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Middle and Late Helladic Laconia Competing principalities?

Η Λακωνία κατά τη Μέση και Ύστερη Εποχή του Χαλκού:
Τοπικές ηγεμονίες σε ανταγωνισμό;

The early career scholar conference 'Middle and Late Helladic Laconia: Competing principalities?' is organized by the Netherlands Institute at Athens, the Ephorate of Antiquities of Laconia and the University of Groningen.



12-13
April
2019



Organizing Committee:

Dr. Tsouli,
Dr. Wiersma,
Dr. van de Put,
Mrs Maltezos

Scientific Committee:

Prof. Banou,
Mrs Pantou,
Dr. Prent,
Dr. van de Put,
Dr. Tsouli,
Mrs Vasilogamvrou,
Prof. Voutsaki,
Dr. Wiersma

Hosted by the Netherlands Institute in Athens, Makri 11

A limited number of seats is available.

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Day 1: Friday April 12th

16.00-16.30 Welcoming, registration
16.30-17.00 Opening speeches

SESSION I: Laconia: setting the scene**CHAIRS: Winfred van de Put, Maria Tsouli**

17.00-17.30 **Emilia Banou, Anne Chapin and Louise Hitchcock**
The Eurotas Valley, Laconia, in the 2nd Millennium B.C.: The Area of Vapheio –Palaiopyrgi in Context

17.30-18.00 **William Cavanagh, Chrysanthi Gallou, Ilias Spondylis, and Jon Henderson**
Southern Laconia in the Middle and Earlier Late Bronze Age: pottery from Pavlopetri and other sites.

18.00-18.30 **Konstantinos P. Trimmis**
The curious case of an island: A preliminary account on the Northern Kythera Middle and Late Bronze Age Landscapes; Laconian, Cretan, or Kytherian?

18.30-19.00 Break

19.00-19.30 **Corien Wiersma and Wieke de Neef**
The Ayios Vasilios Survey Project. Results of the pedestrian field survey and geophysical research

19.30-20.00 **Sofia Voutsaki**
The political geography of Mycenaean Laconia

20.00-20.30 **Discussion**

20.30 Reception

Day 2: Saturday April 13th**SESSION II: Sites****CHAIRS: Emilia Banou, Sofia Voutsaki**

- 09.00-09.30 **Nektarios Karadimas, Adamantia Vasilogamvrou and Elina Kardamaki**
Preliminary remarks on the stratigraphy of the West Stoa from the new Mycenaean palace at Ayios Vasileios, Laconia
- 09.30-10.00 **Maria Tsouli, Adrianna Kotsi, Dimitris Vlachakos**
A new Mycenaean settlement by the middle Evrotas valley: the site Vrysika of Xirokambi
- 10.00-10.30 **Stuart MacVeagh Thorne and Mieke Prent**
Middle Helladic Geraki
- 10.30-11.00 Coffee Break

Session III: Pottery**CHAIRS: Mieke Prent, Adamantia Vasilogamvrou**

- 11.00-11.30 **Joost Crouwel**
Geraki - from Middle to Late Helladic: ceramic evidence
- 11.30-12.00 **Emilia Banou, Maria Tsouli and George Tsiaggouris**
Ceramic Evidence on the Transition to the Mycenaean Era in Southern Laconia: Prehistoric Pottery from Passavas near Gytheio
- 12.00-12.30 **Dora Kondyli and Iro Mathioudaki**
Throwing some light on the early history of the Mycenaean palace at Ayios Vasileios, Laconia: Examining three early Mycenaean pottery deposits from Building Alpha
- 12.30-13.00 **Vasco Hachtmann and Sofia Voutsaki**
The relationship between Central and South Laconia during the Early Mycenaean period: The pottery evidence
- 13.00-13.30 **Discussion**
- 13.30-15.30 Lunch

**SESSION IV:
Burials****SESSION IV: Burials****CHAIRS: Emilia Banou, Corien Wiersma**

- 15.30-16.00 **Maria Tsouli, Aphrodite Maltezou, George Tsiaggouris**
New evidence on the funerary landscape of Middle Helladic Laconia
- 16.00-16.30 **Leonidas Souchleris**
A new cemetery of the Late Bronze Age at Pellana, in the northern part of the Eurotas valley.
- 16.30-17.00 **Tomáš Alušík**
Health status in Middle and Late Helladic Laconia
- 17.00-17.30 Coffee Break

