The conference aims to explore social and economic developments from the Early Bronze Age III to the Late Bronze Age I period (ca. 2200 - 1600 BC) in the southern Aegean. The focus will be on the southern mainland, though we would like to adopt a comparative approach and examine parallel (or divergent) processes in the surrounding islands and Crete.

The Middle Bronze Age (MBA) societies in the Greek mainland have long been considered as simple, static and homogeneous, and it has long been thought that social and economic differences emerge towards the later MBA. However, recent research, presented at the Mesohelladika conference, suggests that the MBA witnesses important changes and divergent developments which are still imperfectly understood. Our interpretation of these changes is based mostly on mortuary data; other spheres of life, notably houses and settlement organization, have not received a systematic treatment. In addition, changes in material culture and shifting patterns of interaction have not always been correlated with social change.

Any discussion of the MBA has to start with a serious reconsideration of social conditions during the unstable EB III period. This period of crisis, depopulation, material poverty and increased regionalism is usually set against the preceding EBA II period, which was characterized by population growth, differentiation, prosperity and increased interaction. As a result, the EBA III period has received little scholarly attention. While research in the last 30 years has rightly criticized monocausal diffusionist interpretations, we have not been able to come up with alternative explanations combining environmental factors, internal developments and shifting networks of mobility and interaction.

Needless to say, considerations of social change raise questions of periodization; indeed, one of the aims of the symposium is to discuss whether the traditional chronological sub-divisions based on the ceramic sequence can adequately describe periods of change and increased regionalism.

GRONINGEN GREEK ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCES are organized as part of the examination procedure of PhD candidates doing research on topics related to Greek archaeology at the Groningen Institute of Archaeology.

The first one in the series is organized to coincide with the oral examination of Corien Wiersma, who will defend her PhD thesis entitled Building the Bronze Age. Architectural and social change on the Greek mainland from EH III to LH I. The defense takes place on Thursday 17th of October, at the Academy Building, 16.15.
Registration details
The list of speakers is complete. If you want to attend the symposium, you can still register at symposium.aegean.prehistory@gmail.com. Please include your name, affiliation, and position. Registration costs only 5 €, and can be paid during registration.

If you are an Archon-member, no registration costs are required.

Online broadcast
The conference is also going to be live broadcasted online. A video-link will be sent around in due time.

Publication
The conference proceedings will be published.

Symposium dinner
On Wednesday evening we offer participants the possibility for dinner at Humphrey’s Restaurant. The dinner includes a 3-course meal and drinks at the cost of 35 €.

If you would like to attend, please let us know at symposium.aegean.prehistory@gmail.com.

These costs for the dinner can also be paid during registration on Wednesday morning.
List of speakers

John Bintliff
University of Leiden, The Netherlands / University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Walter Gauss
Austrian Archaeological Institute in Athens, Greece

Evi Gorogianni
Department of Anthropology and Classical Studies, University of Akron, Ohio, USA

Borja Legarra Herrero
University College London, United Kingdom

Michael Lindblom
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University, Sweden

Daniel J. Pullen
Department of Classics, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Jeremy B. Rutter
Department of Classics, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, USA

Sofia Voutsaki
Groningen Institute of Archaeology, The Netherlands

Erica Weiberg
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University, Sweden

Todd Whitelaw
University College London, United Kingdom

Corien Wiersma
Groningen Institute of Archaeology, The Netherlands
Symposium Program Day 1
Wednesday 16 October 2013
Harmonie Building, Marie Loke zaal (ground floor)

9:30-10.15  WELCOME – coffee & tea
REGISTRATION

Morning Session
Chaired by Prof. O.T.P.K. Dickinson

10.15-10.30 Sofia Voutsaki & Corien Wiersma
Welcome and Introduction

10.30-11.15 Erica Weiberg
‘Early Helladic III: a non-monumental but revitalized social arena?’

