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THE SEA PEOPLES' "SEPULCHRAL MEDINET HABU"? THE LH IIIC WARRIOR BURIALS OF THE NORTH-WESTERN PELOPONNESE AND THE ORIGINS OF ACHAIAN ETHNICITY THEODOROS G. GIANNOPOULOS

SUMMARY

Since the 1930s a constantly increasing number of warrior burials of Late Helladic IIIC date (12th and early 11th century B.C.) have come to light in the north-western Peloponnese, especially within the borders of the historical and modern region of Achaia. The 24 excavated buried warriors (16 in Achaia) represent the greatest concentration of contemporary warrior burials in the Aegean and are accompanied by an equal number of Naue II swords. The aim of the present paper is to provide a systematic and up-to-date consideration of this group of warrior burials, stressing its importance as a case study for two different and often competing theoretical approaches: one principally socio-archaeological, focusing on social status and display and sometimes questioning the real warrior identity of the deceased, and the other more biographical-historical, associating social questions with the perspective of real warrior lives. Disconnecting the finds in question from both the idea of a "static", land-based ruling elite and from various migrationist

hypotheses, we explore their biographical dimension within the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Aegean and Mediterranean historical context. Through an interdisciplinary study it is possible to examine the relationship of the north-western Peloponnese with the wider “Sea Peoples phenomenon” of the late 2nd millennium B.C. and the significance of the Mycenaean post-palatial era for toponymic associations and identity perceptions hitherto exclusively related to early historical antiquity.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Από τη δεκαετία του 1930 και εξής ένας διαρκώς αυξανόμενος αριθμός ταφών πολεμιστών της Υστεροελλαδικής ΙΙΙΓ περιόδου (12ου και πρώιμου 11ου αιώνα π.Χ.) έρχεται στο φως στη βορειοδυτική Πελοπόννησο και ιδίως στην περιοχή εκείνη, που τόσο στην αρχαιότητα όσο και σήμερα φέρει την ονομασία Αχαΐα. Οι 24 ταφές πολεμιστών που έχουν ως τώρα ανασκαφεί (16 εξ αυτών στην Αχαΐα) συνιστούν τη μεγαλύτερη συγκέντρωση ταφών πολεμιστών της περιόδου αυτής στο Αιγαίο και συνοδεύονται από ισάριθμα ξίφη Naue II. Σκοπός του παρόντος άρθρου είναι να προσφέρει μια συστηματική και επικαιροποιημένη επισκόπηση αυτής της ομάδας ταφών πολεμιστών, αναδεικνύοντας τη σημασία της ως μελέτης περίπτωσης για δύο διαφορετικές και συχνά αντικρουόμενες θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις: μιας πρωτίστως κοινωνικο-αρχαιολογικής, που εστιάζει σε ζητήματα κοινωνικής θέσης και επίδειξης και ενίοτε αμφισβητεί την πραγματική πολεμική ιδιότητα των νεκρών, και μιας πιο βιογραφικής-ιστορικής, που εξετάζει κοινωνικά ερωτήματα υπό το πρίσμα της ύπαρξης αληθινών πολεμιστών. Αποσυνδέοντας τα συγκεκριμένα ευρήματα τόσο από την ιδέα μιας «στατικής», χερσαίας ηγετικής ελίτ όσο και από διάφορες υποθέσεις μεταναστευτισμού, γίνεται προσπάθεια να διερευνηθεί η βιογραφική τους διάσταση εντός του ιστορικού πλαισίου της Ύστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού και της Πρώιμης Εποχής του Σιδήρου στο Αιγαίο και στη Μεσόγειο. Στο πλαίσιο μιας διεπιστημονικής προσέγγισης, καθίσταται εφικτό να μελετηθεί η σχέση της βορειοδυτικής Πελοποννήσου με το ευρύτερο

«φαινόμενο των Λαών της Θαλάσσης» της ύστερης 2ης χιλιετίας π.Χ., καθώς και η σημασία της μυκηναϊκής μετανακτορικής περιόδου για τοπωνυμιακές συσχετίσεις και ταυτοτικές αντιλήψεις, που ως τώρα θεωρείται πως ανάγονται αποκλειστικά στους πρώιμους ιστορικούς χρόνους της αρχαιότητας.

INTRODUCTION¹

Since at least the 5th century B.C., the north-western landscape of the Peloponnese emerges on the historical scene with the name "Achaia". A region of southern Greece with a rather humble existence in mythological traditions and early historical developments was thus associated with a toponym bearing significant epic connotations. Almost seven centuries before this toponymic association, at the end of the Late Helladic (LH) or Mycenaean period, the region in question became the final resting place for a numerous and special group of people. Its archaeological imprint is a constantly increasing number of warrior graves of LH IIIC date (c. 1200–1060 B.C.), gradually uncovered since the late 1930s. Sixteen warrior burials dating to this period have been excavated in the chamber tomb cemeteries of this region.² Along with eight other similar finds in the adjacent regions (Elis and Arcadia), they represent the greatest contemporary concentration of warrior burials known in the Aegean. Their "coat of arms" is the cut-and-

1. The present paper has a long story, going back to 2009, when a much earlier and shorter version of it was orally delivered at the *Round Table on Bronze Age Aegean Warfare*, organised by A. Papadopoulos and K. Grigoropoulos in Athens. Its final, much extended and heavily revised version owes much to both the numerous important studies on the subject published in recent years and the excellent review process of

the journal *Aegean Studies*. I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive and stimulating comments. For useful discussions about aspects of this paper I would also like to thank my colleagues R. Jung, S. Kaskantiri, I. Moutafi and A. Vassilopoulou. I am also grateful to Sp. Skourtis and A. Sharples (sharpsightedgrammar.co.uk) for thoroughly reviewing my English text.