- 17.30-18.00 **Sofia Voutsaki, Ioanna Moutafi, Vasco Hachtmann and Michael Dee**
The North Cemetery at Ayios Vasilios: austerity and differentiation in the Early Mycenaean period
- 18.00-18.30 **Yannick de Raaff, Theo Verlaan, Sofia Voutsaki and Gary Nobles**
Destruction, construction and reconstruction: the Built Chamber Tomb of the North Cemetery at Ayios Vasilios, Laconia
- 18.30-19.00 **Youp van den Beld**
Brick by brick: labour investment and processes of change in Ayios Vasilios
- 19.00-19.30 **Discussion**
- 19.30 Conference wrap-up and closing addresses



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The Eurotas Valley, Laconia, in the 2nd Millennium B.C.: The Area of Vapheio –Palaiopyrgi in Context

E. Banou, University of the Peloponnese

A. Chapin, Brevard College, North Carolina

L. Hitchcock, University of Melbourne

Palaiopyrgi is the most prominent hill in the chain of hills marking the center of the Eurotas valley, rising to a height of 214 m, about 7 km south of Sparta; its summit offers an unhindered view to all directions, towards Menalaion to the N., Ayios Vassileios to the SW and Vouno Panayias to the E. About 350 m to the north lies the famous Mycenaean tholos tomb of Vapheio, one of the very few tholos tombs known and the only one thoroughly excavated so far in Laconia (Tsountas 1889), with which the hill has been associated (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1960, 76-78; Banou 1996, 34-36, 76-78, Plan 3). Midway between the Vapheio tholos tomb and Palaiopyrgi, lies a quarry of conglomerate, consisting of a semi-worked column base, curved cuttings and separation channels. Based on the stone quarried, the extraction technique, the size of the column base, part of the pottery found in association with it and its proximity to the tomb and the hill of Palaiopyrgi, the quarry was dated in the Mycenaean times, leading to the conclusion that material extracted from this and other conglomerate shelves exposed in the wider area, may have been used for extensive building activities on the hill itself in that period (Hitchcock et al. 2016). In 2016-2017, an intensive survey was carried in the area between the tholos tomb and Palaiopyrgi, in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Laconia, the University of Melbourne, the University of the Peloponnese and Brevard College, having the quarry at its centre. The paper discusses existing archaeological evidence from the area of Vapheio-Palaiopyrgi and its implications for social and political change in the Eurotas valley, with special reference to its central location in the valley and to the transition to the Mycenaean era, taking into consideration recent developments of research in the area.

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Southern Laconia in the Middle and Earlier Late Bronze Age: pottery from Pavlopetri and other sites.

William Cavanagh, Chrysanthi Gallou, Ilias Spondylis, Jon Henderson, University of Nottingham

The underwater site of Pavlopetri has most recently been investigated by the joint project of the Ephoreia for Underwater Archaeology and the British School at Athens which conducted field seasons in 2009, 2010 and 2011. In addition to a survey of the visible building remains using state of the art surveying methods, surface artefacts were collected from across the site and two small trials were also excavated. The unstratified pottery, often severely abraded and worn, has nevertheless revealed evidence for links both with nearby sites, such as Epidavros Limera, those on Kythera and Ayios Stephanos, and with areas further afield such as Crete and central Greece. This paper will report on a selection of finds dating from early MH to LH II and discuss their contribution to our understanding of the period.



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The curious case of an island: A preliminary account on the Northern Kythera Middle and Late Bronze Age Landscapes; Laconian, Cretan, or Kytherian?

Konstantinos P. Trimmis, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Bristol

The current perception of Middle and Late Bronze Age Kythera is mainly based on the finds of the Kythera Island Project along with evidence from the work of the Ephorate of Antiquities in Housti cave. These projects covered the central and southern parts of the island and their data created a narrative of an Early Helladic influence that was followed by a “Minoan” dominated Middle Bronze Age. This approach led to an intensive examination of topics such as Minoanisation and Insularity and how these adapt to the Kytherian paradigm although a major question remains; is this a narrative that can showcase a pre- “history” of Kythera as an island that, in its totality, oscillates between the influence of two competing worlds? Or did the groups at the northern part of the island continue to be influenced by Helladic characteristics even during the relative “decline” of settlements in the Middle Helladic Laconia and the consequent rise of the Cretan characteristics?

