Discussions in Mycenaean Archaeology

(SOCIAL) PLACE AND SPACE IN EARLY MYCENAEAN GREECE

Conference organised by
the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology
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ABSTRACTS
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The Hellenic Government-Karakas Foundation Professorship in Greek Studies, University of Missouri-St. Louis
# PROGRAM

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5TH

**KEYNOTE LECTURE** by J. C. Wright

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6TH

**TRIPHYLIA AND THE IONIAN ISLANDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Eder / G. Hatzi-Spiliopoulou / B. Horejs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chr. de Vree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Huber / G. Kordatzaki / E. Kriatzi / H. Mommsen</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Nikolentzos / P. Moutzouridis</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. van Wijngaarden</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MESSENIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.-V. Karapanagiotou / D. Kosmopoulos / S. R. Stocker /</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Davis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Vitale / S. R. Stocker / E. Malapani</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Egan</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. M. A. Murphy</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Zavadil</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Vlachopoulos</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Cosmopoulos</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7TH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V. Petrakis</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LAKONIA AND KYTHERA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Vasilogamvrou / E. Kardamaki</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LAKONIA AND KYTHERA continued

S. Voutsaki / V. Hachtmann / I. Moutafi
E. Kiriatzi / C. Broodbank

ACHAEA AND THE NORTHERN PELOPONNESE

L. Papazoglou-Manioudaki / K. Paschalidis
P. Pavůk

ARKADIA

E. Salavoura

ARGOLID

S. Voutsaki
A. Philippa-Touchais / G. Touchais
St. Keramidas / S. Spiropoulou / A. Vassilopoulou
E. Konstantinidi-Syvridi

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8TH

AEGINA

W. Gauß

GENERAL ASPECTS

O. Dickinson
J. Rutter
J. Weihartner
Y. Galanakis

CONTACT INFORMATION OF SPEAKERS AND AUTHORS  36–40
James C. Wright

EARLY MYCENAEAN GREECE: WHAT WE STILL DON’T KNOW

Recent focus of research on the Middle Helladic Period, publications of important sites such as Ayios Stefanos, the Menelaion, and the Aspis of Argos, and renewed excavations at such important places as Pylos, Kakovatos, and Aigina, to name only a few, have much added to our understanding of the formation of what we label Mycenaean civilization. There remain, however, major unanswered questions. These range from the reasons for the founding of new settlements to the nature of contacts between the emergent Mycenaean and their peers among the islands, on Crete, and elsewhere. The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion at this conference about the lacunae in our knowledge so as to orient research towards filling the gaps in our understanding.
Kakovatos is mainly known for its three large and richly furnished tholos tombs that rival the wealthiest burials of their time on the Greek Mainland. New research in Kakovatos revealed the remains of a building complex of the Early Mycenaean period on the so-called acropolis. Excavations of the site by Wilhelm Dörpfeld in 1907–08 had remained more or less unpublished. The recent fieldwork offered the rare opportunity to explore an Early Mycenaean habitation site together with the group of associated tombs. The integration of data from neighboring sites allows studying the development of Kakovatos in the regional context of Triphylia.

The stratigraphy of the excavated building complex provides valuable information about the history of the site in the Early Mycenaean period, when places of regional prominence emerged in the Peloponnese. A rebuilding of an earlier architectural phase took place in LH IIB, and towards the end of this phase the architectural complex was destroyed. Just as the tombs stood out by their size, expenditure in terms of construction and wealth of grave offerings among the tombs of the region, the building complex on the Acropolis hill was set apart spatially, clearly visible above the Triphylian plain. We can recognize this as one of the strategies of Early Mycenaean elites to elevate themselves symbolically, socially, economically, politically and spatially above the rest of the population.
Christine de Vree

THE THOLOS TOMBS OF KAKOVATOS – THEIR PLACE IN EARLY MYCENAEAN GREECE

The Mycenaean tholos tombs at Kakovatos in the western Peloponnese, which were excavated by Wilhelm Dörpfeld in 1907–1908, belong to the largest of their time (LH I–II). Even though they were looted, they still contained a large amount of highly valuable objects. These include weapons, bronze and silver vessels, jewellery of different materials and seals, ivory objects and a large number of palatial style amphorae (22). Parallels come from various richly furnished tombs from all over the Greek mainland. All these similarities indicate the existence of certain rules concerning the variation and combination of grave goods. In her investigation of the Shaft Graves of Mycenae and the younger so-called Warrior Tombs of Knossos Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier has demonstrated that the various sets of grave goods served a hierarchy of social distinction. It will be argued that this general pattern may be valid also for other Early Mycenaean regions.