11.15-12.00 Walter Gauss and Michael Lindblom
Premycenaean pottery shapes of the Central Aegean: A new resource in development

12.00-12.45 Daniel Pullen
Feasting, hospitality, and exchange relationships: Exploring the dynamics of Bronze Age social structures through reciprocity

12.45-14.00 Lunch Break

Afternoon Session I
Chaired by Prof. D. Pullen

14.00-14.45 Corien Wiersma
Building the Bronze Age. Architectural and social change on the Greek Mainland from EH III to LH I

14.45-15.30 Jeremy Rutter
The temporal slicing and dicing of Minyan Culture: Some speculative extensions of Corien Wiersma’s 2013 tripartite schema

15.30-16.00 Coffee & Tea break

Afternoon Session II
Chaired by Prof. T. Whitelaw

16.00-16.45 Sofia Voutsaki
A society in flux: Social change in the MH period in the Argolid

16.45-17.00 Final discussion of the day

17.15-18.45 Reception at the Groningen Institute of Archaeology

19.00-21.30 Dinner at Humphrey’s
Symposium Program Day 2
Thursday 17 October 2013
Harmonie Building, Marie Loke zaal

| 9:30-10.15 | WELCOME – coffee & tea
REGISTRATION |
|------------|------------------|
| **Morning session**
**Chaired by Prof. J.B. Rutter** | |
| 10.15-10.30 | Corien Wiersma
Welcome and Introduction |
| 10.30-11.15 | Evi Gorogianni
Social complexity in MBA and LBA Cyclades: A view from Ayia Irini |
| 11.15-12.00 | Borja L. Herrero
Tradition and transformation in the burial record of Pre- and Protopalatial Crete |

12.00-13.15 Lunch break

| **Afternoon session**
**Chaired by Prof. J. Crouwel** | |
| 13.15-14.00 | John Bintliff
Long-term developments in southern mainland settlement systems from Early Helladic to Late Helladic times as seen through the lens of regional survey |
| 14.00-14.45 | Todd Whitelaw
Urbanism in the prehistoric southern Aegean: A comparative perspective on scale, differentiation and integration |
| 14.45-15.15 | Final discussion of the symposium |
Abstracts

‘Early Helladic III: a non-monumental but revitalized social arena?’
Erica Weiberg
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University, Sweden

Abstract: Some periods of prehistory can be defined as more “monumental” than others, i.e. more efforts were during these times put into the architectural appearance of space. The disappearance of the Corridor Houses, the observable pinnacle of the EH II architectural achievements, has had a considerable impact on the interpretations of the time thereafter, when this architectural feature was no longer a part of the architectural repertoire. Based on the degree of visibility and pervasiveness of the archaeological material, the centuries following the end of the Early Helladic II period on the Greek Mainland could indeed be deemed rather insignificant. Beyond issues of monumentality and visibility, however, many things seem to have been stirring, indications of non-insignificant activity, also in areas such as the NE Peloponnese where the differences from EH II appear especially forceful. The appearance of regional styles, an often raised characteristic of EH III, could in itself be argued to be one significant result of intensified activities, in a new revitalized social arena, unrestrained at this point by the strong and wide-reaching agenda of the EH II period that promoted concordance rather than individuality.

Certainly there were areas on or closely associated with the Greek mainland that appear to have comprised a greater degree of entrepreneurship than others. These (such as Aegina and Kythera) may be said to develop at the expense of other nearby areas (such as Argolid and Laconia), but it could also be argued that their apparent prosperity would not have evolved if not in intense interaction with their surroundings. In the presentation I will draw together contexts from the EH III mainland for a discussion on issues of scale, human resourcefulness and the reformulation of social agendas during times of change.