This paper brings together recent archaeological data from the Australian Paliochora Kythera Archaeological Survey (APKAS), with earlier surveys on Northern Kythera by I. Petrocheilos, A. Tsaravopoulos and the author with the aim to correlate all the available evidence for the Middle and Late Bronze Age landscape patterns and to contextualize the dynamics between local groups and the possible influences from the North (Laconia) and the South (Crete). The goal is to showcase how the settlement patterns on Northern Kythera are similar or different to those in Laconia and Southern Kythera during the 2nd millennium BC and to investigate if and how the intra- and inter- island dynamics actually swing between the two worlds - the Helladic and the Minoan. Ultimately knowing that during the later stages of the Bronze Age, the island was mainly dominated by Helladic pottery groups and Mycenaean style influences, the paper examines how the strategic location of the island - as a natural bridge between Crete and the Peloponnese - assisted towards the shaping of the cultural characteristics of the later Mycenaean Laconia.



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The Ayios Vasilios Survey Project. Results of the pedestrian field survey and geophysical research.

Corien Wiersma, University of Groningen

Wieke de Neef, University of Ghent

The Ayios Vasilios Survey Project is a 5-year project which started in 2015 and consists of three pedestrian survey campaigns, followed by further geophysical research and an ethnographic survey. The survey project is carried out under the auspices of the Archaialogiki Etaireia and co-directed by Prof. Sofia Voutsaki and Mrs. Adamantia Vasilogamvrou.

The aims of the project consist mainly of 1) reconstructing the spatial development of the palace settlement, 2) developing a survey method for prehistoric urban sites, and 3) identifying the functional zones at the settlement based on the integrated geophysical and archaeological datasets.

Three field surveys and large-scale geophysical research were conducted between 2015 and 2018. The pedestrian surveys were carried out in grid units of primarily 10x10 m, as well as 20x20 m. In each square a 5% total collections of finds was made first, followed by a diagnostic sample of the remainder of the unit. Most of the surveyed area was also researched by means of a mobile magnetic gradiometry survey.

In the lecture the most important research results of the project are presented. We especially highlight the habitation history of the site during the Bronze Age, which is divergent from currently known Mycenaean palaces, both with respect to the continuity of habitation and settlement size. Furthermore, we highlight some results of the geophysical research, that confirm the size of the settlement, and also indicate the presence of activity areas (including burials and possible workshops) on the borders of the site.



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The political geography of Mycenaean Laconia

Sofia Voutsaki, University of Groningen

This paper is a new attempt to understand the changing site hierarchy of Mycenaean Laconia and the spatial dynamics in the region in the light of new discoveries and recent insights.

The problems -the dearth of extensive settlement excavations or intact cemeteries, the limited extent of intensive surveys, the virtual absence of systematic geomorphological investigations - are well known. On the other hand, the information provided by extensive and intensive surveys, filled in by the many rescue excavations, does provide a background against which the relations between newly excavated (Ayios Vasilios) or recently published sites (Ayios Stephanos, Menelaion) can be explored anew. This paper will attempt to do so by bringing together the changing settlement pattern, the history of occupation at different sites and the fluctuations in the use of cemeteries.

The picture which emerges suggests that Laconia's political trajectory may have been significantly different from the developments in other palatial regions such as the Argolid, Boeotia or Messenia.

The discussion will revolve around three points:

- The predominance of smaller or medium sized centres which are unlike the large, sometimes fortified urban sites in the Argolid or Boeotia;
- The discontinuous use, or at least the fluctuating significance of the main sites which differ from the incremental growth (which has been inferred) in palatial sites elsewhere;
- The more restricted and localised display in the mortuary sphere.

Whether this picture is correct and accurate, and not a product of the biases and limitations of the evidence needs to be deliberated further. It is hoped that this paper will make a contribution to this continuous discussion.