Some items distinguish very few sites only (Mycenae, Dendra, Kakovatos, Pylos, Peristeria, Thorikos, Thebes and Volos-Kapakli). Imports from the Near East as well as from Europe represent specific types of jewellery (of amber, agate and glass), while cheek pieces of horse harnesses, bone disks or buttons with the design of the “karpatenländisch-ostmediterrane Wellenbandornamentik” are closely related to the privilege of chariot driving. It is argued that foreign necklaces and collars as well as horse harnesses were part of a set of status symbols that were used by a small group of peers across the Greek Mainland. This contribution will focus on the place of Kakovatos within the network of Early Mycenaean sites on the Greek Mainland.
Jasmin Huber / Georgia Kordatzaki / Evangelia Kiriatzi / Hans Mommsen

CONSUMING LOCAL AND IMPORTED POTS AT KAKOVATOS: REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL CONNECTIONS

The building complex at the Acropolis plateau and the three adjacent, richly furnished tholos tombs attest to the existence of an elite group at the site of Kakovatos during Early Mycenaean times. The tombs that contained among other precious finds elaborated palatial-style amphorae and oval-mouthed amphorae, verify the presence of a powerful social group operating there during this transformative period, when major social changes took place throughout the Peloponnese with the emergence of political and social hierarchies.

An integrated project combining archaeological and scientific data is carried out concerning both the finer and coarser pottery from Kakovatos in order to shed light on issues of pottery production and supply. Petrographic data combined with refiring tests and Neutron Activation Analysis are associated tightly with the typological and stylistic analysis of the pottery. The assemblage under study concerns plain and decorated ceramics found at the settlement and the tholoi, including the palatial-style and the oval-mouthed amphorae, often associated with elite groups.

The current study focusing on the characterisation of the local potting tradition and the identification of potential imports investigates aspects of pottery production, consumption and supply. It constitutes a first effort to explore the local, intraregional and interregional dynamics affecting social transformations in this part of the Peloponnese and neighbouring and more distant areas. The preliminary results suggest a rather intricate pattern of supply and consumption and a cosmopolitan lifestyle with local and imported pots combined in different activities, such as drinking but also cooking. Based on the variety of imported pots, it seems that there were wide connections and access to regional and long-distance networks and intensive circulation between Northern Triphylia and other parts of Peloponnese, as well as between the site and the central, south and southeast Aegean.
The archeological site of “Kleidi” (this word means key) at Samiko is located between the sandy beach of the Ionian Sea at the Gulf of Kyparissia and the Mount Lapithas, essentially monitoring the land "pathway" from the northwest to the southwest Peloponnese. Its strategic location has resulted in the continuous habitation of the site from the Middle Bronze Age up to the years of Ottoman rule. The Hellenistic fortification of the so-called Samiko Acropolis, just opposite of the prehistoric burial and residential contexts, described by Strabo and Pausanias, testifies once again to the importance of the region.

This contribution attempts to reconsider the outcomes of the old and recent excavations, held in the area. The archaeological research lasting over a century started by Wilhelm Dörpfeld in the early 20th century. In 2007 the authors of the present paper carried out a salvage excavation of unfortunately short duration, trying to verify if there were stratified data, helping for an accurate dating of the domestic relics of the site.

Although the project for the overall publication of the findings, performed in cooperation with the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the OREA Institute, is at a very early stage, our presentation intends to examine the role and the “status” of Samiko within the so-called Mycenaean world and the kingdom of Pylos.

Moreover we would like to clarify the relations and the interconnections with other adjacent archaeological sites, such as Kakovatos, Epitalio, Makryssia, and Ancient Olympia.

The discussion of the historical topography, the burial and domestic architecture, the burial customs and the presentation of characteristic new finds, will help to create a clearer image about the timespan of the habitation of the site.
Due to the lack of good stratigraphic evidence, the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age are hard to separate in the Ionian Islands. There are several sites on Lefkada, Kefalonia and Zakynthos that have yielded material indicative of these periods, for example the tombs at Skaros and Nidri on Lefkada, and the cist tombs near Kokkolata on Kephalonia. Moreover, there is a scatter of surface finds on the Ionian Islands that indicate settlement during these periods. In this paper, I will explore the similarities and differences in ceramic materials among these sites on different scales. The analysis will start with the material from three sites explored during the Zakynthos Archaeology Project: Vasilikos-Kaloyeros, Vasilikos-Dorestes and Lithakia-Kamaroti. The MBA and Early Mycenaean material from these sites will be compared to discuss chronological and functional correlations. This will constitute the basis for a comparison with material elsewhere in the Ionian Islands and the nearby Peloponnesian coast, which will enable a discussion on possible contacts and emerging networks in the periods concerned.
During the period from 2011 to 2015 the Ephorate of Antiquities of Messenia (the former 38th EPKA) and the Directorate of Studies and Conduct of Technical Works in Museums and Cultural Buildings of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports carried out the following project: “Construction of New Protective Shelter at the Palace of Nestor, Ano Englianos, Messenia,” included in the priority axis “08- Sustainable Development and Quality of Life in Peloponnese” of the Regional Operational Programme “Western Greece, Peloponnese and Ionian Islands 2007–2013,” co-funded by the Hellenic Republic and the European Regional Development Fund.

