depiction of warriors, it has been suggested that warriors became important members of society and thus were rewarded with high status (Hiller 1999: 323-327). As a consequence, burying an individual with a warrior's panoply does not immediately indicate that the deceased was, in fact, a warrior. Rather, that the community wished to demonstrate his high status by associating him with objects which would symbolise a warrior (Whitley 2002: 221). Thus it was not necessary for one to be a successful warrior in order to be associated with this high ranking status.

In addition, anthropological studies have revealed that the dissemination of styles might only have a small role in the definition of social and ethnic boundaries. In the Luo region of western Kenya, for instance, ceramic production is limited to women, who learn their craft from more senior women of their husband's household, such as their mothers-in-law. As a result, distinctive 'micro-styles' are created, based on changes to technical, formal and decorative attributes. Although each community produces their own micro-style, potters cannot distinguish their own style and, in fact, when taught the craft, there is no emphasis on the importance of specific styles. An analysis of the spatial distribution of these pots reveal that the 'micro-styles cut across important social and cultural boundaries, including Luo subgroup boundaries and the border between the Luo and the neighbouring Bantu-speaking Luyia' (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 250).

It is thus concluded that the distribution of ceramic styles within a region cannot be translated as the territory of an ethnic group (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 248-255). In other words, similarities in pottery production might not be indicative of the existence of one ethnic group. This is important to the understanding of *koine* because it demonstrates that similarities between the styles of objects by

themselves should not be used to delineate cultural or ethnic groups. In other words, the area of a *koine* does not necessarily represent an ethnic or even cultural group.

Another source of criticism towards the use of *koine* is that, just as with culture, the former can mask variations which might exist within their defined areas (Galanakis 2009: 6-7). The 'Mycenaean' period, for instance, first received its name after Schliemann's excavations at Mycenae. Seeing the commonalities between the material culture at Mycenae and other sites in Greece, archaeologists eventually extended the nomenclature 'Mycenaean' to the whole of LH I, LH II and LHIII Greece. From then on it was assumed that the community of every site where the defined 'Mycenaean' material culture was found had to belong to the same culture. The danger of applying this logic is that one assumes that characteristics from one area of the 'cultural zone' can be applied to the rest of the area of the *koine*. Furthermore, variations are seen as abnormalities and can thus be excluded from studies.

Considering the imprecise definition of the term *koine* and, specifically, of the West Greek *koine*, this chapter will assess Laconia's relationship to the latter through the examination of the region's EIA pottery production.

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The following sections discuss the Laconian fineware and coarseware pottery from the LH IIIC and Early Iron Age periods. The corpus includes an analysis of 1262 catalogued vases from cemeteries, sanctuaries and settlements, which can be found in Appendix 3. The catalogue contains all of the published material from the LH IIIC, SubMycenaean, Protogeometric and Geometric period, as well as unpublished vessels from the excavations at Mt. Lykaion.<sup>87</sup> This analysis will not use Coulson's phasing (Dark Ages I to III) due to the many new discoveries that now make it obsolete

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<sup>87</sup> Access to unpublished finds was gracefully given by M. Voyatzis and D. Romano, to whom I am very grateful.

(1985: 63-66). Instead, the traditional terminology (Protogeometric and Geometric periods) is preferred. The chapter is divided into three sections, the first of which describes the shapes and decoration of the LH IIIC and SubMycenaean periods. Section two introduces the pottery from the Early Iron Age, including the Protogeometric and Geometric periods. A summary of the analysis and comments are presented in the last section.

## **4.1 LH IIIC and the SubMycenaean Periods**

### **4.1.1 Open Shapes**

#### **4.1.1.1 Krater (K1 to K24)**

*FS 9, 282*

Most examples of Laconia kraters are dated to the LH IIIC Early period and come from Aghios Stephanos. The LH IIIC Early phase is represented mainly by body sherds, from which two types of kraters can be identified: the ring-based (*FS 281* and *FS 282*; K1-K8, K10-K12, K14-K20) and the stemmed krater (*FS 9*; K9 and K13). The former has a semi-globular body with rims which can be either slightly slanted (K16) or flat (K3; Fig. 4.1a and b), but the examples of stemmed kraters are too fragmented to be characterised. Nevertheless, they can be shown to have originated from earlier LH IIIB kraters. A LH IIIB ring based-krater from Epidaurus Limera, for instance, shows the continuous preference for rounded upper bodies, slender, almost carinated lower bodies and slightly everted rims (Catling 1980: 440-447; Gallou 2020: 203, fig. 4.129A, B; Fig. 4.1c). The decorative scheme of LH IIIC Early kraters is mostly light-grounded, with linear decoration. Motifs are distributed in reserved bands on the handle zone, including spirals (K1, K8), wavy lines (K4), tricurved arches (K5), 'bow tie' borders (K6), chequers (K11), quirks (K12) and isolated semi-circles (K19). Sherd K17, however, depicts the mid-section of a figure, possibly carrying an unknown object (Fig. 4.1d), and it constitutes the only known example of figurative decoration on kraters in Laconia from the LH IIIC period.

By the LH IIIC Middle period, only ring-based kraters are found in Laconia. Three sherds from Asteri, Karousi (K21) and Amyklai (K22-K23) represent the type during this period (Fig. 4.1f-h). The rim and body of K21 corresponds well to the carinated krater (FS 282), a shape characterised by a carinated body with short, everted rim, also seen at Mycenae and Lefkandi during the same period.<sup>88</sup> The remaining sherds are body fragments, decorated with panels with rays (K21), joined semi-circles (K22), stemmed spirals (K22), half rosettes (K23) and antithetic spirals (K23). The use of the ray motif is unusual, leading some to suggest that it belongs to a Laconian tradition (Mountjoy 1999: 290, 951-953). This is supported by the presence of the motif on Laconian stirrup jars in Naxos and in the Argolid.<sup>89</sup>

The SubMycenaean period is represented by only one example. K24 has been recently discovered at Pavlopetri, and it belongs to a krater with a deep body and a rim with a horizontal top (Fig. 4.1i). This type of rim can also be observed on later specimens, dated to Protogeometric period. Little remains of the vessel's decoration, but a wavy line is still visible. The wavy line is a common motif of the SubMycenaean period, seen in a number of open and closed shapes throughout the Peloponnese.

#### 4.1.1.2 Cup (Cp1 to Cp11)

*FS 215, 216, 220, 228*

Laconian LH IIIC cups can be divided into at least two groups according to their shape. The most common shape from the LH IIIC Early period is the deep semi-globular cup (FS 215, 216), popular also during the LH IIIB2 and LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early periods in the Menelaion (Catling *et al* 2009: 377-

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<sup>88</sup> Examples in Mountjoy 1999: 172, no. 362, fig. 48 (Mycenae, Argolid) and Popham *et al* 2006: 157, fig. 2.24.2 (Lefkandi, Euboea).

<sup>89</sup> Examples in Vlachopoulos 2006: 346-347, no. 1760, pl. 6 (Kamini, Naxos) and Aravantinos 1977: 79, no.11, pl. 75 (Palaia Epidaurus, Argolid). These stirrup jars and their association to Laconian examples are discussed in detail in section 4.1.2.9.

378). These cups are mostly represented at Aghios Stephanos and they can have slightly everted (Cp5-Cp6) or everted rims (Cp4) and flat bases (Fig.4.2a-c). The shape was very common throughout the Aegean, but Laconian cups have closer parallels to examples from Attica and Corinthia (Mountjoy 1999: 1225).<sup>90</sup> Their decoration, however, is unusual when compared to other regions: Cp4 has two bands (Fig. 4.2c), and Cp5-Cp6 are adorned with patterns, rather than the more prevalent dark band on the rim (Fig. 4.2a-b; Mountjoy 1986: 146).

The carinated cup (Cp2-Cp3) is another type observed at Aghios Stephanos during the LH IIIC Early period. It has a shallow body, a flaring rim set on a flat base and one oval handle (Cp3; Fig 4.2d). Cp2 (FS 240), unlike Cp3 (FS 220), has a ring base and a vertical high loop-shaped handle. The carinated cup has no Mycenaean antecedents, and its appearance has been linked to the introduction of a similar shape of Handmade Burnished Ware (HMBW) cup found in late LH IIIB deposits from Mycenae, Tiryns, Aigera, Korakou and the Menelaion. However, similar examples to Cp2 have been found in Tiryns, Mycenae, Lefkandi, Korakou, Teichos Dymaion, Aigeira and Spaliareika (Rutter 1990: 37; Podzuweit 2007: 116-120; Popham *et al* 2006: 138; Marini 2018: 164-167). These parallels indicate that Cp2 belongs to the same type (FS 240) and thus that HMBW vessels had an impact on the local pottery production in Laconia and other regions of Greece (Rutter 2020: 212-215).

Towards the middle and end of the LH IIIC period, the deep semi-globular shape continues unchanged, apart from a preference for a low conical base (FS 216, Cp9; Fig. 4.2f). By the SubMycenaean period, examples from Pellana (Cp10) and Epidaurus Limera (Cp11) (Figs 4.2g-h), demonstrate the continued popularity of the conical base, now common in other areas of Greece as well (FS 217).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Examples in Iakovidis 1969: 215, no. 452, pl. 79α (Perati, Attica) and Blegen 1921, fig. 92 (Korakou, Corinthia).

<sup>91</sup> Other examples of FS 217 have been found at the Argolid, Ithaka, Attica, Boetia, Euboea and Phthiotis (Mountjoy 1999: 1225).

#### 4.1.1.3 Mug (M1 to M2)

*FS 226, 251*

Mugs were not common during the LH IIIC period in the Peloponnese. The shape is usually represented by one or two examples in each site during the LH IIIC Early period. This is also the case in Laconia. A mug (M2; FS 226) and a spouted mug (M1; FS 251) were discovered in Aghios Stephanos and Epidaurus Limera, respectively. Both shapes have cylindrical bodies with concave sides on a flat base. However, it should be highlighted that M2 is fragmented and only the base survives, thus it is possible that it was spouted as well (Fig. 4.3b). M1, on the other hand, is complete, and besides the spout it also has one handle attached from the rim to the lower body (Fig. 4.3a). This shape can be closely compared to a mug from Attica and a spouted mug from Naxos from the LH IIIC Early period.<sup>92</sup>

The mugs are decorated with dark bands: M1 has thick bands on the rim, body and base, while M2 has thin bands on the lower body and a circular pattern on the bottom of its base. Bands are seen in almost all known examples from the LH IIIC Early period, but in most cases they are placed on the rim and base, and a pattern decorates the area in between.<sup>93</sup> Thus, the decoration of the Laconian mugs can be more closely compared to an example from Lefkandi, dated also to the LH IIIC Early period.

#### 4.1.1.4 Dipper (Dp1 to Dp3)

*FS 236*

Three dippers were found in Laconia from the whole of the LH IIIC period. All were discovered in Aghios Stephanos and are dated to the LH IIIC Early. The shape has either a sharply carinated (Dp3) or a globular body (Dp1), and a raised handle (Fig. 4.3c and e). Dp1 is the only example with some

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<sup>92</sup> Examples in Iakovidis 1969: 333-334, no. 276, pl. 102γ (Perati, Attica) and Vlachopoulos 2006: 135-136, no. 1778, pl. 28 (Kamini, Naxos). Further parallels to M1 comes from Palaiokastro, Arcadia (Mountjoy 1999: 299).

<sup>93</sup> For instance, the mid-section of a LH IIIC Early mug from Attica is decorated with vertical straight and wavy lines (Iakovidis 1969: 333-334, no. 276, pl. 102γ). Examples from Rhodes have horizontal chevrons and panelling (Benzi 1992: 279, no. 36, pl. 38o, 127-128, no. 3383, pl. 143a).

decoration on the body (wavy line), but the handles on Dp2 and Dp3 have diagonal and horizontal bars, respectively (Fig. 4.3d-e). It is interesting to note that the dipper seems to have fallen out of favour in the other areas of the Aegean during the LH IIIC period, except in Laconia and Rhodes. Moreover, the dipper has a long history in Aghios Stephanos, with examples dating from the LH IIIA1 and LH IIIA2 periods.<sup>94</sup> In fact, the carination observed in Dp3 is a feature seen already in dipper number 3570 from the LH IIIA2 period (Janko and Taylour 2008: 360).

#### **4.1.1.5 Bowl (Bw1 to Bw17)**

*FS 242, 288, 295, 305, 306*

A variety of types of bowls were produced in Laconia during the LH IIIC period. All but two have been recovered from domestic deposits from Aghios Stephanos. The remaining bowls were excavated from burials from Epidaurus Limera (Bw15) and in the Armakas cave (Bw17). The most common shape has a globular body with slightly everted, lipless rim (FS 306; Bw5-Bw7, Bw10, Bw12-Bw14; Figs. 4.4a-g). According to Mountjoy, the vessel could represent an adaptation of the Minoan deep bowl and kantharos in Laconia (1999: 1064). The lipless rim, however, is a feature also seen on stemmed bowls from Rhodes and Messenia.<sup>95</sup> A reserved band with a variety of motifs adorns the area between handles. Among the most common motifs are antithetical spirals (Bw5, Bw8), wavy lines (Bw6), semi-circles (Bw9), panelling (Bw10), multiple stems (Bw12) and V patterns (Bw13). Lastly, all examples have monochrome interiors.

Shallow angular bowls are the second most common type of bowl during the LH IIIC period in Laconia. This type has a conical, carinated bowl, flaring lipless rim, two horizontal handles just below the rim and a raised concave base (FS 295; Bw1-4, Figs. 4.4h-k). In contrast to the previous specimens,

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<sup>94</sup> Examples from the LH IIIA1 period in Janko and Taylour 2008, nos. 3305 and 3306; LH IIIA2: Janko and Taylour 2008, nos. 3038, 3114, 3570 and 3680.

<sup>95</sup> Examples in Benzi 1992, pls. 30a and 36s, fig. 436 (Ialysos, Rhodes) and Blegen *et al* 1973, fig. 292.10 (Pisaskion, Messenia).

decoration of the shallow bowl can be described as simple, with one band on the rim and one just before or after the carination, a decorative scheme observed also on bowls from the Argolid.<sup>96</sup>

One handled-bowls were also produced in this period (FS 242, Bw15-BW16). These vessels can be identified by their semi-globular bodies, lipless rims and horizontal handles (Fig. 4.4I). Unfortunately, the examples from Laconia are too fragmented and decoration patterns cannot be identified. Lastly, one undecorated deep rounded bowl with vertical handles (FS 288, Bw11) has been uncovered in Aghios Stephanos. The shape was also produced in Messenia and the Argolid, however earlier, during the LH IIIB period.<sup>97</sup>

#### **4.1.1.6 Kylix (Ky1 to Ky15)**

*FS 267, 274, 275, 276*

Two types of kylikes are common to LH IIIC Early Laconia, and both are represented in Aghios Stephanos. The first has an angular bowl, with a straight upper body and a slightly everted rim. One handle is usually found attached to the lip and the lower part of the body. The stems are straight and their bases convex (FS 267, Ky1, Ky3, Ky7-Ky9, Figs. 4.5a-e). The shape was not popular during the LH IIIC period, with few examples from Achaea, Melos and Rhodes.<sup>98</sup> The known Laconian kylikes of this type are monochrome, similar to those from Achaea and Melos. The second type of kylix has a deep conical bowl with straight or incurving lipless rim. Two small handles are attached from rim to the lower part of the bowl (FS 274). Unlike FS 267, FS 274 kylikes were rather common throughout the Aegean (Mountjoy 1999: 1228). Decoration is also simple, consisting of bands (e.g. Ky2, Ky4-Ky5) and panels on the bowl (Ky6). One example has an unpainted exterior and a monochrome interior (Ky10,

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<sup>96</sup> Example in Mountjoy 1986: 153, fig. 197.1.

<sup>97</sup> Examples in Furumark 1941, pl. 159 (Messenia) and Blegen 1928: 159, nos. 126 and 127, fig. 152 (Zygouries, Argolid).

<sup>98</sup> There are examples of kylikes at Elis, but they cannot be compared to the FS 267 shape from LH IIIC Early Laconia. Instead, there seems to be a preference over FS 274 shapes (see Eder 2006b: 150-154 for examples from Olympia). See examples of the FS 267 shape in Marini 2018: 167-170, KLX12, pl.35 (Aigera, Achaea); Renfrew 1985: 165, no. 176, fig. 5.7 (Phylakopi, Melos) and Benzi 1992, pl. 175d (Ialysos, Rhodes).

Fig. 4.5f-j). Both shapes (FS 267 and FS 274) have antecedents in LH IIIA and LH IIIB kylikes, which are well represented in the Menelaion (Catling *et al* 2009: 373, 378-379).

By the end of the LH IIIC period, a number of kylix stems develop a swelling, which became well-defined ridges during the SubMycenaean period. Stems with ridges continued to be produced into the Protogeometric period, evidenced by examples from Messenia, Ithaca and Elis. Yet, due to the similarity between the SubMycenaean and Protogeometric types, dating the stem can be challenging (Demakopoulou 2009: 121; Symeonoglou 2002: 69-70). In the case of Laconia, four ridged stems were excavated at Amyklai (Ky11-Ky15; Fig. 4.6a-c). K12, for instance, has regularly spaced ridges, but they are slightly rounded. Parallels to its shape are seen in Olympia and Nichoria, where stems are roughly dated to between the Submycenaean and Protogeometric periods.<sup>99</sup> The ridges of Ky11 and Ky13, however, are very well defined, and can be compared to ribbed stems dated to the Protogeometric period from Polis, Ithaca.<sup>100</sup>

#### 4.1.1.7 Deep Bowl (DB1 to DB79)

*FS 284, 285, 286*

Nearly all Laconian LH IIIC deep bowls can be dated to the Early phase of the period (92.4%). Most originate from Aghios Stephanos (DB1 to DB70, 92%), but a small number were also discovered in chamber tombs in Epidaurus Limera (5.1 %, DB71-DB72, DB75), Pavlopetri (2.5%, DB76-DB77) and Pellana (1.3%, DB73). The shape is represented by a variation of types (FS 284 to 286) that can be generally described as having a deep bell-shaped body with slightly everted rims and ringed bases. Handles are horizontal and looped-shaped, set high on the upper body (Fig. 4.7a-j). Rim diameters

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<sup>99</sup> For parallels see Eder 2006b: 148-54, nos. 18-20, pls. 33 and 77 (Olympia, Elis) and Coulson 1983: 257, no. P1599, fig. 3.5. The shape has also been recently identified at Mt. Lykaion, Arcadia (C-Z-627-01; Romano and Voyatzis 2021: 16, fig. 16f).