2. Some of the main publications dealing with the subject are: Deger-Jalkotzy 2006: 157–161, 168–169; Eder 2003: 38–50; 2006: 557–559; Giannopoulos 2008: 201–252; Kaskantiri 2016: 257–260, 354–358; Moschos 2002: 29–30; Papadopoulos 1999; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994; Paschalidis 2018: 472–474; Petropoulos 2000: 72; Salavoura 2015: 381–387.

thrust sword of Naue II Type, which is an important component of the metallurgical *koine* with central European and Balkan origins that experienced a widespread distribution “from the Rhine to the Orontes”³ in the last, turbulent centuries of the 2nd millennium B.C. The LH IIIC Naue II swords that accompany the buried warriors in the north-western Peloponnese form the largest concentration of these weapons found in a single region of the eastern Mediterranean.⁴

Occurring not sporadically but rather as a group or horizon (in geographical and chronological terms), the warrior burials under discussion seem to belong to those specific funerary finds of the Aegean Late Bronze Age that, each time in their own spatial and temporal context, appear to document the emergence of a new warrior class with special social significance. The sensational finds associated with the beginning of the Mycenaean culture are examples of such groups of warrior burials: e.g. the shaft graves discovered in 1876 by H. Schliemann in Grave Circle A of Mycenae⁵ and the more recently excavated Griffin Warrior of Pylos.⁶ A later important group are the Late Minoan II–IIIA warrior graves of Knossos.⁷ It is therefore not surprising that both the cultural development in LH IIIC north-western Peloponnese and the phenomenon of warrior burials have attracted the interest of many scholars in recent decades. However, despite the significant amount of available archaeological evidence and the attempts to interpret aspects of the phenomenon, we contend that no sufficient understanding of it has yet been reached. In our view, any attempt to contribute to the study of the archaeological finds in question has to start with some important theoretical and methodological considerations.

A first fundamental issue that has to be addressed relates to the very term “warrior burial”. In recent decades, the argument has been advanced that the term “warrior burial” (or “warrior grave”) is problematic because it reflects a “common-sense”, straightforward biographical reading of the archaeological evidence and is therefore insufficiently critical.⁸ Use of the term under discussion has been described as “one of the most tenacious legacies of Homeric archaeology”⁹ and viewed as a remnant of the early days of

3. Jung 2009: 72–73. See also Kristiansen & Suchowska-Ducke 2015: 373–375, figs. 5–6.
4. Giannopoulos 2008: 168, n. 332; Kaskantiri 2016: 429. Crete and Cyprus have yielded the second largest concentrations.
5. For the burials of the Grave Circle A see Karo 1930; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1986: 159–198; Schliemann 1878.
6. Davis & Stocker 2016.
7. Driessen & Macdonald 1984: 56–69; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985: 196–214; Matthäus 1983: 203–215.
8. Anderson 2018; Arena 2020: 41–42; D’Onofrio 2011; Georganas 2018; Whitley 2002.
9. Whitley 2002: 218.

Aegean prehistory, which were characterised by pioneers of the discipline attempting to use archaeological evidence to substantiate the historical truth of the Homeric epics. This "biographical fallacy" argument relies *prima facie* on the results of the osteological study of human bones from warrior burials both in the prehistoric Aegean and in other cultural contexts. The osteological evidence suggests that some individuals buried as elite warriors could not have been real warriors in life, being either too young (as, for example, in Burial II at the Late Minoan Grave 4 at Sellopoulo or in some early Anglo-Saxon burials in England¹⁰) or exhibiting no combat-related injuries (although, as rightly suggested, in many cases bladed weapon attacks would have targeted the osteologically less visible soft tissues¹¹). It has therefore been suggested that the grave goods in these cases are to be principally studied as symbolic metaphors and metonymies for certain concepts of identity¹² and that the term "warrior burial" should be abandoned in favour of the more neutrally descriptive "burial with weapons".¹³