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Preliminary remarks on the stratigraphy of the West Stoa from the new Mycenaean palace at Ayios Vasileios, Laconia

Nektarios Karadimas, University of Crete

Adamantia Vasilogamvrou, Director Emerita Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

Elina Kardamaki, OREA, Austrian Academy of Science

Ten years have passed since the first Linear B tablet was found at the hill of Ayios Vasileios near the village of Xirokambi in Laconia. The excavations at the south slope of the hill began in 2011; since then the remains of two buildings (D and E), as well as two Stoas have been brought to light. So far, the West Stoa is undoubtedly the most important among them. Its upper storey contained several pithoi and a Linear B archive, the first ever found in Laconia. The Stoa was destroyed by an immense fire during the LH IIIB1 period, while the whole site was abandoned in early Late Helladic IIIC and it was reinhabited almost two thousand years later during the Byzantine times. Taking into account the significance of the West Stoa, this paper will present some preliminary remarks on its stratigraphy, focusing in particular on the Linear B Archive within the regional and supra-regional geographic and cultural environment.



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A new Mycenaean settlement by the middle Evrotas valley: the site Vrysika of Xirokambi

Maria Tsouli, Director of the Department of prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and Museums, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

Adrianna Kotsi, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

Dimitris Vlachakos, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

During the construction of the modern Sparta bypass (branch Skoura – Pyri) a new Prehistoric site came to light in the lower part of the middle Evrotas valley. In the nearly 8 acres extended site, called “Vrysika” (the noun reminds us the word “faucet” in Greek), near Xirokambi and the Mycenaean palatial center of Agios Vasileios, traces of settlement were found, dated from the Early Helladic to the Early Hellenistic period. The most impressive remains are dated in the Late Helladic period, mainly in the LH IIIA-B.

It seems that the Late Helladic settlement was established above the Early Helladic remains and it consists of a complex of three oblong rectangular buildings in the E – W axis, parallel to each other but not similar in plan, and two more buildings further southeast. Building 3 constitutes the main core of the complex, being a megaron-type building (24 x 8,9m.) with walls of 1,18m. thick, intended for the support either of an upper storey or of a heavy roof. The building was preserved only in stone foundation level, while it is obvious that the superstructure was made of mudbricks, red traces of which were found scattered close to some walls. Building 3 is surrounded by corridors running on the North, West and South (ca. 2,20m. in width), and auxiliary buildings (Buildings 5, 6, 7) that were severely destroyed by the human factor through the ages.

Most of the pottery, generally in a very fragmented condition, was found outside the buildings and is still being studied.

By and large, the Vrysika settlement is thought to bridge the gap of our knowledge for Mycenaean settlements at the southeastern part of the middle Evrotas valley, close to the west bank of the Evrotas river and quite close to the Mycenaean palatial center of Agios Vasileios.



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Middle Helladic Geraki

Stuart MacVeagh Thorne, Mieke Prent, Free University Amsterdam

Brief exploratory excavations at Geraki by Wace and Hasluck in 1905 and subsequent visits by Waterhouse and Simpson in the 1960s suggested the significance of the site in the prehistoric period. Systematic excavation undertaken by the Netherlands Institute at Athens since 1995 has confirmed this early vitality.

The site was first inhabited, and protected by a fortification wall, in the Final Neolithic period. During the Early Helladic period much of the 3.6-hectare summit was occupied. At this time the site was refortified, with the Early Helladic II Early construction being considerably strengthened in Early Helladic II Late. At the end of this period widespread destruction by fire devastated the site, causing a temporary contraction or abandonment.

Middle Helladic occupation, ending in the Shaft Grave period, is well attested. The site was abandoned before it could develop into a thriving Mycenaean centre. This paper will provide a synthesis of the evidence for habitation, burial and the refortification of the acropolis during the Middle Helladic period.

Evidence for domestic architecture is limited to two trenches, but the presence of substantial fills of Middle Helladic pottery from disparate areas of the acropolis suggests long-term use during the period. A total of five cist tombs are now known from the acropolis, four of them identified by Wace and Hasluck.

Most interestingly, perhaps, excavation in the north of the acropolis revealed that a new fortification wall was built during the Middle Helladic period. As yet, fortification walls of that date are rare in Greece and absent in Laconia. The appearance of such a wall at Geraki confirms the prominence of the site during the Middle Helladic period.



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Geraki - from Middle to Late Helladic: ceramic evidence

Joost Crouwel, University of Amsterdam

Stuart MacVeagh Thorne and Mieke Prent have just presented a synthesis of the evidence for the refortification, domestic architecture and burial on the acropolis of Geraki during the Middle Helladic (MH) period. This paper concentrates on the concomitant pottery from the Dutch excavations.