The focus of this project was the construction of a new protective shelter over the Palace of Nestor, a much needed replacement for the original. Support columns for the new roof (16 in total, 8 to a side) had to be set into holes drilled into the bedrock to a depth of 15 m. In preparation, 16 areas around the perimeter of the Main Building were investigated in 2012–2013. These excavations have shed new light on the history of the site in Early Mycenaean times, including its architecture, wall-painting, and ceramics. In this presentation we describe the course of the excavations and provide an overview of results. In papers that follow, Salvatore Vitale, Sharon Stocker, and Litsa Malapani discuss an important new LH II deposit, and Emily Egan presents new evidence for wall-painting in LH I–IIIA.
A NEW LATE HELLENIC IIB POTTERY DEPOSIT FROM THE ANO ENGLIANOS RIDGE AT PYLOS IN WESTERN MESSENLIA

This paper presents the preliminary study of a recently excavated Late Helladic (LH) IIB pottery assemblage from the Ano Englianos ridge at Pylos in western Messenia. The deposit includes a group of mendable vessels from a pit NE of the later Palace and is of key importance for our understanding of Pylian ceramic developments for two reasons. First, its discovery fills a gap in the local sequence, as LH IIB pottery from Pylos was previously known exclusively from tombs. Second, the deposit reveals significant information on pottery consumption trends in the Pylian area at the crucial transition from the early to the late formative stage of Mycenaean Palatial society.

Our analysis identified four significant features: (a) The simultaneous occurrence of Messenian-, Mycenaean-, and Minoan-type shapes; (b) The high proportion of unpainted ceramics; (c) The prominence of eating and drinking vessels, including oversized specimens; and (d) The occurrence of diminutive vessels.

These features equate to four of the six criteria considered indicative of feasting assemblages, suggesting that the pit deposit under discussion may represent the earliest evidence for this specific type of activity in the area of the later Palace. In addition, the occurrence of shapes originating from three different traditions implies the transcultural character of pottery consumption preferences during LH IIB and sheds new light on the socio-cultural process that led to the formation of the local ceramic repertoire found in the destruction deposits of the final Mycenaean Palace.
Emily Egan

**EARLY MYCENAEAN WALL PAINTINGS FROM THE PALACE OF NESTOR**

Twentieth century excavations by Carl Blegen and Marion Rawson at the Palace of Nestor at Pylos produced a vast corpus of wall painting fragments belonging to the final phase of decoration at the site. The simultaneous discovery of deposits of painted plaster in extramural dumps and intramural construction debris, however, indicated the existence of earlier decorative programs. The date of such prior programs has long been a subject of debate. Today, we can begin to resolve this issue using new information provided by the recent roof excavations, which uncovered painted plaster fragments in securely datable Early Mycenaean contexts. These fragments, which feature monochrome as well as geometric and figural decoration, help to refine our understanding of the early stylistic, iconographic, and technological development of the art of wall painting at Pylos. This paper presents an overview of the newly recovered early material and discusses its character in comparison with, and in opposition to, concurrent developments elsewhere on the Greek mainland, on Crete, and in the Cyclades.
During late MH III/LH I the mortuary landscape of the area around Pylos changed dramatically with the construction of tholos tombs close to the site of the later palace. These early tholos tombs were followed by the construction of chamber tombs, also in close proximity to the palace. Cemeteries and tombs are widely acknowledged as common social strategies and areas of competition, but the specifics have not been as extensively explored of how these strategies might have been employed and might have affected particular communities. For example, how does the addition to the landscape of prominent and visible mortuary areas like the tholoi change the behavior and self-perceived social positions and roles of the generation that saw their construction, and how does that differ from the perception of those tholoi by later generations who had never known the landscape without them? Or how did a change in funerary architecture, such as the addition of chamber tombs at Pylos, impact the earlier strategy? This paper looks primarily at the evidence in the tombs excavated by Blegen around the palace of Nestor by examining their construction dates, the burials and the objects placed in them during MH III/LH I–II and contextualizes these tombs in the larger region. This paper also presents some of the problems inherent in these tombs: the small sample size, the difficulties of dating the small finds in the tombs, and the difficulty of connecting objects to human remains.
Already in the 2nd century BC Pausanias had mentioned in his *Description of Greece* besides the Lion Gate the graves of Agamemnon and his companions as well as those of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Moreover, since Heinrich Schliemann’s excavations at Mycenae in 1876 Greek Bronze Age tombs attract the attention not only of archaeologists and historians. Since then, interest has extended from burial sites of the elites also to less wealthy tombs as scholars got aware that graves are an important source for understanding developments in ancient societies. Especially in cultures where written records are absent or allow only a limited reconstruction of social hierarchies, the analysis of different aspects concerning burials and burial places allows us to make major contributions to this topic. Messenia with its rich Middle and Late Helladic mortuary landscape is especially suitable for studying the socio-political changes, which occurred not only at the transition from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age but also during the Mycenaean period itself. Whereas it is difficult to trace changes concerning social hierarchies during the earlier Middle Helladic period, the emergence of the Early Mycenaean elite(-s) can be observed not only with regard to the choice of the location of the tombs, but also with regard to the type of tomb chosen and the grave gifts provided.
Andreas G. Vlachopoulos