In its emphasis on scientifically "proving" or "disproving" the real warrior identity of individuals buried with weapons, the above sketched argument seems grounded in a positivist stance that can, to some extent, be challenged. More concretely, we think that there are three reasons for maintaining the use of the term "warrior burial", both in the present text and in general. Firstly, substituting the term "warrior burial" with a seemingly more neutral description, such as "burial with weapons", risks imposing the *etic* (outsider) approach of modern research on the *emic* (internal) point of view of the past society under study.¹⁴ The fact that a 12-year-old child in pagan, Early Anglo-Saxon England or Philip Arrhidæus, Alexander the Great's disabled successor,¹⁵ can be identified by us today as people who were buried with the *persona* of a warrior despite probably never having been real combatants,¹⁶ does not negate the fact that they were apparently *seen as warriors* by their own society or social class within the context of their burial and perhaps even in life. Consequently, it is the term "warrior burial" that might bring us closer to the beliefs and concepts of the past societies that we want to understand, so long as we don't ignore the possibility of a

10. Whitley 2002: 219–220, 224.

11. Georganas 2018: 191, 195; Molloy 2012: 121.

12. Whitley 2002: 219.

13. Georganas 2018: 195.

14. For a comprehensive overview of the history and use of these terms see Headland *et al.* 1990.

15. Mentioned as an example by Whitley 2002: 219.

16. Anderson 2018: 220.

“biographical fallacy”. Secondly, the existence of specific graves in which the warrior attribute appears to have been symbolically ascribed to non-warriors through a “weapon burial ritual”¹⁷ does not sufficiently substantiate an inductive, diachronic or cross-cultural generalisation that excludes (or implicitly downplays, through the use of alternative and equally non-neutral terminology) the possibility that in many other cases the persons buried with weapons were indeed warriors in life. As we shall see, the available evidence regarding the warrior burials of the north-western Peloponnese both the archaeological (including the study of weapons’ highly functional technical features and use-wear traces) and the certainly insufficient osteological (the interpretation of which is not free of theoretical assumptions) seems compatible with a more or less “biographical” reading of the funerary record. Overemphasising the possibility of a “biographical fallacy” can therefore lead to a “critical fallacy” that underemphasises the importance of warfare in a past society by overly focusing on the possible dichotomy between a “literal” (i.e. biographical) and “critical” approach to the warrior burials. Thirdly, this dichotomy does not seem so sharp if the main question we seek to answer is whether the military equipment found among the grave goods in certain groups of ancient burials denotes either directly (accompanying real warriors) or indirectly (symbolically ascribing the warrior attribute to non-combatants) the *general significance* of real warfare for the past society under study and the active engagement in it of some of its members. In other words, the proposed dichotomy largely depends on the questions we set and their underlying theoretical orientations and assumptions.

There is no need to stress that archaeological finds can be approached from many theoretical perspectives focusing on different aspects of the material culture. Regarding the mortuary data,¹⁸ for instance, the question of whether the individuals buried with weapons were indeed real warriors is of particular interest for many studies within the paradigm of social archaeology. In these studies, the ancient funerary ceremonies and rites are usually approached either as passive and latent reflections or as active manipulations

17. Whitley 2002: 218.

18. For a recent and comprehensive overview of the different theoretical approaches to mortuary data see Moutafi 2021: 16–46. See also Parker Pearson 1999.

of different aspects of social structure, identity or inequality. Under the influence of this powerful tradition, burial rites are often seen as an instrument for a prestige ideology, "a versatile arena of social negotiation"¹⁹ or "a platform for social aggrandisement",²⁰ while certain foreign or valuable grave goods are identified as "prestige items" used by elite groups for legitimatory display.²¹ Even in mainly social analyses of warrior burials not openly questioning a possible "biographical" reading of the evidence, such as the first treatment of the Achaian warrior graves by the present author,²² the predominant emphasis on exploring the real or aspired social status of the deceased can push concerns about real warfare into the background. Explaining the presence of weapons in tombs by reference to their presumed function in identity construction is also an element of studies of ancient warfare that seek to highlight the important interactions between different social subsystems (military, economic and religious) within the framework of a processual systemic analysis.²³

On the other hand, some studies of warrior burials rooted in a more postprocessual tradition focus on uncovering the contextual meanings of the archaeological record. P. Treherne's influential article on "warrior's beauty",²⁴ for instance, criticises the model of social competition and prestige display as essentially functionalist²⁵ and approaches warrior identity in death not as an ideological construct or "superstructure" of elite interests but as a reflection of a similar warrior identity in life. According to this view, a specific set of grave goods in warrior burials (including toilet articles, such as razors, tweezers, and awls) expresses a shared life-and-death style of Bronze Age warrior elites, centred on the aesthetics of both the living and the dead masculine body. This "warrior's beauty" as a component of the funerary rite is regarded as counteracting the notions of mutilation and decay of the corpse as well as fixing an image of the deceased in the memory of the community. One of the most important aspects of this approach, which is to a significant extent inspired by Homeric ideals, is the (re)association of funerary rituals with death itself and of the warrior burials with the possibility of real warrior lives.

19. Preston 1999: 134.

20. Treherne 1995: 116, 121.

21. It is worth noting that the socio-archaeological concept of burial as "a cause of idle pride to the living" that "makes little difference to the dead" is already encountered in Euripides' *Trojan Women* (*Troades*), 1248–1250. I am grateful to Stavros Karayanni, Professor of English at European University Cyprus, for bringing this beautiful passage to my attention.