MH ceramics are abundantly present, sometimes in closed contexts but much more often in fills. The material is highly fragmentary, predominantly of coarse fabric and usually hard to date within the MH period. At the same time, classes like Dark Burnished, Lustrous Decoration and (in small numbers) Matt Painted, which are well-known at Ayios Stephanos and elsewhere, are represented. Also attested are several fragments of coarse, one-handled jars with a distinctive incised decoration, often referred to as "Adriatic Ware." All in all, early, middle and late MH appear to be represented, suggesting continuous habitation.

Special focus will be on the pottery evidence for the transition from Middle to Late Helladic (LH), which is often called the Shaft Grave era (MH III-LH IIA). The pottery evidence consists of a rather small number of sherds, often with Minoan connections, from our own excavations, as well two complete pots from one of the cist graves discovered during brief British explorations in 1905.

Why the acropolis of Geraki was abandoned after the Shaft Grave era, only to be reoccupied in Protogeometric times, remains a difficult question. For answers I am counting on those present at this conference.



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Ceramic Evidence on the Transition to the Mycenaean Era in Southern Laconia: Prehistoric Pottery from Passavas near Gytheio

E. Banou, University of the Peloponnese

M. Tsouli, Director of the Department of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and Museums, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

G. Tsiaggouris, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

The hill of Passavas, identified by many scholars with the ancient site of Las, dominates the passage leading from the plain of Mavrovouni, south of Gytheio, to the Mani peninsula. About 2,5 km to the E. rises the hill complex of Vardies, where an important Bronze Age settlement and a Mycenaean cemetery are located. and 2 km. to the S. opens the seashore of Vathy. During technical works for the improvement of the national road leading from Gytheio to Areopolis, thirteen sites around the foothills of Passavas were discovered, mostly dating from Classical to Early Roman times, confirming the importance of the area in antiquity. On the eastern foothills of Passavas an undisturbed layer was excavated, containing a considerable quantity of pottery dated to the MMIII-LHII period.

The pottery shows a noteworthy variation, including imitations of Grey, Yellow and Red Minyan, Mainland Polychrome, Oatmeal Minoanising and Fine Minoanising, comprising some Lustrous Decorated sherds, and probable Minoan imports, Micaceous Minoanising, comprising sherds of the Red Silver category, and Mycenaean wares, and points to a significant degree of experimentation in the transition from MH to LH, under the influence of Crete and the island of Kythera. The paper discusses the new ceramic evidence in relation to the material from Ayios Stephanos and assesses the role of Laconia in the emergence of the Mycenaean pottery style under the light of older and recent views on this matter.



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**Throwing some light on the early history of the Mycenaean palace at Ayios Vasileios, Laconia:
Examining three early Mycenaean pottery deposits from Building Alpha.**

Dora Kondyli, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Iro Mathioudaki, Université catholique de Louvain

Extensive excavations at Ayios Vasileios, Xerocambi in Laconia, brought into light an important Mycenaean palatial center. The well stratified material enables the investigation of the character of an established Mycenaean center indicating interesting patterns of pottery production and consumption; but it also offers the chance to investigate patterns of sociopolitical value, which also concern the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (i.e. early Mycenaean period), the layers of which have rarely been reached so far. In this paper three intentional deposits of possibly ritual character from this early period are being examined, which derive from underneath Building Alpha, a very important building of the center, where also twenty-one bronze swords were found. The deposits extending their range to the building's core include vessels of different styles and wares, which are further compared to types known from other centres mainly in Laconia, in order to reveal interaction spheres within this part of the Peloponnese and, furthermore, throw some light on the early formation processes of the center. Pottery trends of the early Mycenaean period, also observed in other Peloponnesian sites, like the preference of fine light buff surfaces and the combination of small sized drinking vessels and large elaborately decorated jars, i.e. items of display, are also evident at Ayios Vasileios. Collating relevant deposits from Laconian sites makes it possible to restore local pottery sequences and, by comparing those to other Peloponnesian sites, reflect early production patterns and modes of interaction and material exchange.