THE EARLY MYCENAEANS OF CHORA, PYLIA: THE EVIDENCE FROM THE CHAMBER TOMBS AT VOLIMIDIA

When S. Marinatos excavated the LH I‒II chamber tomb cemetery at Volimidia, among other sites in the region of Pylos (1955–1965), Messenia started to emerge as a prosperous and dynamic area of the Early Mycenaean world, with crucial contribution to the formation of the Helladic royal estates of the Peloponnese. The cemetery of Volimidia was founded in the transitional MH / LH I period, with its rock cut chambers belonging to the earliest examples of this type of tomb, probably as a result of connections of Southwestern Messinia with Kythera and, indirectly, with the Minoan culture. Even if the considerable amount of LH I‒II pots from Volimidia were found disconnected from their accompanying burials, these ceramics constitute the best preserved complex of Early Mycenaean pottery from Pylia. Their preliminary study documents a local production, which is consistent with the early Late Helladic repertoire, but also combines Cretan and Kytheran elements, which echo the cultural blend thanks to which the hegemonic “estate” of Pylos thrived, as the earlier tholoi of this region also testify.
Michael Cosmopoulous

THE MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE OF IKLAINA

The excavations of the Athens Archaeological Society at Iklaina have unearthed a major settlement that is usually identified with *a-put₂*, a district capital of the Mycenaean state of Pylos. One of the most striking features of the site is its administrative center, containing a number of monumental structures: a large Cyclopean Terrace supporting a (possibly two-storey) building with ashlar blocks, a second monumental building also with ashlar masonry (Building X), two paved roads, a paved piazza, and massive built stone drains. The presence of this kind of monumental architecture outside the traditionally defined "palaces", coupled with the unexpected discovery of a Linear B tablet, opens up a number of questions regarding the role that monumental architecture played in the processes of the emergence of social complexity during LH IIB–early LH IIIA2. These questions are discussed in the present paper, within the wider context of the formation and operation of the Mycenaean state of Pylos.
This paper aims to assess the evidence for the transformation of prestige expression in the Southwestern Peloponnese during the Early Mycenaean period (late Middle Helladic to Late Helladic II) with special attention on the shift from patterns of elite behavior observable throughout the Middle Helladic period in the Southwestern Peloponnese, especially the kind of prestige conveyed by the construction and maintenance of funerary tumuli. Discussion will focus primarily on the appearance of novel perceptions of monumentality in architecture, especially the early employment of cut masonry, as well as the emergence of various types of built burial space, and particularly the tholos form (arguably a local invention) and its association with the dramatic transformation of the funerary landscape of the region. These novelties that seem to appear in the Southwestern Peloponnese earlier in comparison to other regions need not have a single uniform explanation, as they might reflect cultural imports or local developments responding (or even contributing) to the formation of a new sociopolitical environment. Still, these were lasting innovations, shaping basic elements of a new monumental prestige vocabulary that made considerable impact in other regions of the Greek Mainland and contributed, especially from Late Helladic IIA onwards, to the formation of a supra-regional ‘Mycenaean’ elite identity. Finally, the adoption of what has been termed “wanax ideology” (evident by Late Helladic IIIB times, but plausibly associated with the formative stages of the palatial administrations on the Greek Mainland) and its relation to pre-palatial power structures will also be examined in the broader context of social and ideological change throughout the earlier part of the Late Bronze Age in the region.
Adamantia Vasilogamvrou / Elina Kardamaki

SOCIAL SPACE AT AYIOS VASILEIOS AND THE BUILDING PROGRAMS OF THE EARLY MYCENAEAN PERIOD IN LACONIA

The Early Mycenaean period reflects a cultural landscape of continuous transformation leading to major alterations of previous social and cultural environments. Despite the regional differences across the Peloponnese and central Greece there are common trajectories towards this process. The new discoveries at the palace at Ayios Vasileios promise to shed light on the formative period of the Early Mycenaean palatial culture. As the missing piece of an old puzzle, placed next to well known centres of major significance such as Vafio, Menelaion, Ayios Stephanos it may explain and reconstruct the emergence of a new form of social space in Laconia.

The way to understand such transformations is by defining the morphological traits of the (social) space in Laconia and, at a subsequent step, their symbolic/metaphoric values. Although research at Ayios Vasileios is at an initial stage, the new excavation provides evidence for: the introduction of new material culture (new cooking and drinking equipment), new architectural features (large terrace walls, monumental architecture), external contacts (Crete and Kythera at first place but also NE Peloponnese, East Aegean). These elements are amalgamated with a strong background of MH tradition represented by the Early Mycenaean cemetery (MH III–LH I). At the settlement two major architectural phases are recognizable, both represented by monumental structures dated to LH IIB and LH IIIA1. In the latter the focal point is a large court with stoa embracing two consecutive court-sides. A significant architectural feature is the construction of huge terrace walls uncovered in the southeast part of the excavated area which retained thick fills and were holding platforms. In connection to the Menelaion a common building strategy is revealed in an area with a radius of ca. 15 km. However, the new excavation at Ayios Vasileios strongly supports the hypothesis that such terraces existed already during LH IIB.