22. Giannopoulos 2008.

23. Molloy 2012.

24. Treherne 1995; See also Frieman *et al.* 2017.

25. Treherne 1995: 116.

These warrior lives, however, should not be understood as merely including the lived experience of a warrior ideology, comprising certain heroic aesthetics. As H. Vandkilde justly remarks, it is again the Homeric world that reminds us of the double essence of warriorhood, which can be both about heroic codes of conduct and about real and deadly violence.²⁶ Disconnecting warfare from “warriors” (i.e. constructed warrior identities or personas) and, more specifically, from warrior burials can limit “our knowledge of how war and its agents influenced history and vice versa”²⁷ and even discourage (not just critically assess) the association of archaeological evidence of warfare with episodes or periods of actual war activities. The Middle and Late Bronze Age in Europe, when extensive archaeological and historical evidence testifies to the emergence of institutionalised and professionalised warfare, is such a period.²⁸ This warfare is reflected in the remarkable, pan-European distribution of new, highly efficient weapons, like the Naue II sword. This expansion process evidenced in numerous finds, especially in burials and hoards, “points to disruption and violence along the way”.²⁹ Not losing sight of the violent and impactful reality of warfare is therefore essential, particularly if we seek to reach a *historical* understanding of the past phenomena under study, which we would argue is a crucial objective in the case of the LH IIIC north-western Peloponnese and its warrior burials.

From a more epistemological perspective, the difficulty in embedding the archaeological data in question into an illuminating historical narrative might indicate that the LH IIIC north-western Peloponnese is one of those research topics in which a step by step, purely or mainly inductivist methodological approach does not suffice unless the small, inductive steps are sometimes combined with greater deductive “leaps”. Mainly focusing on the Achaian warrior burials, the present paper aims not only to provide a thorough and updated overview of their main features but also to propose a historical narrative by formulating hypotheses partly based on present evidence and partly by opening up bolder interpretative avenues to be assessed by future research. The term “historical” refers to the objective of the present analysis to restore the biographical

26. Vandkilde 2018: 231–233.

27. Frieman *et al.* 2017: 59.

28. See, for instance, Horn & Kristiansen 2018; Kristiansen 2018.

29. Kristiansen & Suchowska-Ducke 2015: 376.

dimension of the warrior burials under study by drawing on historical (contemporary and later written sources), archaeological and linguistic evidence pertaining to this particular Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Aegean and Mediterranean context. Finally, we shall see that conceiving of the "warrior behind the warrior burial" paves a very suitable ground for providing narratives and accounts of individual lived lives, whose importance for archaeology has been stressed by I. Hodder.³⁰

After a short introduction to Achaia's cultural development in the Mycenaean period (I) and the discovery of the LH IIIC warrior burials (II), we will approach the main features of the Achaian graves (III). We will first discuss the spatial and chronological distribution of these burials (III.1–2) and then examine how a socio-archaeological analysis primarily centred on issues of social status and display can be contested by a more biographical line of interpretation assuming real warrior identities in life (III.3–4). Finally, we will expand our biographical approach into a more general historical interpretation of the post-palatial north-western Peloponnese and its warrior class (IV) by assembling several bodies of archaeological evidence and theoretical thought. This interdisciplinary research quest results (V) in shedding new light on the association of the name Achaia with the north-western Peloponnese and in expressing thoughts on the possible significance of the Mycenaean post-palatial horizon for the ethnic identities of later historical antiquity.

30. Hodder 2000.

31. For the periphery of the Mycenaean world see Froussou 1999; Kyparissi-Apostolika & Papakonstantinou 2003.

32. Giannopoulos 2018: 270. For a recent overview of Mycenaean Achaia, with references on all major older and recent research contributions, see Moutafi 2021: 6–9.

I. ACHAIA IN THE MYCENAEAN PERIOD

Achaia is thought to belong to the so-called periphery of the Mycenaean world.³¹ No palatial structures have been revealed in this north-western part of the Peloponnese, something that poses additional challenges to scholars seeking to reconstruct historical and social processes during the Mycenaean period.³² Moreover, Achaia's cultural development in most part of the Late Bronze Age exhibits an interesting similarity to its later history in the Geometric,

Archaic and Classical periods, when it remained a peripheral part of the Greek world, with little participation in the great historical and cultural processes of the surrounding regions.³³ It was only in the Hellenistic period that the north-western Peloponnese emerged as a significant political and military power, during which the Second Achaian League (256–146 B.C.) was even meant to lead the last struggle of the Greeks against the Romans. A similar delay regarding the unfolding of considerable socio-historical developments is discernible in the course of Achaia's history in the Late Bronze Age.