<sup>100</sup> See Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999: 109-110, nos. S216 and S218, pls. 27 and 28, for parallels.

vary between 11cm to 19cm, but most range between 14cm to 16cm. By the SubMycenaean period, there seems to be a preference for low conical bases, as can be seen in DB78 and DB79 (Fig. 4.7k).

Most deep bowls from the LH IIIC Early follow Mountjoy's Group A decorative scheme: a thin or a medium dark band on the rim, followed by a decorative zone on the upper body and a band below (1986: 149-151). The decorative zone usually contains spirals (e.g. DB6, DB14), triglyphs (e.g. DB25, DB28), quirks (e.g. DB8, DB 11), wavy lines (e.g. DB19, DB43) and zigzags (e.g. DB20). Parallels to this scheme can be observed in Euboea, Attica, Corinthia, the Argolid, Elis, and Melos.<sup>101</sup> Most deep bowls have monochrome interiors (77.2%), but three examples have a reserved band below the inner rim (DB1, DB50, DB56), a feature which is also seen on deep bowls from Tiryns from the same period (Podzuweit 1978: 475; Mountjoy 1999: 158). By the Submycenaean period a preference for monochrome vessels, or monochrome with either a reserved band between the handles or with a reserved lower body can be observed in Laconia (DB76-DB79).

#### 4.1.1.8 Kalathos (Ka1 to Ka3)

*FS 291*

The kalathos is represented by two bases (Ka2 and Ka3) and a rim sherd (Ka1), all of which were discovered in Aghios Stephanos and are dated to the LH IIIC Early. The shape has a cylindrical lower body, a protruding rim set on a flat base (Ka2) or a concave base with a bevelled edge (Ka3) (Fig. 4.8a-c). The latter base is somewhat unusual for the shape in this period, but there is a contemporary parallel from Attica.<sup>102</sup> The banded decoration on Ka2, however, has parallels to kalathoi from Kalymnos and Rhodes.<sup>103</sup> Lastly, the top of the rim of Ka1 has an unusual intricate decoration of quirks

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<sup>101</sup> Examples in Popham *et al* 2006, fig. 2.22:3,5 (Lefkandi, Euboea); Broneer 1939: 367, fig. 44a (Athens, Attica); Blegen 1921, figs. 83 and 85 (Korakou, Corinthia); Mountjoy 1986: 150, fig. 189.3 (Mycenae, Argolid); Gialouris 1967: 177, pl. 182γ (Renia, Elis) and Renfrew 2007, no. 92 (Phylakopi, Melos).

<sup>102</sup> Parallel in Iakovidis 1969, no. 5, pl. 46β (Perati, Attica).

<sup>103</sup> Examples in Mountjoy 1999: 1144, no. 10, fig. 470 (Armenochori, Kalymnos); Benzi 1992: 153-156, pl. 59f (Ialysos, Rhodes).

and semi-circles. There are no direct parallels to this rim, but similarly decorated rims have been observed in Lefkandi, during the LH IIIC 1b phase (Popham *et al* 2006: 161).

#### **4.1.1.8 Basin (Bas1 to Bas3)**

*FS 294*

Three sherds from Aghios Stephanos can be identified as basins (FS 294), since their rim diameters are larger (21-32cm) than those from regular bowls. Nonetheless, the sherds (Bas1-Bas3) are too fragmented to recreate a full profile. What can be observed is that Bas1 and Bas2 have semi-globular bodies with an overhanging lip, while Bas3 is a fragment of a flat base with flaring sides. Bas1 and Bas2 are decorated with dark lines around the vessel's mid-sections, a decoration common to this type during the LH IIIC Early, seen for example in the Argolid and in Corinth (Figs. 4.8d-e).<sup>104</sup>

### **4.1.2 Closed Shapes**

#### **4.1.2.1 Amphoriskos (Amp1 to Amp18)**

*FS 59, 60, 61, 62*

Amphoriskoi were commonly deposited in graves in Laconia throughout the LH IIIC period. However, during the LH IIIC Early they are also represented in Aghios Stephanos (Amp1, Amp2, Amp4-Amp6) as well as in burials in Epidaurus Limera (Amp3, Amp7-Amp8). During the LH IIIC Late period the shape is found only in the chamber tombs in Epidaurus Limera (Amp11-Amp13, Amp15-Amp16) and Pellana (Amp14). There are at least four variants of amphoriskoi in Laconia (FS 59-62): the most common type has a globular or ovoid body, concave short neck and a wide mouth with a lipless, flaring rim - which becomes more pronounced from the LH IIIC Middle onwards (FS 59 and 61; Fig. 4.9a, c). Moreover, most examples have two horizontal handles and a ring base, but a version with three

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<sup>104</sup> For parallels see Podzuweit 1983: 365, fig. 2.12 (Tiryns, Argolid) and Blegen 1921, fig. 29 (Korakou, Corinth).

handles (FS 61; Amp3, Amp5) has also been observed in Epidaurus Limera and Aghios Stephanos (Fig. 4.9c).<sup>105</sup> Amp6 (FS 62) stands out for its unusual shape: an ovoid body, concave neck and two vertical handles attached from the lower neck to the belly (Fig. 4.9d). The shape is rare throughout the Aegean during the LH IIIC Early, with a few examples from Messenia, Kos and Rhodes.<sup>106</sup> These examples, however, cannot be closely compared to Amp6.

By the LH IIIC Middle period, Laconian amphoriskoi can be compared to the more typical examples from elsewhere in the Aegean with a globular, rather than oval body, a short concave neck and flaring, lipless rim (Amp9, Fig. 4.9b). However, the closest parallels to the Laconian vessels are found in Palaiokastro, Arcadia and Naxos.<sup>107</sup> Interestingly, a possible Laconian amphoriskos was among the offerings in a grave in Perati, Athens. The body has an exaggerated biconical shape, with a long, concave neck, a flaring rim and a conical base (Amp10, Fig. 4.9g). The shape is very unusual compared to other Laconian examples, but Mountjoy suggests that the pointed rays decorating the vessel is a typical Laconian motif and thus it is likely that Amp10 was produced in this region (Mountjoy 1999: 604).

Little change is observed in the LH IIIC Late examples, when vessels demonstrate a preference for a more oval rather than globular body (Amp11-Amp12, Figs. 4.9f). Lastly, two examples can be dated to the SubMycenaean period (Amp17-Amp18). Amp17 has a globular body, a wide mouth, an everted, lipless rim and a low conical foot (Fig. 4.9h). The horizontal handles are placed high on the belly and vertical to the body, in a similar fashion to Amp1. Amp18, on the other hand, has a longer, globular body, a concave neck with a flaring, lipless rim and horizontal handles (Fig. 4.9i), which can be compared to examples from Messenia and Attica.<sup>108</sup> It is interesting to note the similarity between

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<sup>105</sup> Examples of FS 61 amphoriskoi were produced already at the Menelaion during the LH IIIB period (Catling *et al* 2009: 373, no. A23, fig. 285).

<sup>106</sup> Examples in Blegen 1954, pl. 38.9 (Koryphasion, Messenia), Mountjoy 1999: 1099, no. 73, fig. 449 (Langada, Kos) and Benzi 1992, pl. 25g (Ialysos, Rhodes).

<sup>107</sup> Example in Vlachopoulos 2006: 117, no. 950, pl. 13 (Aplomata, Naxos).

<sup>108</sup> Examples in Mountjoy 1999: 363, no. 144, fig. 126 (Nichoria, Messenia); Papadopoulos *et al* 2017: 719-721, nos. A16 and T64-1, fig. 6.9 (Kerameikos, Attica). Moreover, it is interesting to note the similarities of shape

the shapes of Amp18 to Amp1 from the LH IIIC Early period, an indication that the shape was most likely introduced during this period.

The decoration of Laconian amphoriskoi continued to change throughout the LH IIIC period. During the LH IIIC Early, decorative zones over the handle area were very common, coupled with either monochrome or banded bodies (e.g. Amp3, Amp6; Figs.4.9c, e), a pattern seen also in Perati, Attica.<sup>109</sup> By the LH IIIC Middle, the majority of vessels are monochrome, with thin reserved bands between the neck and body and in the lower body. Amp9, for instance, has a reserved foot and thin reserved lines at the transition between the neck and shoulder and on the lower belly, as seen in specimens from Perati, Attica and Kamini, Naxos.<sup>110</sup> Decorative bands and banding became popular once again during the LH IIIC Late period (Amp11-Amp12, Fig. 4.9f), a scheme which can be compared to examples from Elis and Achaea.<sup>111</sup> Finally, SubMycenaean amphoriskoi demonstrate trends which become extremely popular during the Protogeometric period and are a hallmark of Laconian Protogeometric decoration, namely stacked triangles (Amp17) and shiny, metallic, black paint (Amp18).

#### 4.1.2.2 Collar-necked jar (CJr1 to CJr7)

*FS 63, 64*

A small number of collar-necked jars survive from the LH IIIC period (FS 63, 64), most of which can be dated to its Early phase. The largest number of vessels originate from Aghios Stephanos (CJr2-CJr5), but isolated examples were also recovered from cemeteries in Epidaurus Limera (CJr6) and Sykia (CJr1). Nearly all are small, with a maximum diameter between 16cm and 17cm, and have globular bodies, short or slightly concave necks with lipless rims and flat bases (Figs 4.10a). Two round,

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between Amp18 and Amp1, dated to the LH IIIC Early. Yet, the excavators affirm that 'its context does not allow' Amp1 to be dated so late (Janko and Taylour 2008: 378).

<sup>109</sup> Example in Iakovidis 1969: 171, no. 38, pl. 51γ (Perati, Attica).

<sup>110</sup> Examples in Iakovidis 1969: 171, no. 38, pl. 51γ (Perati, Attica) and Vlachopoulos 2006: 382, no. 1713 and 443, no. 1758, pl. 11 (Kamini, Naxos).

<sup>111</sup> Examples in Mountjoy 1999: 389, no. 65, fig 135 (Agrapidochori, Elis) and Papadopoulos 1979, fig. 159g (Chalandritsa, Achaea).

horizontal splayed handles are usually placed on the shoulders (e.g. Cjr1), but there are at least two examples with vertically placed horizontal handles, high on the shoulders (Cjr3, Cjr5, Fig. 4.10c-d). This is an unusual feature for the collar-necked shape not observed in other regions of the Aegean, with the exception of Rhodes and Naxos.<sup>112</sup> FS 63 jars, a larger version of the shape, were introduced in LH IIIC Early in Laconia (Cjr1-Cjr2), but the shape is unusual elsewhere during this period, being found in contemporary Attica and Melos only.<sup>113</sup>

One collar-necked jar from Pellana (Cjr7) indicates that changes were introduced to the shape during the LH IIIC Late period. Cjr7 is smaller than previous specimens, with a maximum diameter of 9.2cm. Its handles are more splayed and a lug is attached to the shoulder (Fig. 4.10e). Similar characteristics are observed in jars from the Argolid and Attica dated to the same period, suggesting that Cjr7 is not an exception, but a development observed in collar-necked jars in general.<sup>114</sup>

Collar-necked jars were decorated with dark bands, mostly around the belly, shoulders and the lower neck. The neck can be monochrome coated, and a decorative zone is seen between handles in some cases, containing motifs such as horns (Cjr1), tassels (Cjr2), quirks (Cjr4) and foliate bands (Cjr7) (Figs. 4.10a-e). A similar decorative syntax can be observed in most of the known examples from elsewhere in the Aegean. It should be highlighted, however, that the horn motif is an influence from Crete, observed in collar-necked jars from the Mainland during the LH IIIC Middle (Mountjoy 1999: 283) as well as in LH IIIC Early amphoriskoi from Rhodes.<sup>115</sup> Lastly, the LH IIIC Late period sees the introduction of handles decorated with dashes (Cjr7, Fig. 4.10e), a feature common in the Argolid and Attica.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> See examples in Forsdyke 1925: 176, no. A961, fig. 241 (Ialysos, Rhodes) and Vlachopoulos 2006: 249, no. 1718, pl. 11 (Kamini, Naxos).

<sup>113</sup> Examples in Broneer 1939: 397, pl. 78p (Athens, Attica) and Renfrew 1985: 172, no. 86, fig. 5.10 (Phylakopi, Melos). Cjr1 can be closely compared to a collar-necked jar from Athens, in Onasoglou 1986, pl 10.

<sup>114</sup> See examples in Deshayes 1966: 59-60, pl. 60.7 (Argos, Argolid) and Mountjoy 1999: 605, nos. 521-522, fig. 226 (Perati, Attica).

<sup>115</sup> Examples in Benzi 1992, pls. 109d and 94a (Ialysos, Rhodes).

<sup>116</sup> Examples in Deshayes 1966: 59-60, pl. 60.7 (Argos, Argolid); Mountjoy 1999: 605, nos. 521-522, fig. 226 (Perati, Attica)

### 4.1.2.3 Alabastron (Al1 to Al10)

FS 86, 96, 97, 98

Alabastra were not common in LH IIIC Laconia. There are only ten examples from the period between the LH IIIC Early and LH IIIC Late, and most were found in chamber tombs in Epidaurus Limera (Al3- Al10). These vessels can be either straight-sided (FS 96-98) or rounded (FS 86), of which the former was the most popular – a preference observed also during the LH IIIB2 and LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early periods in Laconia.<sup>117</sup>

#### 4.1.2.3.1 *Straight-sided (Al1 to 6, Al8-Al9)*

FS 96, 97, 98

Laconian straight-sided alabastra have cylindrical lower bodies and short concave necks with lipless rims set on a flat, convex or disc base. Two horizontal handles or lugs are placed on the shoulders (FS 96-98, Fig. 4.11). Decoration is mostly linear, with bands on the neck, below the shoulder and lower body. A decorative zone on the shoulder area often has a foliate band motif (from Minoan stock; e.g. Al2, Al5, Mountjoy 1999: 291), flowers (Al1), vertical wavy lines (Al3) and dashes (Al8) (Figs 4.11a-e). Furthermore, handles can be decorated with dashes in the later period (Fig. 4.11g). Some straight-sided alabastra from Messenia and Athens have a similar decorative syntax, including the banding and generally simple shoulder decoration.<sup>118</sup>

An example from the LH IIIC Middle period suggests that the shape continued unchanged, with the exception of the addition of an unusual pronounced ledge on its shoulders (FS 96, Al8, Fig. 4.11e). Interestingly, the only other areas in which this feature has been encountered are Rhodes and Naxos.<sup>119</sup> Yet, Al8's decoration – banding with a foliate band on the neck – is comparable to other

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<sup>117</sup> See examples of the rounded alabastra dated to the LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early periods in Gallou 2020: 204, fig. 4.132 and Catling *et al* 2009: 380, nos. ABT3, A25, AB23-23, figs. 253, 285, 254.

<sup>118</sup> Examples in Blegen *et al* 1973, fig. 292.3 (Pisaskion, Messenia) and Mountjoy 1999: 568, no. 328, fig. 209 (Athens, Acropolis, Attica).

<sup>119</sup> Examples in Benzi 1992, pl. 94m (Perati, Attica) and Mountjoy 1999: 946, no. 22, fig. 385 (Kamini, Naxos).

alabastra from Laconia (Al4-Al5), indicating that the vessel is a local product rather than an import. Unfortunately, there is only one known Laconian straight-sided alabastra from the LH IIIC Late period (Al10, Fig. 4.11g). Its profile shows the addition of a low ring base (FS 97), a rare component to the shape, but observed in isolated examples throughout the LH IIIC period in the mainland and the Dodecanese (Demakopoulou and Crowel 1998: 278; Mountjoy 1999: 567-568). Al10, however, is almost identical to a LH IIIC Middle alabastron from the cemetery of Palaiokastro, Arcadia.<sup>120</sup>

#### **4.1.2.2.2 Rounded (Al7)**

*FS 86*

The only known rounded alabastron from the LH IIIC period was discovered at Epidaurus Limera (FS 86; Al7). The vessel has a baggy body, a relatively tall concave neck with a ridge below the lip and a flat base. Three horizontal handles are placed just above the belly. The shape likely descends from LH IIIA1 and IIIA2 alabastra (FS 82-85), especially popular in Epidaurus Limera.<sup>121</sup> Nonetheless, the baggy body has parallels in examples from Corinthia and Achaea (Marini 2018: 121).<sup>122</sup> Its decoration is not dissimilar to straight-sided alabastra, with a decorative zone on the shoulders and a band on the lower body.

#### **4.1.2.4 Jug (Jg1 to Jg22)**

*FS 106, 110, 111, 115, 137*

A variety of jugs are found in the Laconian LH IIIC Early ceramic assemblages, mostly from Aghios Stephanos (62.5%) and Epidaurus Limera (37.5%). The most common shape has a globular body with sloping shoulders and a tall, concave wide neck, with a handle attached from rim to shoulder (FS

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<sup>120</sup> Example in Demakopoulou and Crowel 1998: 278, no. P7, pl. 54f.

<sup>121</sup> See example in Demakopoulou 1968: 155-156, nos. 18-24, pls. 70-71.

<sup>122</sup> See examples in Blegen 1921, fig. 101 (Korakou, Corinthia); Papadopoulos 1979, fig. 134a (Vrachneika, Achaea).