The above mentioned architectural features suggest the emergence of a new social context in Laconia. This is marked not only by the establishment
of new cultural characteristics (protopalatial organization) but also by high competition leading to changes in the building design process (Mansion 2 in Menelaion) possibly following destruction events. Such changes seem to occur in other regions as well (Nichoria, Iklaina) but only in the case of Mansion 2 are so striking. However, at Ayios Vasileios there is no evidence for significant changes in the orientation of the buildings of the LH IIB and LH IIIA1 architectural phases. This may suggest the leading position of the site as early as the LH IIB period.

The (social) space at Ayios Vasileios and Laconia is best seen against a background of constant transformation and external influences that gradually lead to the emergence of a centralized political system in the following LH IIIA2 period.
In this paper we would like to present some first observations on changing perceptions of space and shifting social relations in the site of Ayios Vasilios, Laconia, based on the excavation and study of the Early Mycenaean extramural cemetery of the site, the North Cemetery. Our aim is to investigate how space is harnessed in the process of creation of new cosmological and social divisions.

(i) Space and Place: We will examine the location of the cemetery in relation to the contemporary settlement and the local geomorphology. We will attempt to understand how place is imbued with meaning by examining the previous use of the cemetery area, the spatial organisation of the cemetery (location, depth and orientation of graves), as well as any evidence for human intervention and modifications of the cemetery area (removal and heaping of soil, use of the (natural) gravel layers, construction of walls and a platform).

(ii) Social structure: On the basis of a close contextual analysis of the mortuary practices (grave type, construction and design; treatment of the body and accompanying ritual; offerings) we will reconstruct the changing social relations, and in particular differentiation along age, gender, kinship and status.

Our observations on the North Cemetery will be placed in the context of the wider transformation of the mortuary practices at the very begin of the Mycenaean period (the introduction of formal cemeteries and new tomb types; the practice of re-use and secondary treatment; the deposition of wealth), while at the same time we will examine regional particularities and local responses.
Evangelia Kiriati / Cyprian Broodbank

KYTHERA’S SPACE AND PLACE IN THE SECOND PALACE PERIOD: EXPLORING THE ISLAND’S LANDSCAPE AND CONNECTIVITY

The impact of Crete on the societies and material culture of the Greek Mainland, particularly in relation to the emergence of elite groups during the Early Mycenaean period, has long been a focus of debate between proponents of indigenist versus interactionist models of Mainland dynamics. Kythera has obviously played an important role in this phenomenon not least because of its ‘place’ as a stepping stone between the two distinctive geographical and cultural areas, the Greek mainland in the north and Crete in the south. Old excavations at the coastal site of Kastri revealed a unique case of Minoanisation, both due to its early (starting) date and its intensity. The understanding of this phenomenon has been recently significantly enhanced through an intensive field survey that covered one third of the island, as well as through old and new excavations on peak sanctuaries. What becomes apparent, after ca. 2000 BC, is the exclusive presence of a Minoan-style culture and the lack of any contrastive local culture that renders Kythera effectively a part of Crete.

The intensive field survey has revealed during this time, a landscape with dispersed rural settlements and an extensive, multi-focal, semi-urban zone at coastal Kastri. The multidisciplinary study of these contrasting aspects of the island’s landscape provides a significant insight into local and regional dynamics. Spatial analysis combined with geoarchaeological investigations give a better understanding of settlement pattern development and agricultural regimes, while the stylistic and scientific/technological study of material culture remains (mainly pottery) provides unprecedented knowledge of the island’s craft traditions and their reproduction through time and across space under a strong Cretan influence. Such an approach to the island’s craft products makes even more meaningful the contextual study of their spatial distribution both among the numerous communities of the island, but also beyond it, among communities in the Peloponnese, shedding new light on consumer’s preferences and the social context of new practices.
Achaea, in the Northwest Peloponnese, belongs to the core of the Mycenaean world and in the Early Mycenaean period it goes through the same evolution processes. We witness settlement growth and the rise of local elites who manifest their status in stone built and richly furnished tombs, particularly in Western Achaea. Mygdalia was founded in the Shaft Graves era on a hill’s summit to the SE of the city of Patras, a naturally fortified site overlooking the fertile Patras plain and the sea. The settlement is built on three successive terraces, the lower terrace supported by a massive enclosure and retaining wall that seems to be part of initial planning. Substantial architectural remains of a large building, floor deposits of LH I and LH II date and evidence of local pottery production help us to understand this important and underrated period in Western Achaea. During the early centuries of Mygdalia, some children were buried underneath house walls, as if they had to sustain the site’s history. In the west slope a cemetery of built tombs, including an apsidal tomb and a tholos tomb, was located. The tholos tomb, already disturbed and plundered at the end of the Early Mycenaean period, was furnished with pottery that now finds parallels in settlement strata. This early floruit comes to an end at the beginning of the palatial period, as the destruction levels in the settlement and the plundering of the tholos tomb testify. Continuation of habitation during the palatial period, to our present knowledge, remains ambiguous and probably it was on a more modest scale. The settlement will thrive again in LH IIIC, the time of the warrior graves in Achaea.
Peter Pavůk