During the Early Mycenaean and the Palatial period, the north-western Peloponnese remained a provincial region following the mainstreams of cultural development. For instance, a horizon of six Early Mycenaean small tholos tombs, in the western Achaian sites of Katarraktis-Rodia, Kallithea-Laganidia, Petroto and Portes,³⁴ is present in the region, and there is at least one association with person(s) of significant wealth and external connections: the so-called hoard of Pharai, found outside Tholos Tomb B at Katarraktis-Rodia and consisting of silver and bronze vessels, and bronze weapons possibly imported from (or acquired in) other Mycenaean centers, including a sword of Type A and a dagger with inlaid decoration of dolphins.³⁵ As in other regions of Mycenaean Greece, in the succeeding LH IIIA–B phases, the use of the Achaian tholos tombs ceased,³⁶ a phenomenon that could reflect a power centralisation process. Nevertheless, although there are findings like the monumental LH IIIA Chamber Tomb 4 in the cemetery of Voudeni,³⁷ indicating the existence of local rulers (or important individuals) with considerable wealth, no evidence of a palatial administration and its social order has so far been unearthed in Achaia. The warrior burial found in Chamber Tomb Θ of the cemetery of Kallithea-Laganidia,³⁸ a burial context possibly dating to LH IIIA, could be ascribed to an important person. This is also the case with a number of LH IIIB burials furnished with daggers and sometimes with ceramic offerings, demonstrating contacts with Crete and Argolid.³⁹ According to a recent argument, the Achaian social landscape during the Mycenaean Palatial period was one of small-scale chiefdoms of Early Mycenaean standards, which were principally

33. Giannopoulos 2008: 1, 253.

34. Giannopoulos 2008: 42–46, 53–54, 57–60, figs. 10, 14, with all primary bibliographical references. See also Arena 2015: 12–14; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 2010; Paschalidis 2018: 6, 10–12, 14.

35. Giannopoulos 2008: 41–46, fig. 10; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 2020: 132–137, figs. 7:2–9.

36. Papazoglou-Manioudaki 2010: 501–502, 516.

37. Giannopoulos 2008: 64–65, fig. 15; Kolonas 1988: 168–170, drawing 16.

38. Papadopoulos 1992a: 24, fig. 28; 1992b: 58, pl. 19; 1999: 269–270, pl. LVII:c.

39. Moschos 2009a: 350; van den Berg 2018: 197, both with further references.

independent from the palatial centers, although to some degree overshadowed by the latter's economic and trade activities.⁴⁰

Although this hypothesis is certainly open to falsification by the possible future discovery of a Mycenaean palace in Achaia, the present state of research seems indeed to indicate that during the Palatial period social complexity in this region maintained the Early Mycenaean or, to a certain extent, even the Middle Helladic standards.⁴¹ Achaia appears to have become the epicentre of significant cultural and historical developments, possibly (but not necessarily) reflecting social transformations, in the twilight of the Mycenaean period. The most important remains from LH IIIC Achaia are undoubtedly the 16 known warrior burials that we will now examine in greater detail.

II. LH IIIC WARRIOR BURIALS: HISTORY OF RESEARCH

The history of discovery of the Achaian warrior tombs, most of which were excavated by the local Ephorate of the Greek Archaeological Service, extends chronologically from the late 1930s up to the present day. The first burial to be unearthed was found by N. Kyparisses in the cemetery of Clauss between the years 1937–1939. Its significance was unfortunately not appropriately assessed and its context has not been documented. The Naue II sword and the spearhead once accompanying the warrior were rediscovered many decades later in the National Museum of Athens and published by Th. Papadopoulos and L. Kontorli-Papadopoulou.⁴² The two warrior tombs of Kallithea (with the famous bronze greaves and a bronze headgear accompanying the warrior of Chamber Tomb A), excavated in 1953 by N. Yalouris, were the next two links in the chain of discoveries.⁴³ One year later, in 1954, it was Yalouris again who came across a fourth warrior burial, this time in Kangadi, the westernmost site having hitherto yielded a LH IIIC warrior grave.⁴⁴

After a long pause in discoveries, the warrior of Krini-Drimaleika was uncovered in 1981, with his sword still in its wooden scabbard.

40. Arena 2015.

41. Arena 2015: 21; Giannopoulos 2018: 270; Kaskantiri 2016: 433.

42. Papadopoulos & Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1984: 221–224, figs. 1, 2, pl. 29.

43. Giannopoulos 2008: 213–219, figs. 29–32; Papadopoulos 1979: 27 (no. 15), 160–161; Yalouris 1960: 42–67, supplement pls. (Beilage) 27–32.

44. Giannopoulos 2008: 204–205, fig. 24; Papadopoulos 1979: 164, 166, figs. 317:c, 320:c–d, 353:a, 356:c–d.

The context was properly documented and published by L. Papazoglou-Manioudaki.⁴⁵ Another Naue II sword came to light in 1990 in Krini-Agios Konstantinos denoting a LH IIIC buried warrior, but its context was badly disturbed.⁴⁶ In contrast, the two warrior burials in the Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika, revealed in 1989–1990 by M. Petropoulos in the locality of Lousika, were much better preserved, adequately excavated and published.⁴⁷ Another well preserved and published context is the Chamber Tomb Θ in Clauss, uncovered in 1991 when Th. Papadopoulos resumed excavation of the cemetery.⁴⁸ Two further warrior burials were unearthed in the 1990s: the warrior of Portes in Chamber Tomb 3 (excavated in 1994 by L. Kolonas and I. Moschos), who was buried with grave goods including greaves, a bronze vessel and a bronze headgear;⁴⁹ and the burial found in 1995 in Chamber Tomb 4 of Nikoleika,⁵⁰ the only one located in eastern Achaia. In the 2000s, four new Naue II swords were uncovered in the chamber tombs 67, 69 and 75 of the cemetery of Voudeni,⁵¹ indicating the existence of LH IIIC warrior burials in this important site. Finally, a last Naue II sword has apparently been discovered in the locality of Elaiochorion-Lousika, but no further information has yet been made accessible to the academic community.⁵²