Premycenaean pottery shapes of the Central Aegean: A new resource in development
Walter Gauss, Austrian Archaeological Institute in Athens, Greece
Michael Lindblom, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University, Sweden

Social change in prehistoric societies is analysed through the sequential patterning of material culture. In ceramic studies, this entails the production, distribution and consumption of vessel shapes from various potting traditions. While original perceptions or “understandings” of visual differences and functions between various containers will always be subject to new interpretations, there is a need among scholars to be explicit in what criteria they use when assessing similarities and differences in vessel forms. For want of a native classification, there are several modern typologies of Aegean Bronze Age pottery. While working on the ceramic deposits at Kolonna and Lerna, we have nevertheless noticed the lack of a detailed ceramic typology that accommodates a larger geographical area and a longer time span than what has previously been available. In this presentation, we wish to present a possible solution to this lacuna. It includes a new shape typology for the EBA III-LBA I Southern and Central Greek Mainland and the Cyclades (i.e. the Central Aegean) based on virtually all published instances of wholly or largely complete vessels from these areas.
Feasting activities have been proposed for many contexts in the Aegean Bronze Age, but two criticisms that have been leveled at these identifications are the lack of clear criteria used to identify a feast in contrast to the daily consumption of food and drink, and the lack of critical understanding of the social dynamics behind the activity. Scale is one criterion often used, but Jerry Rutter has suggested that small-scale consumption by a limited number of participants, even as few as two individuals, can be indicative of the social consumption of food or drink, when utilizing specialized vessels or in certain definable contexts. Ultimately feasting, the communal consumption of food and drink, and hospitality, the sharing of food and drink among a limited number of participants, are social activities that involve the social dynamics of exchange between individuals and are a reflection of how social relationships are structured into social organization, whether within or outside of the context of kin relationships.

Reciprocity encompasses the social dynamics of any exchange between individuals and how these social relationships form the structure of social organization. Reciprocity is often categorized as generalized, balanced, or negative. Manipulation by individuals (or elites) of reciprocity through strategies such as asymmetrical exchange relationships or competitive generosity lead to indebtedness of one exchange partner to the other, and this indebtedness can be institutionalized into hierarchical social structures.

Sofia Voutsaki has suggested that social structure in the early Middle Helladic period is based on kinship, while that of the Late Helladic IIIB is based on status differentiations controlled by palatial elites. In this paper I examine feasting and hospitality diachronically from the Early Helladic to the Late Helladic to identify the changing nature of the exchange relationships generated and how those are manifested in the evolution of social structure.

The EH III and early MH period of southern Mainland Greece are characterized by small-scale egalitarian communities. For this reasons, relatively little research has been devoted to this period. Research that has been carried out especially focused on explaining the collapse of the EH II society and material change during EH III, thereby focusing on ceramics. The domestic architecture has received little consideration, except for the introduction of the apsidal house shape. The Mainland societies developed rapidly in terms of social complexity towards the end of the MH and during LH I, and as a result, much more scholarly attention was paid to this phenomenon.

In this paper, I outline the main results of my PhD research on the analysis of EH III, MH and LH I domestic architecture. First a summary of the most important patterns raised by the analysis are given, such as on house shape, house size, number of rooms, architectural homogeneity and variety, and change through time. In the second part, I concentrate on explaining these patterns. This will include a discussion of how communities were likely to have been socially organized, how and why social organization changed over time and how this is reflected in the domestic architecture.
Important issues that are going to be raised for the study of this period, are for example the suggestion that the social body of EH III societies was fragmented compared to EH II societies; that signs of social and economic change were already hinted at during MH I and MH II; and that the overall small and problematic data set of houses does have research potential in archaeological studies.