THE NORTHERN PELOPONNESE IN THE MH III–LH II PERIODS

The paper will attempt to summarize the evidence for the Final Middle and the Early Late Helladic periods on the northern Peloponnese, touching upon Korinthia but concentrating mainly on the Achaia and northern Elis. With pottery being the chronologically most sensitive and best published element of the relevant archaeological evidence, the paper will concentrate especially on the definition of the local ceramic sequence as opposed to the newly arriving Mycenaean style. The funerary evidence, as well as the scarce architectural evidence, will also be discussed. All of the mentioned will be evaluated through the lens of the Central Greek evidence and it will be demonstrated how very much similar any social and cultural processes in both areas must have been, at least in this period. In doing so, it will be attempted to place the local development in a broader context and to illustrate how clearly different from the rest of the peninsula the Northwestern Peloponnese was, with Korinthia being more interlinked with the rising new power center at Mycenae but still keeping some distinctiveness. The spread of Mycenaean elements towards the Northwestern Peloponnese and Central Greece will be juxtaposed and the meaning behind it discussed.
Eleni Salavoura

EARLY MYCENAEAN ARKADIA: SPACE AND PLACE(S) OF AN INLAND AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

The concept of space is an abstract and sometimes a conventional term, but place – as a space where people dwell, (inter)act and gain experiences – contributes decisively to the formation of the main characteristics and the identity of its residents. Arkadia, in the heart of the Peloponnese, is a landlocked country, with small valleys and basins surrounded by high mountains, which according to the ancient literature offered to its inhabitants a hard and laborious life. Its rough terrain, made always Arkadia a less attractive area for archaeological investigation. Few excavations have been carried out, fewer have been published. However, due to its position in the centre of the Peloponnese, Arkadia is an inevitable passage for anyone moving along or across the peninsula. The long life of small and medium agrarian communities undoubtedly owes much to their foundation at key points, connecting the mainland with the Peloponnesian coast, than to the potential for economic growth which the land provided. However sites such as Analipsis, on its ESE borders, the cemetery at Palaiokastro and the ash altar on Mt Lykaion, both in WSW part of Arkadia, indicate that the area had a distant past, and raise many new questions. In this paper I discuss the role of Arkadia in Early Mycenaean times based on the settlement pattern and on excavations’ data, and I investigate the relation of these inland communities with other high-ranking central places. In other words, this is an attempt to put place(s) into space, supporting that the central region of the Peloponnese was a separate, but not isolated part of it, comprising regions that are also diversified between each other.
Sofia Voutsaki

SOCIAL CHANGE AND HUMAN AGENCY: THE ARGOLID AT THE ONSET OF THE MYCENAEAN ERA

The southern mainland undergoes a pervasive transformation at the onset of the Mycenaean era: The period sees the introduction of new sumptuary practices, the emergence of elites and regional centres, the redefinition of personal identities and social relations, and a new receptivity to external influences. It is widely acknowledged that the Argolid, and the site of Mycenae in particular, play a leading role in this process. While this is undoubtedly true, assigning a central position to Mycenae and the Argolid entails the risk that we treat Mycenae as representing developments across the entire region, and conversely that we see the Argolid as a homogeneous entity already during the Early Mycenaean period.

In this paper I would like to present differences and divergences within the Argolid during this period of fluid social relations, political realignments and shifting alliances. My argument will proceed in two stages: First, I will first discuss the diverging trajectories of the different communities across the Argive plain, and, second, the different responses by different social (age, gender, kin and status) groups. The aim of this paper is therefore to reveal the interplay between wider social processes and human agency, as different communities, groups and individuals attempt to carve their position in a changing world, experiment with new ideas and practices, and try to find a balance between tradition and innovation. The discussion will be based on contextual analyses of different types of data (domestic, mortuary, skeletal, biomolecular) carried out under the Middle Helladic Argolid Project.
During the Middle and Late Helladic period (MH, LH), several important settlements were developed in the Argolid, tracing dynamic cycles, diverse but interconnected. During this time, Argos follows a non-linear and therefore particularly interesting course. Based on data from recent studies, we will try to sketch the social dynamics and changes in Argos during the early LH period, a phase rather pivotal for the development and the role of the community in the next three centuries (palatial era). These developments will be better understood beginning the examination from MH II, a period during which Argos acquires a particularly powerful position in the region.

In MH II, elements of particular importance are: 1) the building of a fortification wall on the Aspis hilltop and the concentration of habitation in the same area, features indicative for the presence of collective processes and dominance aspirations; 2) graves within the settlement and at the same time some rich tombs at the foothills of the Aspis confirm the existence of complex social structures at this early stage; 3) the diversity of artefacts (rich pottery assemblages of varied technologies, bronze items, a gold pendant with references to Minoan Crete but possibly of local manufacture), which point to the operation of active local workshops and the participation into broader exchange networks.