Adding the five last-mentioned finds to the 13 warrior burials cited in earlier publications⁵³ should bring the total to 18. The reason we are listing 16 burials in this paper is because two of the previously

45. Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994: 171–200, figs. 1–25, pls. 23–36.

46. Petropoulos 1990: 132–133; Giannopoulos 2008: 125–126, pls. 59:1, 60:1, where, however, the Naue II sword published proved later to be the one from Drimaleika, see below. See also Kaskantiri 2016: 180–185, 187–188, 257–258, 354–355, pls. 131, 133:T2/X1.

47. Giannopoulos 2008: 101–104, 233–237, pls. 26–32, 33–35, 42–48, 49–51; Petropoulos 2000: 68–76, drawings 4–7, figs. 4–10, 21–46.

48. Papadopoulos 1991: 81, pl. 48:b; 1999: 270, pl. LVIII:b; Paschalidis 2018: 79–80, 83–85, 250–252, 416–420, 471–473, figs. 145, 147, 148, 158, 498–500:a–b, 501, 898.

49. Giannopoulos 2008: 205–207, figs. 25, 26; Kolonas 1996–1997: 474–475, fig. 2; 2000: 96, fig. 3; Kolonas & Moschos 1995: 218, pl. 83; Moschos 2009a: 356–359, figs. 1–2; 2012: 307, fig. 602.

50. Petropoulos 1995: 234, drawing 23; 2007: 257–264, figs. 6–8, 27, 29, 86, 87.

51. Kaskantiri 2016: 358; Moschos

2009a: 360, n. 71. More information about the context and chronology of these four Naue II swords will be included in Jung, Moschos and Mehofer, forthcoming.

52. Kaskantiri 2016: 358; Paschalidis 2018: 13, 417.

53. Especially in Papadopoulos 1999 and Giannopoulos 2008.

cited 13 findings proved in recent years to be non-existent. The first misunderstanding was caused by the initial impression that during the 1990 excavation of the 6th Ephorate in the site of Krini-Agios Konstantinos, two Naue II Swords were found. Later research in the storerooms of the Ephorate determined that one of the two swords bearing the label "Agios Konstantinos" was instead the sword found in Chamber Tomb 3 of Krini-Drimalaika in 1981. Unfortunately, by that time the sword of Drimalaika had been republished,⁵⁴ as assumed part of the present author's material, to which in reality belonged the other sword.⁵⁵ The second misunderstanding concerned a Naue II sword (found with the Burial Δ in Chamber Tomb 1 of Mitopolis) that was later revealed to be a bronze dagger.⁵⁶

Among these 16 burial contexts, there are no more than six that allow for reliable observations by virtue of their state of preservation, appropriate documentation and good publication. These are the two burials of Kallithea-Rabadania (Chamber Tombs A and B), the two finds of Spaliareika (Contexts 6 and 7 of Chamber Tomb 2), the warrior burial of Krini-Drimalaika (Chamber Tomb 3) and the warrior buried in Chamber Tomb Θ in Clauss. Additionally, important chronological observations can be made in relation to the Naue II sword of Krini-Agios Konstantinos (see below, section III.2). In the other cases, Tomb 3 of Portes and the four Naue II swords from Voudeni are well documented and very promising but not yet fully published; the context of the burial in Nikoleika is well documented but not very informative; the old excavation of Kyparisses in Clauss and the warrior burial of Kangadi were inadequately documented; and, as mentioned above, the burial context of the Naue II sword from Elaiochorion-Lousika remains at present entirely unknown. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, it is possible to attempt a systematic study of the main features of this group of finds.

54. In Giannopoulos 2008: 125–126, pls. 59:1, 60:1. See also Paschalidis 2018: 417, n. 858.

55. Eventually published in Kaskantiri

2016: 180–184, 187–188, 257–258, 354–355, pls. 131, 133:T2/X1.

56. Mentioned in Giannopoulos 2008: 207–208. See Moschos 2009a: 350,

n. 26 as well as Christakopoulou-Somakou 2010: 33–34, 133–134, 147; van den Berg 2018: 217.