The temporal slicing and dicing of Minyan Culture: Some speculative extensions of Corien Wiersma’s 2013 tripartite schema
Jeremy B. Rutter
Department of Classics, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, USA

A brief review of the chronological terminology used to describe what Roger Howell (1973) termed “Minyan culture” precedes an evaluation of the principal characteristics of the three major temporal units into which Corien Wiersma (2013) has divided it for the purposes of her detailed survey of shifts in settlement location, organization, and architecture across some six centuries. For Early Helladic III (ca. 2200/2150 – 2050/2000 BCE), the evidence for a period of exceptional population mobility is explored. For the following Middle Helladic I-II phases (ca. 2050/2000 – 1750/1720 BCE), why a period that witnessed more robust dwellings and more permanent settlements likewise featured vastly increased quantities of funerary data as well as much more abundant evidence for both intercultural and intracultural exchange is investigated. Finally, during the Middle Helladic III through Late Helladic I phases (1750/1720 – 1600/1580 BCE), significant relocations of cemeteries, the emergence of wealthy elites in numerous different regions of the mainland, and the proliferation of readily distinguishable regional schools of finely decorated tablewares attest to increasing competition for status and power that is the immediate precursor of the process of “Mycenaeanization” emanating from the Argolid by the end of the period. The chronological schema chosen by Wiersma for her survey of domestic architecture enables a clearer interpretation of the data currently available to us than do more traditional schemes of relative chronology based purely on ceramics. Moreover, this schema corresponds well with subdivisions of the Middle Helladic era based principally on funerary evidence, such as those espoused by Sofia Voutsaki and Helene Whittaker.

A society in flux: Social change in the MH period in the Argolid
Sofia Voutsaki
Groningen Institute of Archaeology, The Netherlands

Social change in the MH period has been a favourite topic of discussion in the last twenty years. To give just a few examples, Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier has proposed a differentiated society already in the earlier phases of the MH period, and James Wright has attributed social change in the mainland to the actions of aggrandizing faction leaders. Interesting as these theories are, what has been missing from the discussions so far is a systematic analysis of the empirical evidence in all its different facets – whether houses, graves, artefacts, or images. This has been the main goal of the MH Argolid Project – to analyze different types of data by integrating several analytical methods at various levels of analysis, though within one regional unit. The first aim of this paper is to summarize and distill the results of the project and to reconstruct social change across different spheres of life and death. A further aim is to go deeper and to understand not only the wider processes, i.e. the rate and nature of social change through the MH period, but also the variety of responses to these changes by different communities and social groups.
Social complexity in MBA and LBA Cyclades: A view from Ayia Irini
Evi Gorogianni
Department of Anthropology and Classical Studies, University of Akron, Ohio, USA

The Middle and Late Bronze Age in the Aegean was a dynamic time characterized by the rise of socio-political complexity that resulted in the formation of state level societies on Crete and on the mainland of Greece. Many have argued that the Cyclades played a significant role in these formation processes, acting as mediators of trade and exchange and as facilitators in the exploitation and procurement of important resources and raw materials, commodities that became emblematic of the upper classes in state level polities.

There is and has been great interest in the development of social hierarchies and the rise of palatial societies in this area of the Aegean, and rightfully so, but relatively little has been said about the internal social structure and transformation of the Cycladic communities that were involved in the Pan-Aegean networks of trade and exchange. Hence, the present paper is an attempt to analyze the social structure of these communities and the transformations that ensued due to their involvement and dealings with partners commonly categorized as state level polities. In the absence of mortuary data from the Cyclades, the focus of this investigation is the built environment and material culture of Cycladic communities.

Any investigation of social complexity in the Cyclades must draw on data from the site of Ayia Irini on Kea, since so much of the site has been published and is currently under study. Thus, different areas of the site are compared using categories such as relative percentages of imported goods, different household industries, the size of storage areas, and the presence or absence of elite markers. Assemblages from across the site offer nuances on the internal social dynamics as well as on the interplay between local and regional groups and the regional powers beyond the shores of the island.

Tradition and transformation in the burial record of Pre- and Protopalatial Crete
Borja Legarra Herrero
University College London, United Kingdom

A detailed look at the mortuary record of the early 2nd millennium BCE on Crete reveals that traditional views of social differentiation becoming increasingly marked in the tombs do not correspond with the available evidence. Indeed, there are major problems to identify elite burials in the communal cemeteries of the period. New buildings, a change in the deposition of burial goods and novel funerary procedures did not lead to the stronger manifestation of a social hierarchy. This fact seems incompatible with current models of Cretan state formation that emphasise elite agency and social mechanisms of differentiation such as emulation and conspicuous consumption of exotica.