During the transitional phase (MH III/LH I), innovation versus the persistence of MH traditions is revealed in all social practices. On the Aspis citadel the construction of a peripheral building of specific character seems to be accompanied by the decrease in size of the habitation area on the hill and at the same time the expansion of the settlement in the Lower Town. Regarding the funerary record, despite some innovations in burial practices, the continuous use of the old cemetery, next to the habitation area in the Lower Town, suggests a persisting tradition. A similar trend is denoted by the emphasis on the consumption of locally produced ceramics.
During LH II/IIIA1, a series of important changes may indicate an effort to create a new collective identity as opposed to the past. The Aspis citadel is now definitively abandoned and habitation is only confined to the Lower Town. By the same time (LH II) new burial practices, as part of a novel funerary ideology, inaugurate a new burial ground at some distance from the settlement, in the Deiras ravine. In the rich tombs of the Deiras cemetery a number of gold jewellery, despite certain unique features, fit well into the known patterns of gold working in the early LH period. This shift in all aspects of social practices seems to suggest a break with traditional bonds and the emergence of new ideologies, strongly tended towards emulation with those prevailing in the wider social space. In conclusion, we would say that at the beginning of the LH period Argos may have been overshadowed by the explosive changes at Mycenae, but it is clear that, through human agency and dynamic processes during the MH period, Argos was instrumental in shaping the leadership role of the Argolid throughout the LH period.
Stefanos Keramidas / Sofia Spiropoulou / Andromache Vassilopoulou

PLACING THE KAZARMA THOLOS TOMB WITHIN THE EARLY MYCENAEAN ARGOLID

The Kazarma tholos tomb constitutes a significant monument of Early Mycenaean funerary architecture in Argolid. It was excavated at the end of the ‘60s by Evaggelia Deilaki and it immediately attracted the attention of experts since, amongst others, it contained richly furnished intact burials and a varied array of prestigious grave goods, which convincingly denote the high status and connections of the deceased.

In this presentation we will attempt to place the Kazarma tholos tomb within the natural and cultural landscape of the Early Mycenaean Argolid. Thus, we will focus on two main axes, topography and social structure. Firstly, it is necessary to discuss the position of the Kazarma tholos within the natural setting of the Argolid. Its location apparently creates intriguing questions. At the foot of a natural lookout, away from the known centres of the period, without an apparent relation to a contemporary settlement or other burial structures, but on an important trail that connected the Argive plain with the Saronic Gulf and the Aegean sea, the choice of the specific setting for erecting such a monumental funerary construction remains puzzling at least.

The second part of our paper focuses on the interpretation of the Kazarma tholos tomb in accordance to the evolving socio-political structure at the dawn of the Mycenaean Age. What are the elements and interrelations of power in Argolid and in what sense a distinguished individual decides, or is potentially allowed, to build an imposing symbol of posthumous remembrance on an important trade route? Is it even the case of a dignitary or maybe a local leader and in what way this paradigm emerges from the overall transforming character of this early phase of Mycenaean Argolid?
The necropolis at Dendra, covering the periods LH IIB‒IIIA1, offers through its remarkable finds an eloquent picture of the luxury possessed by the aristocracy up to the final phase of the Early Mycenaean period. It is the time when art and crafts take a distance from the hitherto Minoan influences, to create forms and symbols purely Mycenaean, in search of a new identity.

Metalwork of an advanced workmanship, testifying to the presence of highly skilled craftsmen, is recorded especially through the hoard of 33 bronze vessels (Chamber Tomb 2), gold and silver ones (Tholos Tomb, Chamber Tomb 10, Shaft II), but also through the unique example of a cuirass (Chamber Tomb 12) and elaborately decorated weapons. Tin-incrusted pottery, toiletries and precious jewellery form also part of the valuables that furnished the distinguished deceased at the necropolis. Craftsmen at the service of the elite seem to circulate between various areas of the Aegean and Cyprus, forming, through their creations, common codes between its members.

Considering the unusual extent of the chamber tombs’ cemetery and the presence of an unplundered tholos tomb, the paper discusses how the artifacts’ types and motives from Dendra can provide the ground for a re-evaluation on the production of luxurious items, their manufacture and trade, at the threshold of the Mycenaean peak.
The settlement of Kolonna on the island of Aegina is one of the major Middle Bronze sites in the Helladic cultural sphere. The island benefited from its privileged geographical position in the centre of the Saronic Gulf, allowing open sea access and proximity to the Peloponnese, Attica, Megaris, and the islands of the Cyclades. In the Middle Bronze Age Kolonna emerged to an important trading domain with fair number of imports from distant regions. Since the advanced Middle Bronze Age the local elite attempted to emulate selected aspects of a Minoan lifestyle. Interestingly this seems to have been a short-lived phenomenon, as there is relatively little evidence for the adoption of Minoan lifestyle or technical innovations in the late Middle Bronze Age. Nevertheless Kolonna certainly flourished also in the late Middle Bronze Age and the Early Late Bronze Age. This is attested by the rebuilding of the mansion of the settlement, the so called Large Building Complex and a continuous strengthening of its fortification system. The unbroken importance of Kolonna as trading domain is illustrated particularly by the number of imports attested at the site but also by the widely distributed Aeginetan pottery.
Oliver Dickinson