110; Jg1-Jg2, Jg6-Jg7; Figs. 4.12a-c). Yet, only one example survives with its base (Jg6), which is flat. Decoration is usually plain, with thin bands on the shoulder and lower body, similar to specimens from the Argolid.<sup>123</sup> The other two types of jugs are represented by one vessel each. Jg3 has a biconical body, with a wide mouth and straight rim (Fig. 4.10d). Its base is flat and the handle is attached from rim to belly (FS 111). Comparable vases to Jg3 are observed in Attica and the Argolid during the same period.<sup>124</sup> The last example from the LH IIIC Early period is a narrow-necked jug from Epidaurus Limera which has a globular body, a tall, narrow neck and a handle from rim to shoulder (FS 118, Jg8, Fig. 4.12e). Although narrow-necked jugs were particularly popular in Achaea, where they were produced throughout the LH IIIC period, their shape differ considerably from Jg8. The bodies of the Achaean examples are also globular, but they have shorter necks and more rounded handles and shoulders, unlike Jg8.<sup>125</sup>

No jugs survive from the LH IIIC Middle period, but the succeeding phase sees the introduction of a larger variety of shapes. FS 110 jugs continued to be produced, but their shoulders are decorated with wavy lines (e.g. Jg10, Jg11, Figs. 4.12f-g). A larger version of FS 110 jugs can be observed (FS 106; Jg9, Jg15, Figs. 4.12h, 4.13i) as well as an ovoid type, with short neck and a low conical base (FS 115; Jg12, Jg16-Jg18; Figs. 4.13j). Linear decoration is preferred for these shapes, with the occasional addition of motifs such as necklaces (e.g. Jg9, Jg18). Lastly, it is also during the LH IIIC Late period that trefoil jugs are first observed in Laconia. Trefoil jugs with globular bodies are usually decorated with bands (Jg13, Jg19; Figs. 4.13k-l), while the biconical examples are mostly monochrome, with a decorated band in the shoulder area (Jg14; Fig. 4.13m). Two jugs from the SubMycenaean period show that the FS 115 shape continued to be popular (Jg20-Jg21, Figs. 4.13n-o), however they now have a dark ground or monochrome decoration.

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<sup>123</sup> Examples in Mountjoy 1999: 155, no. 308, fig. 40 (Mycenae, Argolid).

<sup>124</sup> Examples in Mountjoy 1999: 570, no. 339, fig. 210 (Alike, Attica) and Wace 1932, no. 58, pl. 31 (Mycenae, Argolid).

<sup>125</sup> Example in Papadopoulos 1979, fig. 148a and b (Klauss, Achaea).

A group of jugs deserve further attention due to their similarities to a LH IIIC Late 'East Mainland *koine*', as defined by Mountjoy (2009: 289-312). According to Mountjoy, vessels including jugs (FS 106) and trefoil jugs (FS 137) from the Argolid, Corinthia, Attica, Euboea and Thessaly share some commonalities which could indicate a *koine*. In particular, the decorative syntax of this *koine* is the aspect most relevant to the discussion of Laconian vessels, including shoulder decoration that runs over the edge of the decorative zone into shoulder bands, large 'hooks' from the base of the handle and multiple coils. These features are clear on Jg9, Jg13 and Jg19 from Epidauros Limera (Fig. 4.12h, 4.13k-l). Yet it is important to highlight that the shapes have closer parallels in Naxos (Jg9) and the Argolid (Jg13, Jg19).<sup>126</sup>

#### 4.1.2.5 Lekythos (Le1)

FS 122

One lekythos (Le1), dated to the LH IIIC Late period, has been discovered among the chamber tombs of Epidauros Limera. It has a globular body with sloping shoulders, a narrow and slightly concave neck with a lipless rim and a ringed base. The sherd can be compared, although not closely, to a specimen from Athens (Fig. 4.14a).<sup>127</sup> However, the decoration (dark bands over the rim, shoulders and foot) has a parallel in examples from Asine.<sup>128</sup>

#### 4.1.2.6 Hydria (Hy1 to Hy2)

FS 128

Two hydriai, dated to the LH IIIC Early period, were excavated from settlement deposits at Aghios Stephanos (Hy1-Hy2). Unfortunately, they consist of small body sherds, from which small

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<sup>126</sup> See examples in Kardara 1977, pl. 54 (Aplomata, Naxos), Frödin and Persson 1938, fig. 263.1 (Asine, Argolid) and Mountjoy 1999: 177, no. 392, fig. 51 (Mycenae, Argolid).

<sup>127</sup> Example in Iakovidis 1969, no. 42, pl. 52γ (Perati, Attica).

<sup>128</sup> Example in Mountjoy 1996: 57, no. 33, fig. 9 (Asine, Argolid).

patches of decoration survive. Yet wavy lines in white over a black band on the belly can still be observed, a feature not seen in any other specimen in Laconia during the LH IIIC period (Figs. 4.14b-c).

#### **4.1.2.7 Strainer jug (Stj1)**

*FS 155*

The strainer jug is a somewhat rare shape during the LH IIIC period in Greece. The example from Epidaurus Limera can be dated to the LH IIIC Middle period and it has a globular body, a tall and narrow neck and a lipless rim on a ringed base. A twisted handle is placed vertically from rim to shoulder (Stj1; Fig. 4.14d). The shape seems to be more common on Rhodes during the LH IIIC Middle period, but the Laconian vessel finds closer parallels to another rare example from Attica.<sup>129</sup> Interestingly, both are decorated with a hook below the handle, a trait that has been proposed by Mountjoy as a possible feature of an 'East Mainland' *koine* (2009: 289-291).

#### **4.1.2.8 Feeding bottle (Fb1 to Fb3)**

*FS 162*

Three feeding bottles were found in total, all from Epidaurus Limera. One is dated to the LH IIIC Early period (Fb1) and two from the LH IIIC Middle period (Fb2-Fb3). The shape has a globular body with sloping shoulders, a long, wide neck and a long spout (Fig. 4.14e). By the LH IIIC Middle period, the feeding bottle has a wider belly diameter and spouts can be either short or long (Fig. 4.14f-g). Parallels to the earlier phase can be seen in assemblages from Attica and Corinthia.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Example in Iakovidis 1969, no. 280, pl. 102γ (Perati, Attica).

<sup>130</sup> Examples in Mountjoy 1999: 570, no. 346, fig. 210 (Perati, Attica) and Mountjoy 1999: 228, no. 177, fig. 73 (Korakou, Corinthia).

#### 4.1.2.9 Stirrup jar (Sj1 to Sj24)

*FS 174, 175, 176*

Stirrup jars dating to the LH IIIC Early period are found mainly in burial contexts in Epidaurus Limera (Sj3-Sj4, Sj6). Only two complete vases have been published (Sj1-Sj2), which show a preference for globular bodies, with a maximum diameter between 11cm and 14cm, and straight false necks with a flat disc on top. Spouts are lipless, but flaring, and bases are concave (FS 174; Fig. 4.15a, e). Sj1, however, has a squat body, similar to examples from Crete and Attica (Kanta 1980: 247).<sup>131</sup> Parallels between Laconian and Cretan stirrup jars should not be surprising, since connections between the areas are further demonstrated by a number of Cretan imports, such as Sj6 (Fig.4.15c).

Most vases from the LH IIIC Early period have banded bodies, with a decorative zone on the shoulders, while some examples have monochrome feet. Among the most common motifs used in the decorative zones are chevrons (Sj1), semi-circles (Sj3, Sj4), loops and antithetical spirals (Sj5). The top disc can be decorated, mostly with spirals (e.g., Sj4, Sj21) and rings at the bottom of the spout and of the false neck (e.g., Sj1, Sj11). This decoration syntax can be observed also on stirrup jars from Attica, Achaea and Skyros.<sup>132</sup>

During the LH IIIC Middle period, stirrup jars are represented in the chamber tombs of Epidaurus Limera only. In total, seven vessels were found, of which three belong to an Eastern Aegean type (FS 176, Sj8, Sj11-Sj12, Fig. 4.16f-h).<sup>133</sup> The type can be characterised as having a globular shape with sloping shoulders, a narrow lower body and a ring base. Their spouts are straight and have flaring lips. The shape can be closely compared to specimens from Ialysos, but the decoration suggests

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<sup>131</sup> See examples in Kanta 1980, fig. 24.6 (Erganos, Crete) and Mountjoy 1999: 574, no. 353, fig. 211 (Hymettos Cave, Attica).

<sup>132</sup> See examples in Mountjoy 1999: 574, no. 350, fig. 211 (Acropolis, Athens, Attica), Papadopoulos 1979, fig. 69e-f and 104g-h (Chalandritsa, Achaea) and Parlama 1984, no. 4 (Baliti, Skyros).

<sup>133</sup> The type is found mainly in the islands of the Dodecanese; thus, it was referred as an 'Eastern Aegean' type by Furumark (1941, pl. 100). Examples of the shape are published in Benzi 1992, pl. 21a-b (Ialysos, Rhodes), Mountjoy 1999: 1134-1136, nos. 18-24, figs. 464-466 (Kalymnos) and Levi 1967, figs. 198-199 (Langada, Kos).

Minoan influences as well.<sup>134</sup> Sj8, for instance, has a fringed scale decoration from Minoan stock between an octopus' tentacles (Mountjoy 1999: 287-290; Fig. 4.16f).<sup>135</sup> Another example has a large fish on its body (Sj12), which can be compared to depictions from the interior of larnakes in Crete (Fig. 4.16g).<sup>136</sup> Connexions with Crete are further demonstrated by an imported stirrup-jar among Epidaurus Limera's grave goods (Sj13; Fig. 4.16i). Naxos could also have influenced Laconian potters, as can be seen in the use of barred almonds with eyes (Sj8), stars and curved ended rays (Sj11; Fig. 4.16h; Mountjoy 1999: 290).<sup>137</sup> Contacts with other areas of the Peloponnese are indicated by stirrup jar Sj7 (FS 175), an import from the Argolid. Although the sherd is too fragmented to indicate its overall shape, its decoration – bands, semi-circles and joining semi-circles – have clear parallels in Asine and Mycenae.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, a Laconian stirrup jar (Sj14) has been identified in the cemetery of Palaia Epidaurus, in the Argolid,<sup>139</sup> indicating a possible network of exchanges between the two areas.

By the LH IIIC Late period the stirrup jar is still associated with burial contexts, mainly from Epidaurus Limera (Sj16, Sj18-Sj24). The shape has now a more oval rather than globular body (Sj21-Sj22) and feet are of the low conical type. Decoration shows that the Argolid continued to influence Laconian potters. Sj22, for instance, is adorned in the same manner as Argive LH IIIC Middle period examples, with banding throughout its body and semi-circles (Fig. 4.17k-l). Moreover, conjoined semi-circles and triangles, as seen on Sj16, have affinities with specimens from Asine.<sup>140</sup> Another interesting development observed during the LH IIIC Late period is a marked increase in the number of imported stirrup jars in Laconia. Half of the known examples originate from Crete (Sj19, Sj23, Sj25; Figs. 4.18n-p) and the Argolid (Sj18, Sj20; Figs. 4.18q-r).

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<sup>134</sup> Compare with Benzi 1992, pl. 21a-b (Mus. Inv. 2796).

<sup>135</sup> See Mountjoy 1999: 955, no. 43, fig. 388 for parallel.

<sup>136</sup> Compare with Kanta 1980, figs. 65.4 and 66.1-2.

<sup>137</sup> See parallel in Mountjoy 1999: 955, no. 43, fig. 388 (Aplomata, Naxos).

<sup>138</sup> See parallels in Frödin and Persson 1983, fig. 260.3 and Mountjoy 1986: 168, fig. 215.2.

<sup>139</sup> See vessel in Mountjoy 1999: 165, no. 341, fig. 44 (Palaia Epidaurus, Argolid).

<sup>140</sup> Compare with Mountjoy 1996: 59, nos. 8 and 13 and Frödin and Persson 1938: 412, no.20, fig. 270.1.

#### **4.1.2.10 Ring askos (RA1)**

*FS 196*

The ring askos (RA1) has a shape typical of other examples from the Aegean, apart from its horizontal spout and two lugs on either side of the body (Fig. 4.19a). The vessel was recently published by Gallou, which dates it to the SubMycenaean period based on comparisons to a parallel from the same period from the Kerameikos (2020: 230-231).<sup>141</sup>

#### **4.1.2.11 Multiple vase (MV1)**

A multiple vase comes from a LH IIIC Late period burial context in Krokeai (Fig. 4.19b). The vessel is composed of three connected globular bodies, of which only one has a spout. The spout is straight with a flaring rim and a basket-shaped handle attached from neck to the body. Although multiple vases were not uncommon in the Aegean during this period, this example stands out due to the fact that only one body has a spout (Demakopoulou 1982: 108-109).

### **4.1.3 Coarse Ware**

Coarse ware is poorly represented in LBA Laconia, except at the Menelaion. During the period between the LH IIB and the LH IIIA1, the site contained the largest variety of cooking forms in the Greek mainland (Lis 2017b: 204-207). However, by the end of the LH IIIB2 and the beginning of LH IIIC Early period there is a decrease in the number of shapes. The majority was recovered from mixed deposits and thus cannot be dated precisely. In this section, the material from the Menelaion is analysed according to their function.

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<sup>141</sup> See parallel in Ruppenstein 2007: 156-157, Gr. 146/8, Pl. 38.

### 4.1.3.1 Cooking Vessels

#### 4.1.3.1.1 Basin (CWBas1 to CWBas35)

Basins are one of the most common cooking vessels in the Menelaion. A total of thirty-five basins were catalogued, representing 43% of all cooking ware from the end of the LH IIIB2 to the LH IIIC Early period. The shape can have almost straight or rounded edges and most have flat lipless rims, yet some examples have everted rims (e.g., CWBas9, CWBas31). Two horizontal loop handles set high are seen in at least two vessels (CWBas15, CWBas31), but it is unclear whether this was a characteristic common to all basins (Fig. 4.20a-d; Catling *et al* 2009: 431). Rim diameters can be as wide as 60cm, but most measure between 30cm to 40cm. There are no close parallels to this shape, but the handled basins can be somewhat compared to Shape 2, from Nestor's Palace Room 60 (Blegen and Rawson 1966: 355-356; Catling *et al* 2009: 432).

#### 4.1.3.1.2 Kitchen Beaker (KB1 to KB41)

Kitchen beakers or one-handled jugs at the Menelaion can be described as having a girth no greater than the height, flaring rims and a single handle from rim to the belly. Necks can be either high (e.g., KB15, KB27, Fig. 4.20e-f) or short (e.g., KB22, KB29; Fig. 4.20g-h) and bases are flat. Rim diameters vary between 7cm and 15cm, but most measure between 9cm to 14cm. The shape is most likely a descendent of button-based jugs (BBJ), a popular type during the LH IIB to LH IIIA2 periods. Unlike BBJs, however, the beaker has a wide base, which would allow the vessel to rest securely on a level surface (Catling *et al* 2009: 424). This was a common shape for coarse ware elsewhere in the Aegean. The vessels from the Menelaion with short necks, for instance, can be compared to examples from Lefkandi and Korakou.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Parallels can be seen in Popham *et al* 2006: 148, fig. 2.5: 1 (Lefkandi, Euboea) and Rutter 1974: 236-237, 294, no. CP 120, fig. 90.7 (Korakou, Corinthia).

It is interesting to note that the development of the beaker, at some point during the LH IIIB, is accompanied by the disappearance of another popular shape of the Mycenaean period, the tripod. (Catling *et al* 2009: 424). Changes such as this can indicate new ways of food preparation were introduced during this period.

#### **4.1.3.1.3 Amphoroid cooking pot (AmpCP1 to AmpCP6)**

This category contains a small number of very fragmented sherds. Nonetheless, they all share short necks with everted rims and rounded handles attached from rim to shoulder (Fig. 4.21a-d). The shape was first seen in the Menelaion most likely during the LH IIIA1 period, indicated by a vessel<sup>143</sup> with similar characteristics from the construction deposits of Mansion II (Catling *et al* 2009: 427).

#### **4.1.3.1.4 Shallow Tray (CWST1 to CWST5)**

Shallow trays were distributed in a number of contexts in the Menelaion dated to the LH IIIA to the LH IIIC Early period. The sherds from the LH IIIC period, however, were concentrated in the Aetos Stone Mound. These fragments suggest a wide (rim diameter varying from 37cm to 60cm) and a shallow pan, with low walls that can be vertical but usually splay outwards, set on a flat base (Fig. 4.21e-h). Only one example (CWST3) has the remnants of a thick, horizontal handle (Fig. 4.21f). The shape most likely originated at some point during the LH IIIA1 period, but it only became common during the LH IIIB2 period.<sup>144</sup> The shape of these earlier versions can be closely compared to the LH IIIC examples, thus indicating that trays remained mostly unaltered throughout the Late Bronze Age at the Menelaion.

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<sup>143</sup> CLO58, in Catling *et al* 2009: 99-101, fig. 120.

<sup>144</sup> LH IIIA and LH IIIC examples were found in a number of deposits, including the Pottery Dump; the North, South and East Wash deposits and in the Construction Level Outside (Catling *et al* 2009: 99, 122, 126, 129 and 132).

## 4.1.3.2 Storage Vessels

### 4.1.3.1.1 Collar-necked Jar (CWJr1 to CWJr31)

Collar-necked jars were distributed mainly in three deposits at the Menelaion: the Prophitis Elias erosion gully (CWJr1-CWJr5), the Aetos Stone Mound (CWJr8-CWJr26) and the re-occupied area from the end of LH IIIB2 (CWJr27 to CWJr31, Fig. 4.22a-c). Only one jar (CWJr27; Fig. 4.22c) can be fully reconstructed, and it suggests the shape had a globular body. Other examples show a preference for short necks, with slightly everted and lipless rims. A number of bases were associated with the jars, including flat, ringed and raised bases. Lastly, two round handles can be attached to the shoulder and belly. Comparisons between the Laconian jars and examples from Mycenae have been suggested (Catling *et al* 2009: 421). However, the handle from the latter is attached from the middle of the neck to the shoulder of the vessel, unlike the jars from the Menelaion.

### 4.1.3.1.2 Pithos (Pit1 to Pit24)

Pithoi were also represented in the LH IIIB2/LH IIIC Early and LH IIIC Early deposits from the Menelaion, specially at the Prophitis Elias Erosion Gully and the Aetos Stone Mound (Pit1-Pit7; Pit8-Pit17, respectively). Unfortunately, most consist of neck fragments and a full profile cannot be reconstructed. The sherds show, however, a preference for everted rims with flat-topped lips (Fig 4.22d-g).

A number of examples are decorated with raised bands in the middle or at the lower neck (Pit12 and Pit17, respectively; Fig. 4.22g). Other forms of decoration include raised bands incised with herring bands (Pit15, Pit 16; Fig. 4.22e-f) and piecrust finish with fingernail impressions (Pit17). Decorated pithoi were not uncommon to the Menelaion, but these decorations were introduced during the LH IIIC period. Moreover, it is interesting to note the similarity of the piecrust finish with fingernail impressions to HMBW examples from the Menelaion. It is likely that local potters were

influenced by the HMBW vessels, as was seen in other shapes, such as the carinated cup, discussed above in section 4.1.1.2.