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The relationship between Central and South Laconia during the Early Mycenaean period: The pottery evidence

Vasco Hachtmann, University of Heidelberg

Sofia Voutsaki, University of Groningen

Pottery concerns the everyday household level of society. Therefore, the study of ceramic assemblages is a first important indicator for how close different communities are in their stylistic choices and practices of consumption. Other advantages of this artefact class are its statistical significance and its potential to synchronize with its material manifestations of activities. In this paper we are going to compare pottery style, wares and fabrics at Ayios Vasilios and the Menelaion in Central Laconia and at Ayios Stephanos in South Laconia from the end of the Middle Helladic period until the beginning of the palatial period around the early LH IIIA2 sub-phase. Based on this evidence we may assess our current knowledge about the relationship between these three sites, which common styles and techniques they shared, in what ceramic aspects they differ and which interregional contacts they had in times of significant changes in the social and political organisation. Of particular interest will be possible Cretan influence on drinking practices in different Laconian regions.



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New evidence on the funerary landscape of Middle Helladic Laconia

Maria Tsouli, Director of the Department of prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and Museums, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

Aphrodite Maltezou, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

George Tsiaggouris, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

During recent rescue excavations of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Laconia, a considerable number of graves dated to the end of Middle Helladic period have been unearthed in five sites across the Middle Eurotas valley. Two of them were located and investigated at the southern part of the new Lefktro-Sparta motorway, namely by the sites “Kalamakia” of Kokkinorachi and “Houni” of Kladas villages, northwest of Sparta. In the vicinity of the city of Sparta itself, at the excavation of the University of the Peloponnese plot, in the area of Psychico, very close to the well-known MH III/LH I cemetery, two more burials of possible Middle Helladic date were also unearthed. Furthermore, within the framework of the construction of Skoura-Pyri road, a considerable number of Prehistoric sites were investigated, among other a monumental tomb of Middle Helladic date close to the site “Vrysika” of Xirokambi. Last of all, at the southern edge of the Middle Eurotas valley, at the site “Kamarakia” of Xirokambi, a cluster of graves of the same date were unearthed. The last two sites are located close to the Mycenaean palatial center of Ayios Vasileios, respectively to the east and south of it.

The whole range of grave types is ascertained: built chamber tombs, cist built graves, slab cists, simple pits and stone-lined pit graves are presented. It should be mentioned that the cist built grave, similar to those of the MHIII/LH I cemetery of Ayios Vasileios, and a stone – lined pit found at the site of Kamarakia, must probably have belonged to a cemetery.

Unfortunately, scanty skeletal remains have been preserved, that cannot be attributed to primary or secondary burials. The graves offerings are modest and not differentiated from the general state of the period, and comprise mainly of small vessels.

The paper finally aims at comparing the abovementioned graves to the already known Middle Helladic examples, thus complementing our knowledge of the funerary landscape of Middle Helladic Laconia.



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A new cemetery of the Late Bronze Age at Pellana, in the northern part of the Eurotas valley.

Leonidas Souchleris, Laconia Ephorate of Antiquities

From 2009 to 2016, within the archaeological supervision that was held during the construction of the new Lefktro-Sparta motorway and the major public works held in the Municipality of Sparta, seven new archaeological sites dated to the Late Helladic period were brought to light, at the area that extends from the region of Longanikos village, at north Laconia, to the city of Sparta. The new finds are related to cemeteries, rural and residential facilities and religious sites.

The important of these sites is the new cemetery with chamber tombs that was found on the hill of Agios Ioannis, at the area of the new bridge of Pellana village, close to the west bank of Eurotas.

The architectural form of the tombs and the grave gifts indicate that the cemetery was in use from the late LHIIIB up to the beginning of the LHIIIB1 period, while influences, imports and contacts with the Mycenaean administrative centers of Eleia, Messenia, Attica, Cyprus and, mainly with Mycenae, can also be identified.

The new cemetery is located to the southeast of the modern village of Pellana and approximately 2 km away from the large Mycenaean cemetery of the rock-cut tholos tombs at the site "Spilies - Pelekiti". The two cemeteries as well as the burials at the site "Triporache" seem to define the territory of a large administrative center at the area of Pellana, in the northern part of the Eurotas valley, during the LHIIIA period.



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Health status in Middle and Late Helladic Laconia

Tomáš Alušík, Charles University, Prague

On the basis of the published reports on the preserved human skeletal remains from Agios Vasilios (MH III-LH I/II), Kouphovouno (MH) and Sykia (LH II-III) an overview of the demography, health status and diet of the population of Laconia in the period of question will be elaborated and generalized. The individuals from Kouphovouno show various kinds of pathologies, incl. several kinds of the manifestations of physiological stress. The population of Sykia seems to be generally healthier. The health status of these three sites will be compared with populations from some sites in the neighbouring regions (Messenia and Argolid) in order to see if the health status, basic demographic parameters and diet significantly changed between Middle and Late Helladic periods – and, eventually, if such change might be linked to any social and political change.