The presentation aims to explain better the actual patterns identified in the mortuary data by using alternative theoretical paradigms that highlight the role of broader populations in social change. The presentation will investigate in particular the fact that social change on Crete seems to be negotiated through traditional arenas such as long-lived cemeteries and that thousand-year old burial customs were combined with innovations in funerary rituals to create change. I will argue that the major dynamics seen at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age on Crete were only possible by rooting new ideologies to traditional beliefs, and by using social inclusive mechanisms rather than exclusive ones. A consequence of this shift of perspective is that the agency of change needs to be widened to include the majority of Cretan populations, which in turn, has profound implications for our understanding of further socio-political developments during the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods.
Long-term developments in Southern Mainland settlement systems
from Early Helladic to Late Helladic times as seen through the lens of regional survey

John Bintliff
University of Leiden, The Netherlands / University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Regional surface survey offers a partial but complementary picture of developments in Aegean Prehistory to that obtained by excavation. In this paper, I shall offer some thoughts on what survey evidence provides for the Mainland Bronze Age, and suggest models for interpreting these phenomena. Current rethinking of survey evidence raises issues as to how far we really understand yet the density and nature of settlement, which has implications for demographic reconstructions. The issue of regionalism, long ago set as a challenge by Oliver Dickinson, also appears an increasingly useful point for insights. Finally the issues of timescales and the resolution of our evidence need to be cast into the framework of the Braudelian durées, since it is likely that we can offer different kinds of explanations as we choose to broaden or narrow our chronological focus.

Urbanism in the prehistoric southern Aegean:
A comparative perspective on scale, differentiation and integration

Todd Whitelaw
University College London, United Kingdom

‘Urban’ is an evocative yet vague term, particularly as used by archaeologists: there is an almost inevitable tendency to want to ‘big-up’ one’s own site or culture of interest. Childe’s 1950 paper ‘The Urban Revolution’ is still widely cited and re-expressed (though he was focused principally on the characteristics of state-level societies, rather than urbanism per se), and much archaeological discussion does not move beyond broad generalities. Geographers and urban analysts have their own definitions, but anthropologists, and quite recently, archaeologists, have begun to contribute to defining the characteristics of urbanism in specifically pre-industrial contexts, of more direct relevance to prehistoric examples. In Aegean prehistoric studies, the term has been used quite loosely, and Renfrew’s introduction of the term ‘proto-urban’ expanded these ambiguities considerably.

In this paper, various comparative perspectives will be explored to try better to define the nature and significance of urbanism in the prehistoric Aegean. Comparisons will be made with other Bronze Age cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean, and sites from Crete, the Cyclades and the southern Mainland spanning the Bronze Age will be considered, focusing on scale, differentiation and integration. LBA sites on Crete contribute the most detail to the picture, given the large-scale exposure of several sites in the early twentieth century, which have been augmented by more limited strategic investigations at these and other sites in recent decades. In contrast, the primary focus of excavation on the mainland on LBA tombs, palaces and citadels provides limited comparable evidence, potentially biasing any comparative assessments. Providing yet another challenge, is it appropriate to consider small Cycladic communities of several hundred inhabitants urban, because they display characteristics also seen in more arguably urban contemporary communities on Crete? Given such ambiguities in both definition and evidence, does the concept of urbanism carry much relevance for the analysis and understanding of Aegean communities and societies?
Map and venues

A  University Hotel
    Kleine Kromme Elleboog 7

B  Harmonie Building – Marie Loke zaal (conference venue)
    Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat 26

C  Academy Building
    Broerstraat 5

D  Groningen Institute of Archaeology (reception)
    Poststraat 6

E  Humphrey’s Restaurant (dinner)
    Vismarkt 42