#### 4.1.5.3 Tub (Tub1 to Tub8)

Tubs can be described as globular shapes, with possibly tapered lower bodies (Fig. 4.22h-i). The necks are wide but very short and rims are everted and usually have two horizontal handles over the shoulders. One example can also be shown to have a bridged spout (Tub3).

#### 4.1.4 Handmade Burnished Ware

Handmade Burnished Ware (HMBW) is a class of pottery that appeared in many areas of Greece and the Aegean, including Kalapodi, Mitrou, Dimini, Lefkandi, Athens, Korakou, Aigeira, Tiryns, Asine, Midea and Chania during the early 12<sup>th</sup> century BC (Rutter 2020: 213; Strack 2007: 25).<sup>145</sup> The shapes represented vary according to site: while at Tiryns there is an apparently complete household assemblage, at the Menelaion the majority of examples consist of storage vessels (Strack 2007: 66-69).

In Laconia, the majority of vessels were discovered in LH IIIB2/IIIC Early and LH IIIC Early contexts in the Menelaion, in the so-called Prophitis Elias Erosion Gully and the Aetos Hill (Catling *et al* 2009: 169-170, 243-250). However, a small number of examples were also identified in Aghios Vasileios recently, in secondary fills dated to the LH IIIC Early period around the Mycenaean cemetery, Building A and the large court (Kardamaki and Vasilogamvrou 2021: 510-519). Examples are handmade and have burnished exteriors and interiors (Catling and Catling 1981: 75; Catling *et al* 2009:

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<sup>145</sup> Lefkandi: Popham and Sackett 1968: 18; Korakou: Rutter 1974: 549-563; Athens: Rutter 1975: 29; Aigeira: Deger-Jalkotzy 1977; Tiryns: Kilian 1978: 451; Asine: Asine II.3: 82-3; Chania: Hallager 1983; Midea: Demakopoulou *et al* 2003: 11-15; Kalapodi: Jacob-Felsch 1996: 33; Mitrou: Zachou and Van de Moortel 2005; Dimini: Adrimi-Sismani 2006.

381). The fabric is coarse and markedly different from others in Laconia. However, petrographic analysis of the vessels from the Menelaion revealed the presence of metamorphic rock fragments (schist, phyllite, crystalline limestone) and sedimentary rocks (limestone, sandstone, siltstone and mudstone), all of which are locally available. Still, it should be highlighted that grog was also identified in a number of examples, an element not seen in other fabrics at the Menelaion (Whitbread 1992: 297-306). Lastly, a comparison between the Laconian HMBW vessels and those from other areas of Greece show they share the same texture, density and types of inclusion and firing method, but in different compositions (Whitbread 1992: 297-306; Strack 2007: 67-72).

There are many theories regarding the origin of HMBW, but most seem to agree that it was introduced by peoples from outside the Aegean, namely from areas within the Adriatic Sea. The theory is based on the fact that Italian-type bronzes were introduced to Greece during the same period, during the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Consequently, HMBW has been linked to specialised craftspeople working with bronze from Italy (Eder and Jung 2005: 487; Strack 2007: 100-101).<sup>146</sup> Thus, the presence of HMBW ware at the Menelaion suggests the introduction of newcomers to Laconia during the end of the LH IIIB2 period.

A small variety of shapes is represented in Laconia including ovoid jars (65%), bowls (17.4%), basins (4.3%), stands (4.3%), a pithos (2.8%) and a jug (2.8%). The shapes are discussed in detail below.

#### **4.1.4.1 Open Shapes**

##### **4.1.4.1.1 Bowl (BWBw1 to BWBw8)**

A total of eight bowls were identified at the Menelaion, but they are too fragmentary to indicate their full shapes. The available sherds show a preference for straight (BWB3-BWBw5),

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<sup>146</sup> In a recent article, however, Rutter emphasised that not all vessels with this fabric can be associated with the Adriatic. Cooking pots and storage vessels at Mitrou, Kalapodi, Frantzis, Pefkakia and Chania, for example, do not have Italian connections and appear to have been used differently than the typical HMBW examples (2020: 213).

rounded (BWBw6, BWBw8) and s-shaped (BWBw7) sides and everted (BWBw3, BWBw5, BWBw7, BWBw8), lipless (BWBw4, BWBw6) or horizontal (BWBw1) rims (Fig. 4.23a-h). Rim diameters can vary between 13cm and 32cm, but most range between 13cm and 17cm. Two examples indicate that these vessels had handles, most likely of the lug type (e.g. BWBw3; Fig. 4.23f). One sherd, however, is unusual due to its fenestrated horned handle (BWBw2; Fig. 4.23g; Catling *et al* 2009: 380). Since its discovery, parallels have been identified in the Subapennine Italian region, particularly in the Acropolis of Lipari (Damiani 1991: 5-33; Jung *et al* 2015: 460).

HMBW bowls are decorated with plain raised bands (sometimes referred as cordons; BWBw5, BWBw7) and bands with finger impressions (BWBw3, BWBw4, BWBw6, BWBw8) below the rim. The raised band on BWBw7, however, is wavy, a feature not seen in any other HMBW vessels from Laconia (Fig. 4.23c). Nonetheless, similar examples are found at Korakou and at Dimini.<sup>147</sup>

#### **4.1.4.1.2 Basin (BWBas1 to BWBas2)**

There are only two examples of HMBW basins and both originate from the Menelaion. Both sherds have lipless, pointed rims and, unlike bowls, they do not have handles or decoration (Fig. 4.23h-i).

#### **4.1.4.2 Closed Shapes**

##### **4.1.4.2.1 Beaker (BWBr1 to BWBr2)**

Beakers can be described as small jugs with a wide mouth and cylindrical bodies. The most complete example from Laconia (BWBr2) was discovered in the Menelaion and it has an everted rim and round handle from rim to belly (Fig. 4.24a). The only decoration seems to be a raised band on the upper body, incised with oblique strokes. The beaker can be compared to a vessel from Lefkandi,

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<sup>147</sup> For the vessel from Korakou see Rutter 1975, no. 1, fig. 3; for Dimini see Adrimi-Sismani 2006, fig. 13g.

which has similar shape and decoration, although its rim is straight.<sup>148</sup> BWBr1, on the other hand, has a more oval handle and no signs of decoration (Fig. 4.24b).

#### 4.1.4.2.2 Ovoid jar (BWJr1 to BWJr30)

Thirty ovoid jars were uncovered at the Menelaion (26) and at Aghios Vasileios (4). A detailed description of the jars is not possible since most examples consist of fragments rather than whole pots. But the shape is thought to be inspired by central and southern Italy traditions from the Recent Bronze Age 1 and 2 periods, namely the *olle*. Moreover, ovoid jars were common in areas of Greece where HMBW is found (Jung 2006: 211-216).<sup>149</sup> A specimen from the Menelaion (BWJr8) indicates that jars had an ovoid body and a flat base (Fig. 4.25a). Rim diameters vary between 14cm and 39cm, but most measure between 14cm and 19cm. The majority of rims are everted (e.g. BWJr12-BWJr13), but slightly everted (e.g. BWJr16) and lipless rims (e.g. BWJr1, BWJr19) are also represented (Fig. 4.25b-h).

Decoration on the Laconian HMBW jars consists mainly of raised bands below the rim. These can be either plain (e.g. BWJr27, BWJr2) or decorated with finger marks (piecrust finish, e.g. BWJr1, BWJr11), finger marks with nail impressions (BWJr12, BWJr15) or oblique strokes (BWJr15). The plain and decorated bands are a common feature to many HMBW jars from Greece and the Aegean, but regional preferences can be observed. Plain bands, for instance, are found in sites in the Argolid and at Aghios Vasileios in Laconia, while bands with finger nail impressions within finger marks seems to be found only in the Menelaion (Fig. 4.25a-h; Kardamaki and Vasilogamvrou 2021: 510-515)).

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<sup>148</sup> See Popham and Sackett 1968: 18, fig. 34 (Phase I, LH IIIC).

<sup>149</sup> Ovoid jars are also common in Tiryns (Kilian 1984: 73-86), Korakou (Rutter 1975: 17-32) and Chania (Hallager 2011: 253-258).

#### **4.1.4.2.3 Jug (BWJg1 to BWJg2)**

There are only two fragments representing this shape in the Laconian HMBW assemblage. BWJg1 was found in the upper fill of room 10 in Building A in Aghios Vasileios, which dates it to the LH III B2 period (Fig. 4.25i). The sherd is particularly interesting because it appears to be an imitation of a Mycenaean shape in the HMBW fabric. The fragment consists of the neck and shoulder of the jug, with a handle attached from the rim to the belly of the vessel (Kardamaki and Vasilogamvrou 2021: 513).

#### **4.1.6.4 Pithos (BWPit1 to BWPit2)**

Two rim fragments were discovered among the Menelaion deposits of HMBW pithoi (Fig. 4.25j-k). BWPit1 has a flat rim with a small lip, while BWPit2 has an everted rim and a body broader than its mouth. The interior of its rim is decorated with incised vertical strokes.

## **4.2 The Protogeometric and Geometric periods**

### **4.2.1. Open shapes**

#### **4.2.1.1 Krater (K24 to K121)**

The Laconian Protogeometric krater can be described as a larger version of the skyphoi variants. Thus, they can have deep, carinated and flaring bodies with rim diameters ranging between 20cm and 30cm (Figs. 4.26a-f). Rims, unlike the kraters from the previous period, can now be offset with either flat or curved tops and handles are either rounded or rope (K45-46; Coulson 1985: 56; Margreiter 1988:21). Large kraters with deep bodies are reported from Amyklai, with lip diameters that range between 30 and 48cms. According to Vlachou, this version might be compared to examples

from Olympia, Athens and Lefkandi (2018: 104).<sup>150</sup> Yet, Coulson claims that Laconian kraters in general are very close to Messenian shapes during this period. It is difficult, however, to see how he arrived at this conclusion, seeing that there are only five very fragmentary sherds known from Nichoria (1983: 81-82, 93-94, 101-102, 1985: 55).

The decoration of Protogeometric kraters closely resembles that seen on skyphoi. The majority of sherds show a preference for a black band on the rim, followed by a decorative zone (28.1%). Alternating black and reserved bands were also popular on the upper body (25%) as was panelled decoration (93.7%). Metopal panels contain motifs such as cross-hatched triangles (K25, K38), sections of cross-hatching (K42) and concentric circles (K37; Figs. 4.26a and f). Still, unlike skyphoi, the concentric circle motif is more common in Laconia (28.1%) and only a small number of kraters have grooves (21.9%). Lastly, there is one sherd with raised bands below the rim (K42, Fig. 4.26f), a feature common in kraters from Messenia and Ithaka (Lemos 2002: 47-48; Wells 1983: 93).<sup>151</sup>

Kraters during the Protogeometric period are particularly associated with cult practices, as almost all of the known examples were recovered in the sanctuaries of Amyklai (68.7%), Artemis Orthia (9.4%) and Athena Chalkioikos (6.25%). Yet, it is important to remember that most of the evidence from the Protogeometric period originates from sanctuaries, and thus it cannot be considered representative of practices of the period.

Unfortunately, there are only a few published kraters dated to the Early and Middle Geometric periods. They indicate that the shape of the krater remained very similar to those from the Protogeometric period (K57-K88). However, some rims have a horizontal projecting lip (K57-K9), an unusual feature for kraters elsewhere in Greece. Margreiter dated these vessels to the Early Geometric period, but a parallel from Attica is dated to the Late Protogeometric period (Margreiter

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<sup>150</sup> See examples in Eder 2006b: 178-179, figs. 67-68 (Olympia, Elis) and Lemos 2002: 48-53.

<sup>151</sup> E.g., Lefkandi, Euboea: Catling and Lemos 1991: 26, no. 413, pl. 57; Nichoria, Messenia: Coulson 1983: 81-82, no. P536, fig. 3.16, (DAII-III); Aetos, Ithaka: Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999: 113, pls. 42 and 43a, b-h (Polis II/Aetos I). The profile of these shapes, however, cannot be compared to the kraters from Laconia.

1988: 28-29).<sup>152</sup> The decorative syntax follows trends observed in the previous period. Concentric circles (59.4%) and panels or bands of cross-hatching (34.4%) continued to be the most popular motifs (Figs 4.27b and f), and metopal panels decorated with cross-hatched triangles and concentric circles are seen in 21.9% of examples. Black bands on the rim are still used (18.7%), but they are not as common as during the Protogeometric period.

Kraters were very popular during the Late Geometric period, especially at Amyklai. The shape is described as having a deep body with a gentle convex curve, with rims that rarely exceed 20cm in diameter (Vlachou 2015: 119). The offset rims – already common in the Argolid and Attica by the Middle Geometric period – are first seen in Laconia during the later phase (K89). Furthermore, Vlachou reports that although the decoration indicates Argive influence, as it includes elements such as meanders (stepped, straight hatching), hatched zigzags and leaf-shaped lozenges, the Laconian shape continued to reflect local tastes (2015: 119; Coldstream 2008: 217).

The published data shows that during the Late Geometric period, some sherds were decorated with bands, which can be thick and contain panelled decoration, or thin with motifs such as zigzags (e.g. K105, K121) and rows of diamonds (e.g. K105, K114). Crosses (e.g. K93), horizontal and vertical zigzags (e.g. K105), stepped meanders (e.g. K104), hatched zigzags (e.g. K105), gridded meanders (e.g. K104) and quatrefoils (e.g. K109) were introduced to kraters in this period (Figs. 4.26a-k). However, the most popular motifs remain that of the concentric circle (34.4%) and vertical lines in bands (28.1%). Lastly, figurative decoration, absent since the LH IIIC period, is now found on kraters, including human figures (K105, K121) as well as animals, such as horses (K104) and birds (K113, K116) (Figs. 4.27d, h-k).

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<sup>152</sup> Krater KA6 (P7008) from the Athenian Agora (Papadopoulos *et al* 2017: 394, fig. 2.279).

#### 4.2.1.2. Cup (Cp11 to Cp124)

Cups, after skyphoi, were the most popular vessels in Laconia during the Protogeometric period. Almost all examples originate from sanctuary deposits, with the exception of Cp51, which was found in a burial in Sparta. At least two types are represented: the first can be characterised as having a deep body with a S-shaped profile and everted rim (Coulson's Types P and Q; e.g. Cp11-Cp30), a shape also in use during the Late Mycenaean period (Coulson 1985: 57; FS 216, 217; Figs. 4.28a-d). The second type is considerably shallower and it can have straight or everted rims (Coulson's Type R1-3, Figs. 4.21e-h). No cups survive intact; thus, it is not possible to ascertain with certainty which type of feet accompanied them. Nevertheless, Coulson proposes in his reconstructions that Laconian Protogeometric cups had flat bases, but he gives no reasoning for this assumption (1985: 58). Moreover, a recent discovery from a burial from Sparta with a conical base (Cp51) seems to disprove this notion.

Most Protogeometric cups have monochrome exteriors and interiors (82.9% and 95.1%, respectively). Monochrome cups were common in the Dark Age II Nichoria assemblage, in Euboea, during the Early Protogeometric period; and in the Argolid, during the Late Protogeometric period (Lemos 2002: 27-33).<sup>153</sup> A few examples have at least some kind of decorative motif, such as cross-hatching (e.g. Cp20, Cp32), vertical lines (Cp16), piled and cross-hatched triangles (e.g. Cp16, Cp20, Cp40), zigzags (Cp52) and diagonal stripes (Cp31). Handles can also be decorated, either with stripes (e.g. Cp12, Cp21-Cp23) or a cross (Cp25) (Figs. 4.28a-k).

The development of Laconian cups during the Early and Middle Geometric periods is mostly unknown due to the lack of examples. But preliminary reports from the recent excavations at Amyklai indicate that the production of one-handled monochrome cups continued into the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Vlachou 2018: 109). In addition, the reports demonstrate the introduction of a new

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<sup>153</sup> Examples in Papadopoulos *et al* 2017, no. T44-12, fig. 6.32 (Kerameikos, Attica), Popham and Lemos 1996, no. 6, pl. 71 (Lefkandi, Euboea) and Wells 1983: 250-251, nos. 693-696, fig. 190 (Asine, Argolid).

type of cup - the deep cup. These vessels have almost vertical walls which converge into a low disc base, and two examples from Amyklai (Cp118-Cp119) suggest that a vertical loop was attached from the lip to the lower body (Vlachou 2018: 109; Figs. 4.29a-d). Published examples of Geometric cups show a preference for banded decoration (Cp90), with motifs such as cross-hatched lozenges (Cp68, Cp70), rows of lozenges (Cp60-61) and chevrons (Cp90). Bands of birds with panels decorated with vertical zigzags can also be seen on Cp119 and Cp121. Cross-hatched triangles continued to be used, as is demonstrated by Cp120 (Fig. 4.29a-h).

#### 4.2.1.3 Bowl (Bw18 to Bw39)

There are only three rim sherds from the Protogeometric period which can be safely identified as bowls (Bw18-Bw20). The top of the rims are flat and the sides curve inwards, suggesting a deep shape (Coulson 1985: 52). Bw19 and Bw20 have monochrome interiors and exteriors, as well as stripes on top of the rim (Figs. 4.30a-c).

The remaining sherds from the Geometric period, however, cannot be securely differentiated between bowls and skyphoi due to their fragmentary state (Bw21-Bw39). Thus they are discussed together in this section. Bw24 could be tentatively classified as belonging to the Middle Geometric period, due to its slightly higher rim. Furthermore, alternating black and reserved bands decorate the rim, and stars in between vertical lines can be observed in a decorative zone on the handle area (Fig. 4.24d), characteristics seen also in examples from the Middle Geometric II period in Argos.<sup>154</sup>

Other sherds have decorative schemes and motifs which are common to the Late Geometric period in Greece, most specifically in the Argolid. Shared traits include diagonal crosses between groups of vertical bars (Bw35-Bw36),<sup>155</sup> cross-hatched diamonds (Bw33),<sup>156</sup> thin zones filled by leaf-

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<sup>154</sup> Examples in Courbin 1966, C423, C837 and C2511, pls. 39, 56 and 66, respectively.

<sup>155</sup> Example in Courbin 1966: 107-108.