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The North Cemetery at Ayios Vasilios: austerity and differentiation in the Early Mycenaean period

Sofia Voutsaki, University of Groningen

Ioanna Moutafi, University of Cambridge

Vasco Hachtmann, University of Heidelberg

Michael Dee, University of Groningen

The North Cemetery at Ayios Vasilios has been excavated between 2010 and 2016 as part of the Ayios Vasilios excavations under the auspices of the Archaeological Society and the general direction of Mrs Adamantia Vasilogamvrou.

The cemetery provides us with important insights into the significant changes taking place in the Early Mycenaean era. This period witnesses changes in the mortuary practices: the introduction of extramural formal cemeteries, the adoption of larger, more labour consuming tombs, the adoption of multiple burials and secondary treatment, the inclusion of richer and more diverse offerings with the dead. These new customs adumbrate the social changes taking place in this period of increased differentiation, competition and connectivity: the growing divisions among age and gender groups, the emergence of status as an important criterion of social categorisation, but also the renewed significance of kin relations.

Several questions arise: To what extent was the community burying their dead in the North Cemetery affected by these changes? To what extent did they follow the new norms and customs, and how did they adapt them to their local traditions or their own social needs? This paper has two aims: a) to offer a contextual analysis of subtle differentiation along age, gender, status and kin divisions in the North Cemetery, and b) to discuss the austerity and restraint which characterizes this burial ground in a period of burgeoning mortuary display and ostentation.



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Destruction, construction and reconstruction: the Built Chamber Tomb of the North Cemetery at Ayios Vasilios, Laconia

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This study is concerned with the reconstruction of the architecture of a so-called Built Chamber Tomb found in the early Mycenaean cemetery of Ayios Vasilios, mainland Greece (approx. 1700-1420 BC). The Built Chamber Tomb is a rather rare tomb type that signals some of the first architectural elaborations on the mainland and they are testament to a change in funerary practices and beliefs. At the same time pervasive social changes take place with the appearance of social differentiation.

The first part of this study aims at understanding both how the tomb collapsed and how it was originally constructed, as well as the sequence of actions that have taken place inside the tomb. More than 25 people were buried inside at different times, which means the tomb was repeatedly opened with every single interment. To understand the construction and use of this tomb, we use a number of Digital Archaeology recording techniques, such as Structure from Motion (photogrammetry) and Virtual Reality (in cooperation with the Reality Center at the University of Groningen).

In the second part of this paper particular attention will be paid to architectural parallels to obtain a better understanding regarding the development of mortuary architecture, both within Laconia and the wider Aegean. The first results suggest that the builders were experimenting with the idea of using a corbelling method to support the superstructure of the tomb. Based on the resultant hypothesis, Tomb 21 could perhaps be equated with other locally and regionally known built tombs such as Psychiko and Palaiochori.



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Brick by brick: Labour investment and processes of change in Ayios Vasilios

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The central objects of study in this paper are the tombs from the North Cemetery of Ayios Vasilios, and the effort it took to build them. These tombs, although not very monumental in terms of scale, display a surprising variety in terms of building material, form and style. Since the tombs are dated to the period right before the construction of the palatial structures found at the same site, they can reveal important information about the formative stages of the palatial community and about the processes of socio-political and economic change in a what is called the Transitional Period.

In this paper the tombs will be systematically examined using architectural energetics: a method that reconstructs construction costs in labour-time. The study of labour investment in architecture already has a long research history and it has become apparent that labour-costs should not be read as static reflections of power and socio-political organisation. Instead, we should also view the production of architecture as a social practice within a performative arena. At the centre of every construction project is human action that is temporally and spatially bound. It is at the level of human interaction - with other humans or materials - that social, political and economic positions and relationships can be created, broken and renewed. I argue that by exploring small-scale agentic practices and their material expressions we simultaneously grasp large-scale spatial, temporal and social realities. Thus, by analysing and diagramming the construction process on a human-scale, and making use of both quantitative and qualitative data, this paper explores the different meanings of architectural elements and labour investment to reconstruct the various building strategies that were applied in the North Cemetery and to inquire into the processes of labour mobilization and centralization in Ayios Vasilios and its broader surroundings.