III. LH IIIC WARRIOR BURIALS: MAIN ASPECTS OF THE PHENOMENON

III.1. THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE WARRIOR BURIALS

The LH IIIC Achaian warrior graves are present in many areas of the modern prefecture (Fig. 1, marked with black rectangles), but there is a conspicuous concentration in western Achaia, especially around the modern city of Patras. This district has yielded 10 of the 16 finds, excavated at sites like Voudeni, Krini, Kallithea and Clauss. Therefore, it would be reasonable to suggest that the region of Patras is of special importance for understanding the phenomenon. However, this plausible assertion has been contested in an

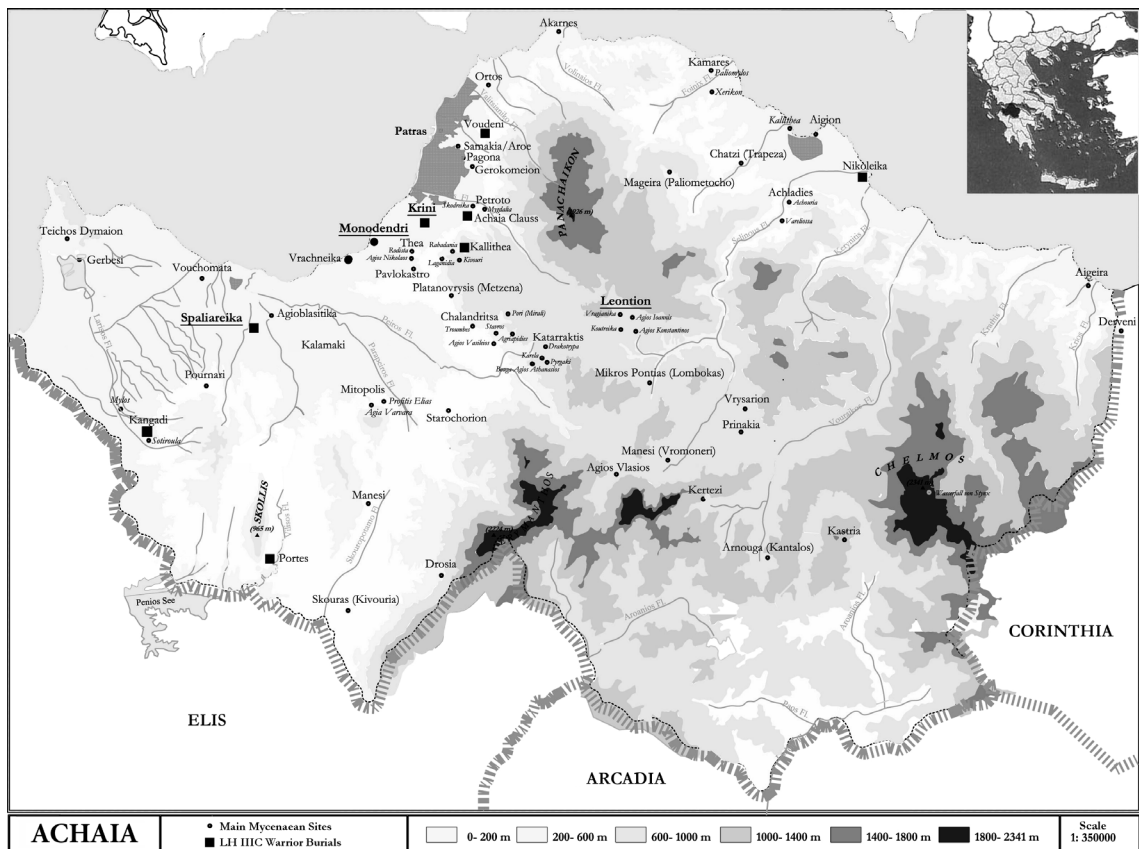


FIGURE 1.

Map of the main Mycenaean sites in Achaia. After Giannopoulos 2008, pl. 1 (the underlined sites yielded the archaeological material published in this monograph).

earlier publication,⁵⁷ in which the present author argued that the large concentration of warrior tombs and Mycenaean sites in the region of Patras is probably not only a reflection of the distant past but also an artefact of the present. It is well known that after the Second World War Greece experienced a large-scale urbanisation process. Population movements generated a housing shortage and subsequent extensive building activity in the regions and urban centres that experienced the greatest increase in population including Patras and its surrounding area, the population of which has increased rapidly in the last fifty years. At the same time, the Greek Archaeological Service mainly concentrated rescue excavations in these same regions. Therefore, as a result of the demographic development that took place in Achaia in the last 50 years, a great number of archaeological sites have been discovered in the area of the modern prefecture's capital city.

However, the coastal and fertile region of Patras has always been an attractive area for habitation. It is reasonable to assume that this area was also densely populated during the Mycenaean period and especially in LH IIIC, when, as we shall argue later, the maritime orientation of the population was probably stronger. Nevertheless, if we compare the density of habitation in Achaia with the number of sites known in other and often more important regions of the Mycenaean world,⁵⁸ we start to suspect that the great concentration of finds in the area of Patras paints a somewhat deceptive picture. It probably mirrors not only the Mycenaean past but also the present distribution of the population. A more careful look on the map suggests that the Achaian warrior burials are present in most parts of the modern prefecture; Spaliareika, Kangadi and Portes are located in western Achaia, while the tomb of Nikoleika in eastern Achaia substantiates the presence of the phenomenon in this part of the modern prefecture as well. It is possible that in this eastern district of Achaia, where the modern building activity is not as intense as it is in the area of Patras, many finds are yet to be discovered.