<sup>156</sup> Example in Courbin 1966, C1, pl. 28.

lozenges and zigzags (Bw30-Bw31, Bw39)<sup>157</sup> and vertical columns with piles of horizontal zigzags (Bw37-Bw38).<sup>158</sup> Cross-hatched triangles persist in the Laconian assemblage during this period, as can be seen in Bw33 (Figs. 4.30d-k).

#### 4.2.1.4 Skyphos (Sk1 to Sk406)

Skyphoi are the most popular shape in Laconia during the Protoegeometric period, being found mostly in sanctuaries. In his analysis, Coulson identified three types of skyphoi, namely the deep, carinated and flaring skyphoi (1985: 34-49). These categories are further divided by rim shapes, such as pointed, straight or bulbous. This dissertation will not include those rim categories because they are not indicative of the general development of the Laconian skyphos or of its parallels.

The deep skyphos, a descendant of the LH IIIC deep bowl, has a bell-shaped body and high, up-swung handles (Coulson 1985: 37; Lemos 2002: 33). This type is less popular than the carinated version, representing only 9.2% of all skyphoi in Laconia. As the name suggests, these have carinated sides just beneath the handles (Fig. 4.31a-c). Coulson suggested that the shape derives from LH IIIC stemmed bowls, however the upper bodies of carinated skyphoi have sharper angles, unlike the latter (Coulson 1985: 40). Finally, flaring skyphoi most likely originate from the Mycenaean conical bowl (FS 295), except that the handles are now less horizontal and are placed lower down on the body (Coulson 1985: 45).<sup>159</sup> Deep and carinated skyphoi have similar sizes, with rim diameters ranging between 10cm and 14cm. Carinated skyphoi, on the other hand, are larger, with diameters between 16cm and 20cm (Sk57 to 67). The flaring skyphos is slightly larger than the other two types, ranging between 12cm and 26cm, but most measure between 14 and 18cms (Fig. 4.31d-e).

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<sup>157</sup> Example in Coldstream 2008, pl. 31c, g.

<sup>158</sup> Example in Coldstream 2008, pls. 28c-e, 30c, d.

<sup>159</sup> Vlachou uses the term *lekanis* instead for the flaring skyphoi, since 'in contrast to Coulson's original impression, two horizontal handles may now be restored for all the examples'. Yet, her explanation is not clear, and there are no figures of such vessels. Therefore, at this time, I prefer to use Coulson's term.

Deep skyphoi were popular in many areas of Greece during the Protogeometric period, thus parallels to the Laconian shape are found in many regions. Skyphoi with a more sinuous profiles, such as Sk13-Sk14 (Fig. 4.31f), however, can be more closely compared to examples from the Dark Age II period in Messenia (c. 975-850 BC).<sup>160</sup> On the other hand, skyphoi with a straighter rim, such as Sk12 and SK31-Sk32, have parallels in Kefalonia (Figs 4.31g-i).<sup>161</sup> The carinated and flaring profile, however, is less common outside Laconia. The former can be compared to an example from the Late Protogeometric period from Achaëa and also to skyphoi from the Dark Age II period in Messenia, but there no parallels to the latter.<sup>162</sup>

All types show a similar decoration syntax. Approximately half of the examples excavated in Laconia have monochrome exteriors and most have monochrome interiors (96.5%). A reserved band on the interior rim is a characteristic common in the Aegean in Protogeometric skyphoi (Lemos 2002: 33), and it is seen in approximately a third of deep and flaring skyphoi, but in 65.3% of the carinated type in Laconia. A popular decorative scheme to all types is the use of a black band over the rim, which can be followed either by a reserved or a decorative band. The latter can be decorated with a range of motifs including triglyphs, cross-hatched triangles, cross-hatched diamonds and cross-hatched panels (Figs. 4.31a-k). Cross-hatching on rims, however, followed by a decorative zone is a syntax restricted to the carinated skyphoi (e.g. Sk73, Sk77 and Sk79; Fig. 4.31a-b, k). Grooves are seen in 29.9% of examples from Laconia. Its origins are unknown and it is an uncommon feature in the Aegean. Examples of grooved skyphoi have been found in Nichoria, but the decoration is more common in Laconia.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> See examples in Coulson 1983, figs. 3-6, 3-7 and 3-23 to 3-27, shapes 3, 6 and 8 (Nichoria, Messenia) and Coulson 1986: no.10 (Koukounara, Meseenia).

<sup>161</sup> See example in Marinatos 1932: 1-47, pl. 11 (Lakkithra, Kefalonia).

<sup>162</sup> See examples in Gadolou 2008: 35, no. 11 and Marini 2018: 249, skp 142 (Derveni Mamousias, Achaëa); Coulson 1986: 124, figs. 13 and 14, Types A, B, E (Kaphirio, Messenia) and Coulson 1986, no. 9, fig. 4 (Malthi, Messenia).

<sup>163</sup> Examples in Nichoria mostly date to the Dark Age II period (Coulson 1983: 77-78).

It should be noted that a considerable number of Laconian skyphoi have been discovered in two sanctuaries in Arcadia, namely Tegea (Sk282-Sk366) and Mt. Lykaion (Sk367-Sk399).<sup>164</sup> The Laconian Protogeometric pottery was initially identified by its reddish yellow or reddish fabric and 'shiny metallic black paint' (Voyatzis 2014a: 224-225). Following this initial observation, the fabrics of the suspected sherds were analysed and found to contain a common geochemical composition with samples from Amyklai (Fenn *et al* 2014: 571-584; Voyatzis 2017: 79). Thus, it can be shown conclusively that Laconian skyphoi were offered at sanctuaries in Arcadia and that there were close links between the two regions during the Protogeometric period. Yet, a closer investigation of the decoration of the vessels from Laconia and those from Arcadia suggests there were different preferences. At Tegea, for instance, only 66.2% of Laconian skyphoi are monochrome. Grooves, on the other hand, were seemingly more popular at Tegea than at Laconia, where 36.5% of all skyphoi had at least one groove. More telling is the small number of skyphoi decorated with the cross-hatched triangle motif in Arcadia, seen in 9.5% of skyphoi, while in Laconia the motif is represented in 38.1% of vessels.

Laconian skyphoi have also been identified in the Argolid, at Asine. These sherds are particularly interesting for the study of Laconian Protogeometric pottery due to the early dating of the vessels. Sk402, for example, was found in deposits from the later part of Phase I, dated to c. 1075-1000 BC. Furthermore, a jug (Jg80) and a sherd from an unknown shape can be shown to be of Laconian origin (Wells 1983: 42, 64, 83). These vessels are significant because they indicate that the Laconian Protogeometric was well underway by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and that contacts between Laconia and the Argolid carried on during the EIA. In fact, contacts between Laconia and Asine can be

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<sup>164</sup> Another skyphos was identified at the sanctuary of Aghios Elias, also in Arkadia. The sherd has a flat, horizontal lip, a small raised band below a groove and motifs such as cross-hatched diamonds or triangles in metopal panels are painted with the metallic sheen common to Laconian vessels. However, petrographical analysis was not undertaken (Forsén *et al* 1999: 179-181).

shown to have continued throughout the settlement's history, as is demonstrated by other Laconian vessels (Sk400-Sk401; Jg79-Jg80) in Phases II to IV in Asine (c. 950-900BC).<sup>165</sup>

The evolution of the shape during the succeeding periods is difficult to characterise due to the fragmentary condition of the sherds. As noted, in most cases it is not possible to discern sherds from skyphoi and bowls, and they were discussed together in section 4.2.1.3. Preliminary reports from Amyklai, however, suggest that two types of skyphoi were in use during the Late Geometric period. One type is clearly influenced by vessels from the Early and Middle Geometric period in Attica, the Argolid and Corinthia. These skyphoi have a shallow body with a low vertical or slightly off-set lip, accentuated shoulders and a low ring foot. They are usually small, with rim diameters ranging between 5cm and 10cm (Fig. 4.32). Yet, their decoration is still typically Laconian, with a preference for stacked triangles in a band on the handle area, as has been observed in examples from the Protogeometric period (Vlachou 2015: 117-118, 2018: 105, 112-116; Sk404-Sk405). The other type can be shown to originate from the carinated skyphos and it is believed to be the ancestor of the Laconian lakaina (Stibbe 1994: 19-23). The shape has a tall lip which forms a gentle convex curve and full shoulders, where the horizontal handles are attached. Decoration of the type is limited, having mainly horizontal wavy lines and diamond chains in the handle zone (Vlachou 2015: 118, 2018: 109). Lastly, the publication of a skyphos sherd with figurative decoration (Sk403) suggests that the shape might have similar decoration to local Late Geometric kraters (Fig. 4.32).

#### **4.2.1.5 Lakaina (Lk1 to Lk15)**

Lakanai were first introduced to the Aegean during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, with examples appearing in Laconia, Attica, Euboea and Boeotia (Stibbe 1994: 19-23; Coldstream 2008: 215). The

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<sup>165</sup> Example in Wells 1983: 64, nos. 345 and 346 (Malthi, Messenia). There are, however, criticisms to these conclusions. Langdon, for one, emphasises that the sherd from Phase I is the only example in the deposit and that the deposit itself might have been disturbed (1985: 533).

main characteristics of the Laconian lakaina are a rounded or carinated body (an inheritance from its ancestral shape, the carinated skyphos), with tall walls that exceed that of the bowl, a slightly off-set lip and flat or concave bases. Lastly, two horizontal handles are attached to the wider diameter of the vessel's body (Figs. 4.33a, c; Stibbe 1994: 22-23; Vlachou 2015: 118-119, 2018: 109). The decoration of the lakaina consists mainly of banding on the upper body followed by a decorated band on the handle zone, containing either vertical zigzags (e.g. Lk3-Lk5) or a row of birds flanked by vertical lines (Lk7, Lk10) (Figs. 4.33b-c). Three examples have also short vertical lines on their lips (Lk1, Lk5-Lk6).

#### **4.2.1.7. Plate (P11 to P111)**

Eleven plates were recovered from Spartan sanctuaries, all of which date to the Late Geometric period (P11-P111). There seems to be some variations in the shape, but these cannot be described in detail due to the fragmentary state of the material. P111 is the only intact specimen, and it has a conical bowl with offset rims, flat bases and two reflex handles attached to the rim, a shape described as 'canonical' for plates from the period (Fig. 4.34e; Coldstream 2008: 216). Nonetheless, P11-P18 can be compared to contemporary plates from Argos. Plate C873, for instance, dated to the period between 900 and 860 BC, has at least two handles on each side, similar to P13 (Fig. 4.34a).<sup>166</sup> Yet handleless versions were likely to be in use as well, as exemplified by P17 (Fig. 4.34b). Horizontal and diagonal wavy zigzags were particularly characteristic of the shape, as seen in seven of the specimens (P11, P14-P110; Fig. 4.34c-d).

Another variant of the plate is P110 (Fig. 4.34d). The shape has a broad shallow body and rounded edges with at least one vertical handle. The shape has been discussed recently by Papadopoulos, who prefers to name it 'broad shallow bowl with composite handles', however he accepts that the shallower examples could represent a variant form of a plate (2017: 828-289).

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<sup>166</sup> Example in Courbin 1966, pl. 68.

## 4.2.2 Closed shapes

### 4.2.2.1. Jug (Jg23 to Jg123)

As with many other shapes from the Protogeometric period, only a few examples of nearly-complete jugs survive (Jg70, Jg72-Jg74). Sherds suggest types with elliptical bodies, short and long necks and ringed feet (Jg72-Jg74, Fig. 4.35a-c). Close parallels to these jugs can be found in the Dark Age II phase (c. 975-800 BC), in Nichoria.<sup>167</sup> Raised bands and grooves at the transition between necks and shoulders are seen in a number of examples, such as Jg70 (Fig. 4.34d). Trefoil-mouthed jugs continued to be produced, but their bodies are now conical rather than globular, with low conical feet (Jg70). Lastly, a range of handles have been observed, including elliptical, grooved and rope handles (Coulson 1986: 60-61).

Most jugs from this period are monochrome with a decorative band in the shoulder area (Coulson 1985: 61-62). Jg70, for instance, is decorated with double wavy lines, a popular syntax in the Argolid and in Attica during the Late Protogeometric period (Lemos 2002: 68-69).<sup>168</sup> However, one specimen published recently from a burial in Sparta (Jg72) suggests jugs also had a light background and neck decoration (Fig. 4.35a).<sup>169</sup> Among the most common motifs are concentric circles, found in 29.1% of all vessels; panels of cross-hatching (12.3%), grooves (12.3%), vertical lines (15.8%), banding (14%) and cross-hatched triangles (14%). It is interesting to note that, while a small percentage of Laconian jugs (14.1%) are monochrome; all four vessels discovered in Tegea are decorated in this manner (Jg76-Jg78).

Laconian jugs from the beginning of the Geometric period are also poorly represented. Jg 92, a trefoil-mouthed jug, is the only intact vessel from the period. Dated to the Middle Geometric period,

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<sup>167</sup> Example in Coulson 1983: 85, no. P817 (Shape III), fig. 3.37.

<sup>168</sup> Examples in Papadopoulos *et al* 2017: 730, T77-1, fig. 6.12 (Athens, Attica) and Wells 1983: 258, no. 757, fig. 196 (Asine, Argolid).

<sup>169</sup> A similar decorative pattern can be observed also in the Late Protogeometric jug from Achaea in Gadolou 2008, fig. 136Θ.

it can be identified as a broad-bottomed jug, with a flat base and a trefoil mouth (Fig. 4.35e). The shape is common in jugs from the Early Geometric period in Corinthia and the Middle Geometric period in Attica and the Argolid.<sup>170</sup> In fact, its pointed decoration on the shoulder, zigzag on the neck and banding on the body can be closely compared to a Middle Geometric II jug from Argos.<sup>171</sup>

The Middle Geometric period saw the introduction of a new type of jug in Laconia, that of the lekythos-oinochoe (Jg88). But it was only during the Late Geometric period that the shape became more common (Jg106-122), when it was distributed mainly in the Spartan sanctuaries (Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos). No complete specimens have been published, but their necks are easily recognisable for their long and slim shape (Fig. 4.35f-h). Moreover, they are fully decorated with panels and bands separated by groups of vertical and horizontal lines. The panels contain motifs such as zigzags (Jg106, Jg108) and cross-hatched triangles (Jg111-114). A similar syntax can be observed in lekythos-oinochoe dated to the Middle Geometric period from Attica and the Late Geometric period from the Argolid and Ithaka.<sup>172</sup> Other less common motifs include stacked triangles (Jg104), panels of cross-hatching (Jg105), dots (Jg107), chevrons (Jg107), crosses (Jg108), rows of lozenges (Jg113, Jg115), birds (Jg117), wavy lines (Jg119) and stars (Jg121).

#### **4.2.2.2. Amphora (Am2 to Am22)**

Amphorae are not well represented in Laconia during the EIA. Only one vessel survives from the SubMycenaean period (Am1), and a small number from the Protogeometric and Geometric periods. An almost complete neck-handled amphora from a chamber tomb in Mavrovouni has an ovoid shape with a tapered lower body, wide neck and double rolled handles (Am6, Fig. 4.36a). There

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<sup>170</sup> Examples in Weinberg 1943: 11, no. 29 (W 22), pl. 4 (Corinth, Corinthia), Papadopoulos *et al* 2017: 735-736, T20-1 (Athens, Attica) and Säflund 1965: 81-90, fig. 68 (Berbati, Argolid).

<sup>171</sup> See example in Courbin 1966, no. C2461, pl. 15.

<sup>172</sup> Examples in Papadopoulos *et al* 2017: 758, no. T18-1, fig. 6.21 (Athens, Attica), Courbin 1966, C11, Pl25 and C3, pl. 26 (Argos, Argolid) and Coldstream 2008, pl.50b (Ithaka).

are no known parallels for this shape in the Aegean, but it should be noted that the ovoid shape and tapered lower body can be also observed in contemporary Laconian jugs. Hence, one could suggest the shape is a Laconian idiosyncrasy. Nevertheless, its decorative syntax — black background with a decorated zone on the shoulders — finds parallels in Late Protogeometric vessels from Athens and Tiryns.<sup>173</sup>

The decoration of the sherds dated to the Early Geometric period (Am6-Am9) is similar to those from the previous period, including the preference for cross-hatched triangles and concentric circles. Another interesting characteristic seen in at least one example (Am7) is that of the placement of raised bands at the transition between neck and shoulders, a feature seen also in Laconian and Messenian jugs from the Protogeometric period (Fig. 4.36b). By the Middle Geometric period, however, the decoration of amphorae indicates external influences. In Am10, for example, decoration is placed high up on the neck as well as dashes on the rim (Fig. 4.36c), similar to amphorae from Athens and the Argolid from the Early to Late Geometric periods.<sup>174</sup>

Amphorae Am20 and Am22 indicate that during the Late Geometric period the shape followed more closely trends seen in other areas of Greece, like Athens and Knossos (Figs. 4.36d-e).<sup>175</sup> Both vessels have taller and more slender bodies than in the previous period; the necks are more elongated and conical in shape and the mouths are wide. Changes are seen in their decoration as well: thin black bands adorn them, as well as decorative zones on necks and shoulders. The latter can include horizontal zigzags (Am15), meanders (Am16), chevrons (Am17), concentric circles (Am20) and chequers (Am19). This decoration syntax can be observed on amphorae from the same period in Athens and Asine.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Examples in Lemos 2002: 58, pl. 82.2 (Athens, Attica) and Lemos 2002: 58, pl. 56.1 (Tiryns, Argolid).

<sup>174</sup> Examples in Blegen 1952: 290, no. 15, pl. 74a and b (EG I, Agora, Attica), Kübler 1954: 225, pl. 33 (LG I, Kerameikos, Attica); Coldstream 2008: 33-34, pl. 23b (EG II; Mycenae, Argolid), Courbin 1966: 188-190, pl. 4 (MG II, Argos, Argolid) and Frödin and Persson 1938: 331, no. 1, fig. 224.2 (Asine, Argolid).

<sup>175</sup> Examples in Coldstream 1972, pl. 21.1 (Knossos, Crete) and Kübler 1954, no. 337, pl. 33 (Kerameikos, Attica).

<sup>176</sup> Examples in Kübler 1954, no. 337, pl. 33 (Kerameikos, Athens) and Coldstream 2008, pl. 28b (Asine, Argive).