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN PELOPONNESIAN POTTERY OVER THE MH–LH TRANSITION

The Peloponnese is often called the heartland of Mycenaean civilisation, and it is certainly possible to follow the processes involved in Mycenaean development more closely through the archaeological material of the Peloponnese than through that from any other region of mainland Greece. But the Peloponnese was not a unity in the Middle Helladic period; its different regions show evidence of distinctive characters, not least in their pottery, and show differing patterns of contact with the outside world. We might therefore expect them to show differences in their development towards Mycenaean, and there is evidence for this, in the pottery as in other features; but there are also indications of closer links between the regions, which helped spread the influence of the increasingly prominent north-east and the development towards the notably homogeneous pottery tradition of later Mycenaean times. This paper will consider the evidence now available for these developments and the motivation that may lie behind them.
Near or at the end of the Middle Helladic era, a wave of polychromy swept over the ceramic repertoires of the central and southern Greek mainland. Beginning at the start of the period we term Late Helladic [LH] I (ca. 1675–1600 BCE) or just before and persisting for some four to five generations thereafter down to some point within the LH IIA phase (ca. 1600–1550/1525 BCE), this predilection for bichrome and trichrome approaches to the decoration of tablewares was a feature of many different regions within the first half of the pre-palatial Mycenaean era. What inspired this sudden popularization in the use of multiple colors for ceramic ornamentation? Although candidates include emulation of developments in wall painting, the ceramic art of neighboring east Mediterranean regions, and even metalwork, it may well be that none of these provide a satisfactory explanation, whether singly or in combination, for the phenomenon in question. Just as striking as its relatively sudden emergence is the seeming contemporaneity of its disappearance from the various regional styles within which it had flourished. Yet polychromy’s virtual extinction around the middle of the 16th century may have nothing at all to do with its rapid rise. How this decorative variable was exploited by its numerous producers may provide some answers to the questions surrounding the peculiar history of this characteristically Early Mycenaean mode of pottery décor.
Among the many Minoan cultural forms that were adopted by the Mycenaeans is religious iconography in art. While the significance of the indigenous Middle Helladic religious tradition of many features of Mycenaean cult practice is now much better appreciated than thirty or forty years ago, the strong impact of Minoan forms of artistic expression on Mycenaean religious figurative art is beyond doubt.

In archaeological terms the growing interaction between Crete and the Greek mainland becomes manifest most vividly through prestige goods deposited in tombs of high status persons during the 17th to the 15th centuries BC. Some of these objects display a complex system of religious figurative scenes and motifs of undoubtedly Minoan origin irrespective whether they were imported from Crete or produced by Mycenaean artists on the mainland (either under the guidance of Cretan artists or on the basis of Cretan objects). Despite their foreign Minoan iconography these objects have the potential to increase our knowledge of Mycenaean religion, because the Mycenaeans seemed to have been interested in those representations of ritual actions only that had a meaning in terms of their own religious conceptions, as has been demonstrated by W.-D. Niemeier for the cult scenes on gold rings. Building on his observations I will review religious scenes and symbols of religious significance on Early Mycenaean objects found on the Greek mainland under the perspective of deliberate selection and possible redefinition. This discussion will include moveable cult equipment and paraphernalia. In particular, the relationship between representations in art and actual objects will be explored. This may help assessing the impact of objects that can be associated with Minoan expressions of religious behaviour on the formation of Early Mycenaean religious practices. Another focus will be laid on the survival and non-survival of symbols and objects of religious significance into the later Mycenaean palatial period.
In an earlier study (2011) I explored the landscape associations between Aegean tumuli and tholos tombs. In this paper, I would like to assess the relationship of Early Mycenaean tholoi with rock-cut chamber tombs, especially at the level of funerary monumentality from LH I to LH IIIA1. Studies on this subject in the Late Bronze Age tend to focus on particular sites or just on tholos tombs. The extant monumental chamber tombs, however, help bring to light some significant, and hitherto little observed, patterns with wider social implications at a regional and at an Aegean level. As with tholoi, chamber tombs vary considerably in terms of their architecture, elaboration, associated burials, furnishings, and placement in the landscape. There is now good data to suggest that chamber tombs may not have been complementary to tholoi within a notional hierarchy of ‘funerary types’ or ‘burial styles’. Depending on their context, the landscapes of chamber tombs and tholoi appear to reveal complex social strategies in a politically dynamic period for Aegean affairs. Shaped by (and also shaping) the politics of the time, tholoi and chamber tombs, with their use and re-use, created competing social narratives and long-lasting mnemonic landscapes.