#### 4.2.2.3 Lekythos (Le2 to Le3)

Two possible lekythoi were discovered in two pit graves at the Triporrachis area in Pellana. Both have very unusual shapes, which do not have close parallels to other lekythoi from Greece (Fig. 4.37a and b). Le2 has an almost square body with rounded edges. A handle is attached from the shoulder to the neck of the vessel and the diameter of the lip is larger than that of the neck. Le3 has a similar shape but half of the neck, towards the mouth, has a larger diameter than the lower half. The excavator claims that these vases are dated to the Geometric period, however, he does not state his reasons for this supposition. Furthermore, a cup most likely dated to the Classical period was found in the same grave as Le2, which is explained as contamination. Due to the lack of parallels to this shape and the lack of information by the excavator, the dating of these vessels remains uncertain.

#### 4.2.2.4 Pyxis (Py1 to Py9)

No examples of this shape are known from the Protogeometric period in Laconia. However, six pyxides from this period were identified among other Laconian vessels at the sanctuary in Tegea. Py2-3 and Py5 most likely represent globular pyxides. However, the lack of a lip on Py2 could suggest it belongs to a rare type seen in Athens with ledge-lugs (Fig. 4.38a-c).<sup>177</sup> Py6, on the other hand, has a sharp, in-turned lip common to pyxides with high handles, especially from Attica (Fig. 4.38d; Voyatzis 2014a: 204). Parallels can also be drawn with a specimen from Tegea, dated to the same period.<sup>178</sup>

Py7-Py9 are dated to the late Geometric period, although only the profile of Py7 can be reconstructed (Fig. 4.38e). Py7 has a cylindrical body with a flat base, a type well represented in the Argolid and Achaea during the end of the Late Geometric period (Coldstream 2008: 126, Marini 2018:

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<sup>177</sup> See parallel and description in Desborough 1952: 108 and Papadopoulos *et al* 2017: 768, fig. 6.23.

<sup>178</sup> Examples in Desborough 1952: 112-113, no. 533, pl. 13 (Kerameikos, Attica) and Voyatzis 2014a: 229, no. C-PG-56, fig. 7 (Tegea, Arcadia).

264).<sup>179</sup> Rounded versions have been reported from the most recent excavations at Amyklai, which according to Vlachou, show influences from the Attic and Argive Early Geometric II and Middle Geometric I styles.<sup>180</sup> Yet, they soon disappear from the Amyklaian assemblage (Vlachou 2015: 117-118).

#### 4.2.2.5 Tripod (Tri1 to Tri12)

A total of nine clay tripods can be dated to the Late Geometric period in Laconia. They were discovered in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (Tri1, Tri6), Amyklai (Tri7) and at the Spartan Acropolis (Tri2, Tri3, Tri9), but the origins of the remaining sherds (Tri4, Tri5, Tri8) are unknown. According to Margreiter, the Laconian tripod is bulged in shape and it can have ring handles (Tri1-Tri2; Fig. 4.39a-b). Moreover, Tri3 indicates that bird figures were used to decorate the handles (Fig. 4.39c; 1988: 45). It is interesting to note that at least one leg of a tripod (Tri6) imitates features typically seen in their metal counterparts, such as incised tangent circles usually seen on hammered tripods (Fig. 4.39d; Margreiter 1988: 45).

Earlier examples dated to the Protogeometric period, however, have been discovered in the sanctuary at Tegea (Tri10-Tri12). The examples consist of three tripod legs, all of which are decorated with a panel of cross-hatching flanked by vertical lines.

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<sup>179</sup> Examples in Courbin 1966, nos. C214 and C572, pls. 84 and 85 (Argos, Argolid) and Gadolou 2002: 169, RAK493, pls. 1 and 13 (Ano Mazaraki, Achaea).

<sup>180</sup> Pers. communication.

## 4.3 Summary and Conclusions

### 4.3.1 The Late Bronze Age

Out of the 247 vessels from the LH IIIC periods catalogued in this dissertation, 44.5% are dated to the LH IIIC Early period, followed by the LH IIIC Late period, with 13.4% of sherds and the LH IIIC Middle period, with 7.3%. It should be noted that this pattern diverges from what can be observed in other areas of Greece, where the LH IIIC Middle period has a larger number of vessels than other phases of the LH IIIC period. The material originates from ten sites, including Aghios Stephanos, Epidaurus Limera, Amyklai, Pellana, Pavlopetri, Asteri (Karousi), Peristeri, Sykia, Krokeai and Armakas (Fig. 4.40-41). Open shapes (64%) outnumber closed shapes, of which cups and bowls were the most popular vessels. Furthermore, all LH IIIC shapes have local antecedents in LH IIIA, IIIB and IIIB2/IIIC Early Laconian assemblages. Continuity is also attested to by the preference of certain decorative motifs, such as bands, tricurved arches, chevrons, stems, zigzags, foliate bands, tassels and rock patterns. A smaller number of motifs are represented during the LH IIIC Late and SubMycenaean periods; however, these are the ones that remained popular during the Protogeometric period (e.g. zigzags, lozenges, triangles, concentric and semi-circles and panelling).

Some features suggests that the LBA Laconian potter was influenced by styles from other regions. According to this analysis, a considerable number of parallels with the Argolid can be observed in the Laconian assemblage of the LH III C period. Yet, Attic and Messenian influences can also be identified in sherds dated to the LH IIIC Early and Late. Together, these features strongly indicate that contacts between Laconia and other areas of Greece remained active throughout the LH IIIC period (*contra* Desborough 1972: 242). Further contacts can be shown through the simultaneous introduction of shapes and motifs in Laconia and the Aegean. For instance, the earliest examples of semi-globular cups (FS 215) first appeared during the LH IIIC Early period in Corinthia, Attica and Boetia as well as Laconia, in Aghios Stephanos (e.g. Cp4-Cp6; Mountjoy 1999: 1225). Another example is that of the carinated cup with high-swung handles (FS 240), seen in Euboea, Corinthia, the Argolid, Achaea

and Laconia (Cp2) also during the LH IIIC Early period.<sup>181</sup> These examples indicate that Laconians were aware of trends occurring in other areas of Greece during the LH IIIC Early period. In addition, imported vessels continued to arrive in Laconia throughout the LH IIIC period. At Epidaurus Limera, for instance, imports have been identified from Crete and the Argolid since at least the LH IIIC Middle period, and their numbers increased during the LH IIIC Late period (Sj16-18, Sj21, Sj23).

Links with other areas of the Aegean can also be suggested due to influences from Rhodes. These influences are particularly clear between Epidaurus Limera and Ialysos during the LH IIIC Early and Middle periods. At least three stirrup jars from the Laconian cemetery, for instance, can be shown to belong to a type seen mostly in Ialysos. The introduction of these influences coincides with a period of economic prosperity in Rhodes, when the island became an important nexus in the exchange networks. Consequently, there were frequent contacts between the island, Greece, Crete and the eastern Mediterranean (Georgiadis 2020: 986-992). Given the location of Epidaurus Limera, it is likely that the site participated in these newly established networks.

### 4.3.2 The Early Iron Age

The small number of vessels from the SubMycenaean period from Laconia does not allow for a thorough characterisation of the style. However, a number of shapes can be shown to have developed from LH IIIC ancestors, contrary to earlier suggestions (Buschor and von Massow 1927: 1-23; Coulson 1985: 63-65; Eder 1998: 100-110). The survival of the kylix from the LH IIIC into the SubMycenaean period is particularly interesting due to its association with cult practices during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods. During the LH IIIC kylikes continued to be used in sanctuaries at Tiryns, Asine and Aghia Irini in Keos, indicating that the shape still had a similar function even after the fall of the palatial system (Kilian 1981: 49-58; Hägg 1981: 91-94; Caskey 1981: 127-135; Eder 2001b: 207).

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<sup>181</sup> Examples in Popham *et al* 2006: 138 (Lefkandi, Euboea), Mountjoy 1999: 230, nos. 182-184, fig. 74 (Korakou, Corinthia) and Marini 2018: 164-167, Cp10-12 (Teichos Dymaion, Aigeira, Spaliareka).

Furthermore, by the end of the LBA and the beginning of the EIA, kylikes are found in a number of areas, including Elis (Olympia), Thessaly, Ithaka, Messenia, Argolid, Crete and Laconia. Based on this evidence, Eder has rightly suggested that the survival of the shape into the EIA indicates the 'continuity of the religious symbolism and ritual function connected with the shape of the kylix from the Mycenaean era into the EIA' (2001b: 208). At Amyklai, the importance of the kylix for cult practices is reflected not only in the presence of the vessels themselves, but also in a fragment of a wheelmade figure depicting a hand holding a kylix. The fragment is dated to the LH IIIB period, suggesting that the association between cult practices and the kylix continued into the SubMycenaean period in Amyklai.<sup>182</sup>

The number of sherds from the EIA is considerably larger, with a total of 806 vessels of which mostly originate from sanctuaries. 68.2% of the assemblage is dated to the Protogeometric, of which 62.1% comes from Amyklai (Fig. 4.42). On the other hand, Geometric sherds are divided between the sanctuaries of Amyklai (23.8%), Athena Chalkioikos (20.3%) and Artemis Orthia (16%), as well as the Acropolis of Sparta (20.7%, Fig. 4.43-44). Lastly, open shapes remain the most popular vessel types during the Protogeometric and Geometric periods (87.3% and 75.4%, respectively). These figures, however, are likely to change after the publication of the finds from the most recent excavations at Amyklai.

EIA vessels can be shown to have developed from local LBA shapes, including the deep and carinated cups, skyphoi, deep bowls, carinated kraters and trefoil jugs. Similarly, wavy lines, cross-hatched and other types of triangles, concentric circles, areas of cross-hatching, lozenges, zigzags and triglyphs are motifs which were introduced during the LBA and continue to decorate Protogeometric vessels. Interestingly, the preference for panelled decoration in metopal panels, an extremely popular motif during the Protogeometric and Geometric periods, were already part of the Laconian decorative

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<sup>182</sup> The fragment is dated based on the shape of the kylix itself, as well as by the decoration of another similar figurine of the head of a female wearing a *polos* (Demakopoulou 2012: 105).

syntax by the LH IIIC period. The panels can be observed on bowls and kraters, for instance, from the LH IIIB period.<sup>183</sup>

Still, dating the Laconian material from the end of the SubMycenaean to the beginning of the Protogeometric period is challenging. A small number of sherds are known from this period in Amyklai, but they are still unpublished. They are briefly mentioned in a preliminary report by Vlachou, who describes Early Protogeometric vessels as having 'strong similarities' to the Attic and Argive assemblages. Moreover, that their decoration can be characterised as rough and sketchy and some have horizontal grooves, a feature common to many later Laconian Protogeometric vessels (2015: 114; 2018: 100). Intriguingly, further evidence of the Early Protogeometric period was discovered outside of Laconia, in the Argolid. Two sherds were identified among the local vessels from Phase I (Jg79, Sk402; ca. 1075-1000 BC) in Asine, and they show that the most prominent features of the Laconian Protogeometric decoration had already developed during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, namely the use of cross-hatching panels, triangles and lozenges.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, changes were introduced which suggest the beginning of a SubProtogeometric period in Laconia (Margreiter 1988: 24-25; Coldstream 2008: 214-215; Vlachou 2015: 116-117). The phase is characterised by the inclusion of features from the Early Geometric II/Middle Geometric Attic, Argive and Corinthian styles to the Laconian repertoire. The shallow skyphos, for instance, first appeared during this period in Laconia, but the shape was produced in Attica and the Argolid at least since the Early Geometric II period. Yet, the Laconian examples are still decorated according to local tradition (Coldstream 2008: 14, 116-117; Vlachou 2015: 116-117, 2018: 106). Nonetheless, grooves, once so popular during the Protogeometric period, disappear and, in shapes such as jugs, are replaced by raised bands. Continuous patterns were introduced, instead of motifs within metopal panels, and Attic Middle Geometric influences can be observed in the use of meanders with diagonal hatching, horizontal parallel lines, horizontal lozenge chains, vertical bars and

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<sup>183</sup> Examples are seen at the Menelaion in Catling *et al* 2009:264, no. AD24, fig. 268, 224, nos. PE38-39, fig. 228.

steep single zigzags (Margreiter 1988: 24; Vlachou 2015: 117, 2018: 105). Lastly, the inclusion of lozenges and triangles with multiple divisions during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC suggest further influences from Eastern Greece.

What could have brought about the change, considering the length and popularity of the Protogeometric style? Initially, archaeologists theorised that the long Protogeometric style at Laconia was a result of their isolation. According to Desborough, 'Laconia as a whole may have been relatively isolated from any contact with the Aegean – an isolation that covered not only the late Dark Ages but apparently much of the 9<sup>th</sup> century as well' (1972: 242). Yet, this analysis has shown that Laconia had contacts with Attica, the Argolid, Messenia and Rhodes during the LH IIIC and the SubMycenaean periods. Moreover, contacts with Arcadia are suggested by a number of Laconian vessels in the earliest deposits of the sanctuary at Tegea (Level B8b – 950-900BC; Voyatzis 2014a: 197), which by the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC had increased by 160% (Fig. 4.45). Further interaction between these regions is in evidence at the sanctuary of Mt. Lykaion, where approximately 100 Laconian sherds from the same period have been found (Romano and Voyatzis 2014: 578-591). Clearly, one should not assume that the presence of Laconian pottery necessarily indicates Laconian visitors. But it does demonstrate the escalation of contacts between Laconians and Arcadians, and thus that the former were not isolated.

Further changes can be observed in the Laconian ceramics during the Late Geometric period, when a number of its more idiosyncratic features were abandoned for those common to Attica, the Argolid and Corinthia. For instance, banding with alternating wide and thin stripes decorate open and closed shapes. The number of friezes per vase multiplied and they were filled with small patterns such as zigzags, lozenges and birds. Friezes can also be divided into lateral and central areas, as is observed in the Argolid. Yet, one can still recognise the influence from the former Laconian style in the preference for cross-hatched triangles, concentric circles and zigzags.

During the Late Geometric period there was also a marked increase in the number of imports to Amyklai. Vlachou indicates the presence of globular aryballoi from Corinthia and large kraters from

the Argolid (2015: 119). In fact, aryballoi became the most common shape in the sanctuary during the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Vlachou 2015: 120). Other imports include flat pyxides with tall knobs, a lekythos-oinochoe with rope handles and shallow skyphoi from Attica and the Argolid (Vlachou 2018: 106-107).

### 4.3.3 Laconia and the West Greek Koine

In a number of studies of the West Greek *koiné*, Laconia's role remains undefined. Scholars recognise that the Laconian style is unique, in the sense that it cannot be easily compared to other styles of the period, and thus are reticent to include the region as part of the *koiné* (Coldstream 2008: 220-221; Voyatzis 2017: 65-85). However, before discussing the role of the region within the *koiné*, it is important to understand how the *koiné* might have been formed. It has been suggested that contacts between Laconia, Messenia, Achaëa, Arcadia, Aetolia and the Ionian Islands, coupled with their common Mycenaean background, would have resulted in similar shapes throughout west Greece (Coulson 1985: 64; 1986: 13; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999: 115; Eder 2006b: 562; Coldstream 2008: 220-232; Gadolou 2008: 288). Contacts are particularly clear in the case of Messenia and the Ionian Islands during the LH IIIC period, for instance. Evidence suggests that Messenia was depopulated after the end of the palatial system. At the same time, Messenian influences are seen in vessels from Kephallonia, suggesting population movement from the former to the latter. Further population movements are indicated by close connections between the ceramic styles from the Polis I phase and the Messenian DA I (Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999: 74, 115).

The analysis of the ceramics from the West Greek *koiné* also suggests that Messenia, Elis, Achaëa and Aetolia shared a common background during the LBA in the shape of a regional Mycenaean *koiné* (Papadopoulos 1995: 201-208; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999: 74; Marini 2018: 186-188). The similarities were first identified by Papadopoulos, and include not only comparable pottery styles, but also tomb architecture, burial customs and other artefacts (Papadopoulos 1995: 201-208).

Laconia, however, does not share these cultural backgrounds. Instead, pottery production indicates closer connections during the LH IIIC period with the Argolid, Attica, Rhodes and Messenia, as was discussed above. Moreover, Laconian LH IIIC vessels seem to share similar features to another possible *koine* of the period, which include regions of the East Mainland (Mountjoy 2009: 289-312). Laconia is not considered as part of the East Mainland *koine*, but there are some features which indicate contacts between the latter and the eastern *koine*. One of them is the decoration of closed vessels which run over the edge of the decorative zone into the shoulder bands (e.g. Jg13). Furthermore, examples of trefoil-mouthed jugs are decorated with stemless spirals with an open centre, also seen in Jg13. The example of one jug does not justify including Laconia within this *koine* but it does suggest that the region had links with those areas. Therefore, seeing the differences in the developmental background between the Laconian style and that from the regions included in the West Greek *koine*, it is not surprising that the Laconian style does not fit the mould.

Examining the West Greek *koine* closer it becomes clear that the majority of similarities observed between the Laconian Protogeometric assemblage and that of other members of the *koine* are restricted to decoration. The only common shape shared by almost all areas of the *koine* (except Aetolia) is the ribbed kylix stem. Eder, for instance, suggests that kylikes emphasise a connection between the areas of the West Greek *koine* 'beyond a common Mycenaean heritage' (Eder 2006b: 213-214). There are, however, two factors which contradict this notion. The first is the fact that ribbed kylix stems are not restricted to the regions of the *koine*. SubMycenaean and Protogeometric examples were found in Thessaly and Cyprus as well.<sup>184</sup> Additionally, by the LH IIIC period there were already a number of similarities between the regions of the west Peloponnese which did not include Laconia. Thus, the ribbed kylix stems cannot represent a common Mycenaean heritage between members of the West Greek *koine*.

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<sup>184</sup> Examples in Batziou-Eistathiou 1984, fig. 2 (Phiky, Thessaly) and Karageorghis 1975, nos. J1, J3-5, pl. XXXIV (Alaas, Cyprus).

A number of motifs can be shown to have been popular both in the western Peloponnese and Laconia, such as cross-hatched panels and triangles. However, Desborough reminds us that 'if one considers individual motifs one can find connections (...) But to isolate cases is dangerous; taking the whole decorative system it is evident that the [Laconian] system is different' (1952: 287). In other words, the use of common motifs cannot indicate connections, only common decorative syntaxes can. In order to better understand the issue, one can compare a syntax seen in most areas of the West Greek *koine*, that of the metope/triglyph system. The system was particularly popular in Laconia, Nichoria (DA II), Achaia (LPG) and Ithaka (Aetos II phase), although is also seen in some examples from Attica (EPG-MPG) and the Argolid.<sup>185</sup> In Laconian vessels, triangles, circles and lozenges above triangles are placed within panels separated by triglyphs, usually represented by three to four vertical lines (Fig. 4.46). Thin panels of cross-hatching are also found between triglyphs. The closest parallel to the Laconian system is that of Messenia, in which triangles are separated by triglyphs. However, other examples from Messenia better resemble specimens from Achaia and Ithaka. In these regions, vertical zigzag lines are seen in between horizontal lines. Other examples are more intricate, consisting of thin horizontal panels containing semi-circles, fringe and panels of cross-hatching. The panels usually contain sideways triangles or one inverted triangle above another triangle (Fig. 4.46). Thus, even this popular decorative syntax demonstrates regional preferences. It is also important to highlight the preference for the shiny, metallic appearance of the decoration, typical of the Laconian Protogeometric pottery production.

Considering the discussion above, one can conclude that there are very few features – mostly decorative elements – which are common to Laconia and examples from the Western Greek *koine*. However, it is important to highlight that a large percentage of the material analysed originates from one single area of Laconia, namely Sparta, and mainly from sanctuaries. Further archaeological

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<sup>185</sup> Examples in Lemos 2002: 42-45, Coulson 1983: 76-79 (Nichoria, Messenia), Marini 2018: 250, 255 (Agio, Achaia), Souyouzoglou-Haywood 1999: 114 (Ithaka), Papadopoulos *et al* 2017: 794-795 (Athens, Attica), Wells 1983: 60, 198 (Asine, Argolid); Karo 1934: 129 (Tiryns, Argolid).

investigations in the region - like the discovery of the palatial structure at Aghios Vasileios – could paint a different picture of the Laconian Protogeometric pottery and its influences. Therefore, at this point, one can argue against the inclusion of Laconia as a part of this ceramic *koine*.

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In conclusion, the development of the Laconian pottery style described above demonstrates that contacts with other communities alone does not result in changes to material culture. As was discussed in the previous chapter, changes are dependent not only on the interaction, but also on the desire and ability of a community to adopt and adapt foreign objects to their own cultural context (Knappett 2011: 137; Wilkinson 2014: 60; Massa 2016: 54). Thus, contacts with other regions of the *koine* did not result in alterations to the Laconian ceramic style. On the other hand, the changes observed to the style during the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, are likely to be the result of changes to the interests of the Laconian groups themselves. The consequences of such conclusions will be discussed further in Chapter 5, together with the evidence from Chapters 2 and 3.

# Chapter 5

## Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Laconia

This dissertation has aimed to offer an interpretation of the socio-political and economic developments of Laconia during the LBA and EIA period. This is the first study to combine the archaeological evidence from both periods, resulting in a catalogue of 64 sites. The settlements, cemeteries and sanctuaries were analysed in depth, as well as a large range of objects. Among the objects, ceramics are the largest group: 1056 fine ware and 203 coarse ware vessels were analysed, including, for the first time, examples from outside of Laconia, such as those from the Arcadian sanctuaries at Tegea and Mt. Lykaion.

It is important to emphasise, however, that the evidence from Laconia is still disappointingly sparse, especially compared with other areas such as Attica, the Argolid and Messenia. A small number of sites have been systematically excavated, and even fewer have had their data published. Thus, the interpretations offered here are likely to change once further evidence becomes available.

### 5.1 The Late Bronze Age

Chapter 2 provided a survey of Laconia during the LBA, with an emphasis on the LH IIIC period. The survey included fifty-nine sites, of which Aghios Vasileios, the Menelaion, Aghios Stephanos, Pellana, Amyklai, Vapheio-Palaiopyrghi, Pavlopetri and Epidauros Limera were analysed in depth.<sup>186</sup> The analysis has shown that wealthy and stratified societies occupied Laconia during the LH III period, as is shown, for instance, by the monumental architecture at the Menelaion and Aghios Vasileios. The

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<sup>186</sup> Reference and bibliography to the other sites can be found in the Gazetteer, in Appendix 1.

close relationship between these centres is evinced by their intervisibility and thus close proximity, which would have allowed for the creation of a network of support between them.

It is clear that the elites at Aghios Vasileios had access to trade routes encompassing Crete and the eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, unlike Messenia, Laconia was not organised around a single political centre. Instead, the archaeological record indicates that Laconian centres had some autonomy regarding the establishment of their economy. As the analysis here demonstrates, the prosperity of Laconian sites fluctuated according to the success and failure of other centres. During the LH IIIA period, for example, the decline of Vapheio was followed by the flourishing of the Menelaion and Aghios Vasileios. This indicates that the former sites were not dependent on Vapheio for their own economic success. Similarly, the destruction of Aghios Vasileios in the LH IIIB1 period was followed by the flourishing of the Menelaion. If Vapheio in the earlier period or Aghios Vasileios during the LH IIIA period were the centres of a Laconian kingdom, one would expect to see negative repercussions at other sites in the area, as is observed after the destruction of the palace at Pylos, in Messenia. Scholars agree that the palatial site at Ano Englianos, at Pylos, was the centre of a Messenian kingdom. Consequently, when the site was destroyed during the LH IIIB2 period, other sites in the region were abandoned, since they relied on the politico-economic system established by the palace and its elite. Surveys of Messenia suggest, in fact, that the region was almost depopulated after the destruction of the palace (Davis *et al* 1997). In the Argolid, on the other hand, the destruction of Mycenae and Tiryns were followed by partial re-construction and, while Mycenae remained an important local nexus, Tiryns became one of the most important centres in the region (Maran and Papadimitriou 2020: 701-705). In the face of this evidence, I suggest that Laconia was more likely to have been organised in a similar manner to the Argolid, rather than Messenia. It is, of course, difficult to compare the destruction of Aghios Vasileios with that of those centres, because of its early date during the LH IIIB1 period. Moreover, the destruction observed in Messenia and the Argolid are likely to be part of a wider pattern which saw similar events occurring throughout Greece, and perhaps even further into the Mediterranean (Sherratt 2003: 40-51; Manning and Hulin 2005: 3-23; Middleton 2010:

10-30). Nonetheless, the comparison with these regions can provide some indications of the Laconian social organisation during the LBA.

Further evidence of the social organisation adopted by Laconian societies during the LBA period can be gathered from burial practices. During the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods, tholos and chamber tombs were the most common practices. Large tholoi, however, were abandoned by the end of the LH IIIA2 period, a phenomenon observed in other areas of Greece as well. At the same time, the number of chamber tombs increased, especially at the southern end of Cape Malea. However, even though the number of chamber tombs increased, grave offerings decreased during the LH IIIB period. This phenomenon has also been observed throughout Greece, and has been interpreted by scholars not as a sign of impoverishment, but rather of the stabilisation of political hierarchies (Galanakis 2020: 362-363). According to this view, stabilisation would have rendered competition among groups unnecessary, and thus also conspicuous consumption in burial practices. Moreover, prestige would now be reflected by the construction of monumental administrative complexes. The theory, however, is not applicable for the Laconian case, seeing that the region could be described as unstable during the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods. As was discussed above, the period is marked by the rise and fall of different centres, suggesting competition between them. Furthermore, it was during the LH IIIB period that important changes must have been introduced to the region after the destruction of Aghios Vasileios and the extension of the Menelaion complex. Therefore, one could suggest instead that the decrease of grave offerings during the LH IIIB period at Laconia was the result of the changing socio-economic climate that might have led to the movement of populations. Such movements would have consequently led to a reduction of burials and thus of associated grave goods, but they were not so drastic as to cause the abandonment of chamber tombs altogether.

By the LH IIIC Early period a number of sites in Laconia were abandoned, but at the same time, a short reoccupation period is seen at the Menelaion, Aghios Vasileios and Aghios Stephanos. It is still too early to discuss the re-occupation of Aghios Vasileios, but the available information indicates that

LH IIIB2/IIIC deposits are associated with Room 9 in Building A – a structure which likely was used for the storage of prestigious objects, such as weapons (Vasilogamvrou 2018: 138, 142-143). On the other hand, at the Menelaion all structures directly associated with the Mansions were abandoned in favour of the Aetos Hill. Thus, different re-occupation strategies can be observed during the post-palatial period: while at the Menelaion there was an intentional rejection of the socio-political system based on the Mansions, at Aghios Vasileios the re-occupation of areas of the former palatial structure indicates an effort by local communities to emphasise their connection with the systems represented by those buildings. The latter is a practice observed in other areas of Greece, but perhaps best exemplified at Tiryns, in the Argolid. At this site, a new structure – Building T – was erected over the ruins of the Great Megaron during the LH IIIC period. Furthermore, the throne room and the hypaethral altar in the Great Courts were also included in the new plan of the Upper Citadel (Maran 2011: 172-173). Scholars such as Maran propose that this was a tactic employed by post-palatial elites to gain legitimacy by associating themselves with the past, and thus establishing themselves as the true rulers (2011: 173-174, Maran and Papadimitriou 2020: 702-704). Given this apparent strategy at Tiryns, I could suggest that the complete abandonment of the Mansions at the Menelaion after the LH IIIB2 period indicates a lack of interest in the symbols of the past. This suggests that elites associated with these symbols either were no longer at the site, or did not have the resources to rebuild it. At Aghios Vasileios, however, the limited evidence points to an opposite strategy of emphasising the association with the palatial system.

The re-occupation of the Menelaion thus indicates important changes in the social organisation of the community. Additional changes are also suggested by the presence of HMBW vessels integrated with local wares in LH IIIB2/IIIC structures at the Aetos Hill, including the Aetos Stone Mound. Many studies dedicated to HMBW propose that the ware represents the settling of newcomers in Greece, most likely from the Adriatic region (Eder and Jung 2005: 485-493; Iacono 2009: 60-69; D'Agata *et al* 2012: 296-314). These findings could indicate that the newcomers were active participants in the post-palatial society established at the Menelaion. In order to better understand

the phenomenon, one can look at the evidence from other sites from the same period. At Tiryns, for example, studies show that HMBW vessels were found mostly concentrated in one area, separated from the local wares. Thus, it has been suggested that there was a rejection of HMBW vessels and their producers at Tiryns during the LH IIIC period (Stockhammer 2008: 286-289, 2011: 234-236). The evidence at the Menelaion seem to suggest the opposite, that this possible new group was integrated into the Mycenaean element of the society. Moreover, if the Aetos Stone Mound can be accepted as the remains of cult practices, the existence of HMBW vessels within it strongly suggests the participation of the newcomers in these practices.

Nonetheless, the re-occupation of the above-mentioned sites was short, and by the LH IIIC Middle, they were abandoned again. The reasons behind such a short re-occupation are not clear, especially since centres such as the Menelaion and Aghios Vasileios remained attractive to newcomers, such as the producers of HMBW. It is possible that changes to trade routes could have impacted these communities. Evidence of such changes can be seen, for example, at Epidaurus Limera. Even though the site is located on the coast, and had been occupied throughout the LH III period, imports were introduced for the first time after the so-called collapse during the LH IIIC Middle period. This influx of imports could have been the result of changing trade routes that now encompassed the eastern Peloponnese and thus Epidaurus Limera. Although the changes proved positive to Epidaurus Limera, other sites were likely to have lost their access and thus an important source of resources.

Another important development at the end of the LH III period was the establishment of the sanctuary at Amyklai. Many have referred to the sanctuary as an 'extra-urban' site, but as shown in section 3.2.5, Amyklai cannot be compared to other 'extra-urban' sanctuaries due to its proximity to a possible settlement during the LH III, period and to a cemetery during the Protogeometric period. Nonetheless, the sanctuary could still have become a place where, after the destructions of the LH IIIB2 period, scattered communities could congregate, considering its location in the middle of the Spartan plain and on the main route crossing Laconia.

A further indication of the origin of visitors to the sanctuary during this early stage can be suggested by one particular category of votives, wheeled bull figurines. As discussed in Chapter 2, these figurines are also found at Amyklai and in contexts dated to the LH IIIB period at Aghios Vasileios, and during the LH IIIB2/IIIC transition in the Aetos Stone Mound at the Menelaion. Thus, I could suggest that these figurines represent a common aspect of the cult practices of the communities of the Spartan plain between at least the LH IIIB and the SubMycenaean periods. Their dedication at the newly established sanctuary at Amyklai indicates that local Laconian communities continued to occupy the region and to visit the sanctuary. This is not to say, however, that the figurines reflect the continuity of cult practices from the palatial period, as will be discussed in detail below. It is important to highlight that similar activities to those observed at Amyklai could have been taking place at the Aetos Stone Mound at the Menelaion, as was suggested in Chapter 2. If this can be shown to be correct, it suggests that the open-air sanctuary phenomenon might have been more common in Laconia than previously thought.

## **5.2 The transition from the LBA to the EIA**

Evidence of the Submycenaean period at Laconia is still fairly limited, as shown in section 3.1. The only sites which continued to be used during the period were Asteri (Karousi), Epidaurus Limera, Peristeri, Anthochori, Amyklai and Pellana. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that, although there was a significant decrease in the number of sites during this period, Laconia was not completely depopulated. Evidence shows that chamber tombs such as those at Pellana, Peristeri and Epidaurus Limera continued to be visited, suggesting that multiple burials were still practised during the SubMycenaean period. Chamber tombs were eventually abandoned by the Protogeometric period, when single burials became the norm at Laconia and in most other areas of Greece. Consequently, those cemeteries were abandoned, with the exception of Pellana.

Cult practices, on the other hand, are observed at Amyklai during the SubMycenaean period. The most recent excavations strongly indicate that the site continued to be visited during this period. This is not to say, however, that the same belief system practised during the LBA continued unchanged into the beginning of the EIA. Studies have shown that, just as any other cultural practice, cult elements can be reshaped and given new meanings according to the context in which they are part of. Each generation recreates their practices according not only to what has passed on by the previous generation, but also as a response to the changing social and material environment (Sourvinou-Inwood 1989: 51-53; Haysom 2020: 340-341). Some of the objects offered at the sanctuary, however, suggest that local groups continued to visit the site. As discussed above, wheelmade bull figurines dated to the LH IIIB and LH IIIC period were found at Aghios Vasileios and at the Menelaion. Examples of such figurines were dedicated at Amyklai, a practice which continued into the SubMycenaean period. Local visitors are also suggested by the pottery found at the sanctuary: a small number of examples can be dated to the SubMycenaean period, which derive from the local LH IIIC shapes and decorations, as was seen in Chapter 4.

### 5.3 The Early Iron Age

A total of seventeen sites from the Protogeometric and Geometric periods were identified in this analysis, an increase of 325% from the previous SubMycenaean period.<sup>187</sup> Most sites are located in the Spartan and Helos plains, while Cape Malea seems to have been completely abandoned. However, a recent survey at Pavlopetri suggests that the site was occupied during at least the Protogeometric period. Thus, one should not dismiss the possibility that other sites from the period might yet be discovered. Unfortunately, only Sparta and Amyklai could be analysed in detail due to the lack of evidence in Laconia from the SubMycenaean period. Publication of the data from Pellana

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<sup>187</sup> For the description of the sites and associated bibliography see Appendix 1.

is problematic, unfortunately, and does not allow for an in-depth analysis. Yet, the site is likely to have been an important centre throughout the LBA and EIA periods. For instance, the site's location was advantageous, especially during the EIA. Because of its location in northern of Laconia, Pellana would have had easy access to sites in the Eurotas river valley, such as Sparta and Amyklai, as well as sites in Arcadia, such as the sanctuaries at Tegea and Mt. Lykaion. An investigation of the pottery and other objects from the site is sure to reveal connections between Pellana and other regions, such as the Argolid.

At Sparta, rescue excavations indicate small pockets of occupation during the LH IIIA to LH IIIC periods. Yet, it is only during the Protogeometric period that a more significant occupation can be verified. Occupation is suggested by clusters of single burials in pits and cist tombs, which reveal a lack of a standardized burial practice. The distribution of graves throughout modern Sparta suggests that communities were organised in scattered hamlets, and it is unlikely that there was any form of centralised political organisation. Furthermore, burial practices do not seem to reflect social differentiation, but rather kinship groups living in small hamlets. By the Geometric period, however, there is a qualitative and quantitative increase in grave offerings, mostly represented by ceramics and metal objects. Although one cannot assume that this rise can be equated with the increase in wealth, it is clear that there was now the desire to demonstrate status through burial practices, which suggests in turn the presence of some form of social stratification. The phenomenon becomes particularly clear during the Late Geometric period, in burials B25 and B29, which contained an array of metal grave goods including bronze rings, spirals and pins, an iron sword and three knives.<sup>188</sup>

Burial practices from the EIA at Sparta also suggest that the groups which settled at the site during the Protogeometric period continued to inhabit the same hamlets during the Geometric period. As was seen in Chapter 3, graves dated to the Protogeometric period were distributed in small groups throughout Sparta, most likely associated with hamlets or households, a pattern which indicates the

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<sup>188</sup> For details see table 3.1, in Appendix 2.

area was occupied by different kinship groups. By the Geometric period, other burials were added to the same clusters; and interestingly, each cluster contained examples of the same burial practices as those from the Protogeometric period. In other words, the same burial practices were clustered in the same place throughout the Protogeometric and Geometric periods in Sparta. I propose that the evidence points to the settlement of different kinship groups in Sparta, groups which continued to define their identity through their own particular burial practices during the EIA.

The cemetery at Sklavochori, however, indicates a different type of social organisation during the Protogeometric period. Instead of clusters of burials, individuals were interred within the same area, thus constituting an organised cemetery. Cemeteries are locations set apart by a community for the burial of its members, and thus can reflect some form of centralised social organisation, unlike Sparta. Why the Sklavochori community was organised differently to Sparta is unclear, however the proximity of the former to the sanctuary at Amyklai could help to clarify these differences. By the time the cemetery at Sklavochori was established during the Protogeometric period, the sanctuary was likely to have been active for at least five generations and served a significant number of visitors, as suggested by the deposits of the period. The daily management, as well as that of important events, would have necessitated the presence of groups in the vicinity of the sanctuary. The community represented at the cemetery at Sklavochori could have been attracted to the region by the sanctuary and were likely to have supplied the workforce responsible for its management. Thus, the sanctuary could have acted as a conduit for a more centralised form of social organisation. In the case of Sparta, the sanctuaries of Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos were established at some point during Protogeometric period, but evidence of a substantial number of visitors can be observed only during the Geometric period. It is likely then that the Spartan sanctuaries were established after the arrival of the Spartan kinship groups represented by the Protogeometric burials, unlike Amyklai and Sklavochori.

Nevertheless, the fact that sanctuaries were established within settlements during the Protogeometric period at Sparta is unusual, and is a phenomenon that cannot be observed in other areas of Greece. Petersson suggested that the Spartan sanctuaries were controlled by the elites, including those believed to eventually become the Spartan royal families, the Agiadae and the Euryontidae. Moreover, he interpreted the Spartan Protogeometric and Geometric burials as evidence of these families living in close proximity to the cult they had established (Petersson 1992: 109-110). The sanctuaries of Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos could certainly have served different groups, which would explain the establishment of two sanctuaries at the same time. However, there are some aspects of his interpretation that should be reviewed. First, identifying these 'elite groups' is very problematic, since the evidence from the graves cannot support the notion of a ranked society. There are very few, and in most cases, no grave offerings included in these burials. Second, there are no burials associated with the sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos, or even in the area which would later become the Spartan acropolis – an area of Sparta which has been well explored by archaeological excavations.

Another interpretation of the function of the Spartan sanctuaries has been suggested by Cartledge. The scholar argues that the sanctuaries acted as literal and metaphysical borders, borders that during the Archaic period were used to mark the limits between the countryside and the centre; and consequently, the Spartans from the *perioikoi*. It is possible that during a later period the sanctuaries had this function, but one cannot say that they were first established with this purpose (1998: 39-47). Firstly, it is very unlikely that the territory of the city of Sparta had already been demarcated during the Protogeometric period. As shown in the discussion in section 3.2.3.1, kinship groups occupied the area at the time of the establishment of the sanctuaries. Burial practices strongly indicate that kinship identities were emphasised, rather than a common Spartan identity. Therefore, it is unlikely that these communities would have seen themselves as belonging to a common city with established boundaries. Instead, I suggest that these sanctuaries had a similar role as that observed at Amyklai. The finds associated with Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos indicate that practices

were based on communal feasting. Furthermore, Artemis Orthia is located on a main route, which would have connected sites in the Spartan plain. They likely provided an arena where different groups could come together and organise exchanges, marriages, and so on. By the Geometric period, however, differences between practices at Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos become more accentuated, suggesting that they might have acquired more defined functions. At Artemis Orthia, for instance, Near Eastern and possibly Cretan objects were dedicated during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, while at Athena Chalkioikos bronze tripods were introduced.

Further evidence regarding the ritual practices at these sanctuaries is available from other dedications, such as pins and miniature spindle whorls. Pins are usually found in sanctuaries dedicated to goddesses (Strøm 1995: 78; Voyatzis 2014b: 468, 527); thus it is not surprising that a large number of these objects were discovered at Artemis Orthia, and almost none at Amyklai. Their numbers indicate that at least since the Geometric period Artemis Orthia was associated with a goddess. At Amyklai, however, excavations have revealed the offering of miniature spindle whorls. As a weaving tool, scholars believe they are associated with women dedicators, since they were the ones most likely involved in textile production during this period. Furthermore, their presence at Amyklai could suggest that the practice of weaving and offering a chiton to Apollo, attested in the later literary sources, was already in place (e.g Paus. 3.16.2).

It is clear that sanctuaries had a pivotal role in the development of the Spartan and possibly Laconian EIA society. In addition, evidence suggests that sanctuaries in general might have constituted important networks throughout Greece. For instance, Laconian Protogeometric pottery was distributed in the Arcadian sanctuaries at Tegea and Mt. Lykaion, indicating close contacts between Laconia and Arcadia during the period. During the Geometric period, contacts with other sanctuaries are evidenced by the deposition of bronze tripods at Amyklai and Athena Chalkioikos. Although tripods can be shown to have been dedicated at Olympia since the end of 11<sup>th</sup> century BC and the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC, it was only during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC that they became popular votives in a

limited number of sanctuaries. Kinderlen has proposed that these sanctuaries should then be considered focal points of elite interactions, where regional and supra-regional networks were formed (Kinderlen 2010 93-97). Thus, I suggest that the sanctuaries at Amyklai and Athena Chalkioikos, in Sparta, participated in such networks. Further evidence is also observed in the production of Laconian bronze horse figurines specifically for Olympia and in the introduction of influences, especially from Attica and the Argolid during the Late Geometric period, to the Laconian ceramic production.

## **5.4 Connections with Greece, the Aegean and the Mediterranean**

This dissertation has emphasised at many points the connections between Laconia and other regions of the Aegean and the Mediterranean throughout the LBA and EIA. During the LH IIIC period, contacts are shown mostly through influences over the local ceramic production, particularly from the Argolid, Attica (especially Perati) and Rhodes. It was also during this period that new trade routes by the sea were established, as a result of destruction in sites not only in Greece, but also in many areas of the Near East, including Anatolia and the Levant; and the weakening of Egypt (Knapp and Manning 2016: 126-128; Murray 2017: 255-258; Manolova 2020: 1195-1201; Schachner 2020: 1108-1113). Consequently, travel routes were disrupted and/or abandoned and changed to accommodate the new political landscape. New routes seem to have favoured sea travelling, as demonstrated by the flourishing of coastal sites such as Perati, Lefkandi and Epidauros Limera (Crielaard 2006: 277-281; Tartaron 2013: 22-29; Murray 2017: 255-256; Nakassis 2020: 283). As was seen in Chapters 3 and 4, imported stirrup jars from the Argolid and Crete first appeared as offerings during the LH IIIC Middle period at Epidauros Limera, with their number doubling during the LH IIIC Late period. The shape and decoration of these jars from the Argolid find close parallels with examples from the LH IIIC Middle and Late at Asine. Further parallels with Asine can be observed on Laconian jugs (Jg9, Jg13 and Jg19) and a lekythos (Le1) from the LH IIIC Late period. These examples strongly suggest that the route that encompassed Laconia, most likely through Epidauros Limera, included Asine. During the LH IIIC period,

Asine was undergoing a phase of prosperity and, unlike other sites in the Argolid such as Mycenae, Midea and Tiryns, continued to be occupied throughout the LH IIIC period (Penttinen 1996: 165-166; Mühlénbruch 2013: 304-309; Maran and Papadimitriou 2020: 704-705). Moreover, its location by the sea would have given the site access to the new travel and exchange routes that were now established (Penttinen 1996: 165-166; Sjöberg 2004: 42).

Contacts between Laconia and Crete, on the other hand, can be shown to have been established at least since 1500 BC, but particularly during the LH IIIA2 period. During this period, a number of vessels from Aghios Stephanos shows features which can be characterised as 'hybrids' of Minoan and Mycenaean types. Exchanges were likely to have been intermediated by the island of Kythera, a stopping point in the route from Crete to the Peloponnese. The route, however, was dissolved with the destruction taking place at Crete during the LM IIIA2 period and the abandonment of Kythera (Hatzaki and Kotsonas 2020: 1032-1034). Moreover, the destruction of the palatial site at Ano Englianos and the consequent depopulation of Messenia, a region with close connections with Crete and especially Knossos, was likely to have further necessitated the creation of new trade routes (Rutter 2003: 194-201; 2005: 21-44). Nonetheless, contacts between Laconia and Crete were revived during the LH IIIC period, as shown by the imported stirrup jars at Epidauros Limera and the use of Minoan motifs in collar-necked jars and straight-sided alabastra. It is unclear what would have attracted Cretans to Laconia during this period, seeing that there is no further evidence of the use of *Lapis lacedaemonius* on the island. However, traders could have been attracted to the copper and lead sources located near the site, in Sykia and Molaoi (Janko 2008: 555). Lastly, one could suggest that Epidauros Limera was a convenient stopping point between Crete and the northern Peloponnese.

Influences from Rhodes on Laconia LH IIIC pottery have also been identified in the analysis in Chapter 4. For instance, several vase shapes such as kylikes, amphoriskoi and bowls find close parallels at Rhodes. Studies have shown that Rhodes became an important centre in the trade networks established during the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. Connections can be observed, for instance, between the island

and Perati and Naxos, as was noted by Thomatos in her study of the ceramics of the period (2007: 318-321). Moreover, Rhodes sees the introduction of a high number of Cypriot imports, suggesting that the former could have been a link between the Near East and the Aegean world (Coldstream 2003: 343; Marketou 2009: 50-51, 2012: 779-788).

The LH IIIC ceramics from Laconia, therefore, clearly indicate that the region was a participant in the trade networks established after the collapse of the palatial system in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. But how the Laconians would have participated in such networks is unclear. Were there direct contacts between Laconia, Crete or Rhodes, for instance? Discussions regarding LH IIIC connections usually highlight the role of Cyprus. The island became markedly active in these networks during this period, as is suggested by the significant increase in the number of Cypriot objects throughout the Aegean (Sherratt 2003: 42-48; Georgiou and Iacovou 2020: 1138-1151). Furthermore, Cyprus is in close proximity to the Near East, and thus would have had access to goods from the region. These goods could then have been carried by Cypriot ships to Rhodes or Crete and perhaps even further. Glimpses of the extent of the Cypriot networks are provided by a number of exciting wreck discoveries from the LBA. The wrecks located at Point Iria and Modi, for instance, were found to contain Cypriot goods, including mostly copper and ceramics (Murray 2017: 258; Bachhuber 2020: 1098-1099). Thus, it is possible that imports from Crete and influences from Rhodes were carried on Cypriot ships to Epidaurus Limera. If this was the case, however, one would expect to find Cypriot artefacts at the site as well. Yet, none have been discovered so far. Another possibility is that Cretans were responsible for bringing their vases to Laconia. It is feasible to propose a route from Crete to Attica via Epidaurus Limera, seeing the intensification of contacts between the former and Crete during the LH IIIB period (Rutter 2005: 27).

Yet another possibility is that imports were introduced at Epidaurus Limera through traders engaged in tramping. Tramping, first highlighted by Braudel, consists of a type of trade based on slow-motion shipping between closely spaced ports, operating along the coast where ships make a

succession of trades throughout the route. The wreck located at Point Iria, in the Gulf of Argos, for instance, has been suggested to exemplify such a trading strategy. The ship contained an array of ceramic vessels dated to LH IIIB2, including Cypriot pithoi, jugs and juglets, Cretan stirrup jars and kraters, bowls, and storage and stirrup jars from the Greek mainland (Bachhuber 2020: 1098). A similar wreck was discovered in the Saronic Gulf off the islet of Modi. The ship contained ceramic vessels only dated to the LH IIIB/IIIC period, which find good parallels to examples from Pylos and Salamis. But at least two pithoi can be shown to have originated from Cyprus (Argouridis 2011: 25-34; Bachhuber 2020: 1098-1099). Furthermore, tramping activity in the Laconian coast during the LH IIIC period could explain the small number of Laconian vessels distributed in the Aegean, particularly Sj14 and Sj15, from Palaia Epidauros (Argolid) and Kamini (Naxos), respectively.

By the Protogeometric period, connections were maintained between Laconia and other areas of Greece only. Particularly notable is the presence of Laconian Protogeometric vessels at the sanctuaries at Tegea and Mt. Lykaion, in Arcadia. Moreover, a small number of shapes were also found among all occupation levels at Asine. The Laconian style itself, as discussed in Chapter 4, was mostly based on regional preferences, but influences from contemporary Argive and Attic styles can also be recognised. Many, however, have emphasised that the Protogeometric style at Laconia has some parallels in shapes and decoration with other areas of the Aegean, especially the so-called 'Western' *koine*. Yet, as shown in the discussion in Chapter 4, there are very few similarities between the Laconian style and that of the *koine*.

An interesting aspect of Laconian Protogeometric pottery is its long duration in comparison with other regions, such as Attica and the Argolid. According to Coldstream, during the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC the style could be characterised as a 'still retarded Protogeometric style' (2003: 62), and that it was the result of 'geographical isolation, insecurity and a low level of technology' which changed only with the 're-establishment of communication by land and sea' (2002: 94). Yet, this dissertation has shown that Laconians were aware of trends occurring outside the region throughout the Protogeometric

period. Jg70, for instance, is monochrome with a decorative band on the shoulders which contains double wavy lines, a decorative syntax popular in the Argolid and Attica during the Late Protogeometric period. A reserved band on the interior of skyphoi is another feature which is seen throughout the Protogeometric period in the Aegean as well as in Laconia. Furthermore, around the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, during the SubProtogeometric in Laconia, motifs from Attica can be observed in typical Laconian syntaxes, such as meanders with diagonal hatching, horizontal lozenges chains and steep single zigzags. Lastly, preliminary reports from the most recent excavations at Amyklai indicate that vessels from the Early Protogeometric period show strong similarities to the Attic and Argive assemblages (Vlachou 2015: 116-120, 2018: 105-109).

Thus, the 'long' Protogeometric period in Laconia cannot be explained because of its isolation. Instead, one can suggest that choices regarding the inclusion or exclusion of decorative schemes and shapes from other regions were deliberate. Studies of cultural contacts and consumption practices emphasise that the adoption of foreign material culture is the result of a 'process of creative appropriation, transformation, and manipulation played out by individuals and social groups' (Dietler 2010: 55). In other words, which pottery shapes were used and how they were decorated was a conscious process based on the needs of the community that used them, and not based on their popularity elsewhere. Unlike the Mycenaean period, groups of the Protogeometric period did not share political systems (e.g. palatial administration) or perhaps even cult practices. And scholars agree that the notion of a Greek identity was not realised at least until the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Hall 1997: 41-51; Malkin 2003: 56-74). These communities shared their Mycenaean past, but after that time they developed according to their own circumstances, a fact that is reflected in the regionalism of burial practices and pottery styles characteristic of the EIA in Greece.

Nevertheless, by the Late Geometric period external influences became conspicuous in the Laconian ceramic style, especially those from Attica, Corinth and the Argolid. It suggests that changes were introduced to Laconian communities, changes that resulted in a more intense adoption of styles

from other regions. On the whole, the evidence gathered in this dissertation suggests that these changes could have resulted from the rise of sanctuaries throughout Greece. In general, the archaeological record indicates an intensification of contacts throughout the Geometric period. Euboeans, for instance, can be shown to have had connections with the Eastern Mediterranean at least since the Early Protogeometric period, as evidenced by objects from Lefkandi (Popham *et al* 1980: 217-264). The distribution of Euboean pottery throughout the Near East indicates that these connections were intensified during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, as it has been found along the coasts on all sides of the Aegean (Desœudres 2005: 3-8; Sherratt 2020: 198-200). In the Argolid, Argos came to the fore, and its late 10<sup>th</sup> century ceramics suggest contacts with Crete, the Dodecanese and Cyprus. By the Middle Geometric period, Argive metalwork was distributed in sanctuaries outside the Argolid, including Tegea and Perachora (Morgan and Whitelaw 1991: 86-93; Maran and Papadimitriou 2020: 706-708). The Athenian ceramics, on the other hand, became widely distributed from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, with the highest peak during the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Alexandridou 2020: 752-753). Therefore, one could suggest that such influences were felt at Laconia after an intensification of contacts throughout Greece during the Geometric period.

In the case of Laconia, constant contacts were likely to have taken place at sanctuaries such as Olympia. Laconians seem to have particularly enjoyed the festivities at this site, as demonstrated by the almost exclusive production of bronze horse figurines for dedication at the site. Furthermore, imported votive offerings at Amyklai dated to the Geometric period could also indicate the presence at the sanctuary of visitors from other regions. Therefore, I suggest that the increase of contacts observed throughout Greece during the Geometric period, bolstered by the establishment of sanctuaries, would have created the interest for Laconian groups to imitate other ceramic styles more closely.

## 5.5 Further research

The study of the LBA and EIA periods in Laconia has been greatly advanced by the most recent discoveries at Amyklai and Aghios Vasileios. However, it is only the full publication of these excavations which will allow for an understanding of these sites and their overall role in Laconia. Nevertheless, until then, there are other areas in which further research can help to better illuminate the development of this somewhat enigmatic region.

First, a re-assessment of the pottery assemblage from the EIA period from collections in Greece is now necessary. Unfortunately this dissertation could not include such an assessment, mostly due to the Covid-19 restrictions at the time the research was conducted. At the same time, an in-depth analysis of the material from Pellana is also needed. As has been mentioned many times throughout this dissertation, excavation results have not been fully published, leaving important gaps in knowledge of the role of the site throughout the LBA and EIA. It would be particularly interesting to analyse any possible connections between Pellana and other regions which seemed to have influenced Laconia, such as the Argolid.

Second, another topic mentioned in this dissertation was the presence of Laconian Protogeometric vessels at sanctuaries in Arcadia. During the analysis, it became apparent that there are clear differences between the assemblages of these sanctuaries and those from Laconia. A thorough comparison would surely further illuminate the connection between Laconia and Arcadia, and the cult practices taking place during the EIA.

Third, the surveys in Chapters 2 and 3 have shown that more comparisons between areas of Greece are needed in order to understand how and if they were connected. The analysis of the Laconian LH IIIC pottery, for instance, has shown possible connections between the region and Rhodes. Furthermore, there still seems to be an insistence on the part of some scholars on comparing pottery assemblages from other areas of Greece to the more extensive collections from Athens and

the Argolid. In the case of Laconia, for instance, the 'lack' of features from these areas in the local ceramic production throughout much of the EIA has led many to conclude that the region was isolated or backward. Instead, I propose that the Laconians were aware of these trends but chose not to include them in their own production. This type of investigation requires a focus on consumption practices and local interests which will shed further light on the relationship between Laconia and the rest of Greece.

Lastly, it has become clear that the lack of systematic and extensive surveys in Laconia has hindered the study of the region. The development of the Laconian socio-political landscape, for instance, could be further explored if the full extent of occupation could be determined. Furthermore, an estimate of the size of sites through time would indicate settlement patterns as well as site hierarchies - and thus the extent of the influence of the Laconian centres. A survey of Laconia would also provide a much-needed, updated analysis of the topography, geology and vegetation of Laconia and thus help to highlight possible land use and resources.

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