Moreover, the most impressive Mycenaean site in Achaia (and in the north-western Peloponnese), namely the fortified acropolis

57. Giannopoulos 2008: 18–22, pls. 1–3.

58. See, for instance, the distribution maps of the chamber tombs in LH IIIA–IIIC published in Cavanagh & Mee 1998: figs. 6:3, 7:2.

59. Giannopoulos 2008: 23–28, fig. 8 and n. 92 for further bibliographical references; Gazis 2010; Gazis 2017; Kolonas 2012. It is worth examining whether this imposing and partly Cyclopean fortress, the undoubtedly most significant site of the region in terms of settlement remains, is to be identified with prehistoric Olenos, i.e. the most important Achaian site in terms of mythological traditions. For Olenos see Giannopoulos 2008: 12–13, 15–16.
60. Mountjoy 1999: figs. 146:54–58.62–63.
61. Mountjoy 1999: 424–425, 430, figs. 149:185, 152:102–103; Papadopoulos 1979: 68–70, figs. 52–62, 191–197.
62. Mountjoy 1999: figs. 149:87.95, 152:103.108–109, 155:120–124; Papadopoulos 1979: figs. 61:a–b, 73:c, 74:e, 75–77, 78:a–d, 82–88, 205:a–b.
63. For the Greek sites see Deshayes 1966: pl. LX:8–9; Grossman & Schäfer 1971: 66, no. 15, pl. 35, 39; Kanta 1975: 265–266, figs. 11, 12; Mountjoy 1999: figs. 139:94, 172:4, 312:291. For the Albanian sites see Bodinaku 1995: figs. 1:4.7, 6:1–9; Wardle 1993: fig. 8, 10. For the Italian sites see Benzi and Graziadio 1996: 95–138, figs. 2–6; Guglielmino 2005: pl. CLXVI:d.g; Iacono & Guglielmino 2022: 201–206, figs. 15:2, 15:9 as well as Matricardi *et al.* 2020. For the importance of the Otranto straits within the context of these exchange systems see Eder & Jung 2005: 489–490.

of Teichos Dymaion,⁵⁹ is not located in the Patras area but in the north-westernmost corner of the region. Consequently, it is highly probable that the Mycenaean habitation as well as the distribution of LH IIIC warrior burials in Achaia followed a more balanced pattern than the one suggested by the modern map of archaeological discoveries. An interesting future research task would be to examine if the geographical distribution of the warrior tombs changes during the LH IIIC period. A clarification of the refined chronology of these contexts would be essential for this task, and that brings us to the next point of discussion.

III.2. THE CHRONOLOGICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE WARRIOR BURIALS

Chronologically, the majority of the Achaian warrior graves seem to be concentrated precisely in the second half of LH IIIC, in the sub-phases LH IIIC Middle and Late. This is also the period of greatest prosperity in Achaian pottery production, which shows signs of independent development since the beginning of LH IIIC. Closed shapes, like amphoriskoi or alabastra with characteristic dumpy bodies, wide bases and simple decoration⁶⁰ bear witness to a former provincial style transforming into a more autonomous ceramic tradition. This tendency reached its peak during LH IIIC Middle and Late, when we see the development of local pottery shapes (e.g. the large four-handled jar⁶¹) and distinctive decorative concepts (e.g. the typical, evenly-spaced banding of closed shapes, especially of the stirrup-jar,⁶² which was the most popular Achaian shape). The prosperity of Achaian pottery production is mirrored by its wide distribution. Sherds of Achaian vases, and particularly of the aforementioned evenly-banded stirrup-jars, turn up both in other Greek regions, such as Elis, Argolid, Phocis or the Ionian islands, and in Albanian and Italian sites around the straits of Otranto.⁶³

The Achaian warrior burials therefore seem to represent a single piece of a broader picture illustrating the prosperity and connectivity of the north-western Peloponnese in this late Mycenaean period. Unfortunately, the refined chronology of many warrior burials

within the broad chronological framework of LH IIIC Middle and Late is uncertain. The same is also true for the chronological subdivisions of the LH IIIC period in general in Achaia. The above-mentioned occasional presence of Achaian-style pottery in other regions has made it possible to broadly synchronise the development of this idiosyncratic style with the ceramic sequence of other Mycenaean centres. However, the lack of well-stratified and published settlement deposits leaves us without the solid ground required for a more detailed study of the relative chronology. Inevitably, much emphasis has been laid on stylistic factors, which are not always a safe chronological indicator especially if they are combined with the often deceptive "horizontal stratigraphy" of burials inside Mycenaean chamber tombs, which are often much more disturbed than they appear to be. Although there have been attempts to overcome these limitations in order to create a new chronological system of LH IIIC Achaian pottery based on burial contexts,⁶⁴ the results have to be strengthened by future settlement stratigraphies.⁶⁵ This is the only way to avoid the circular reasoning of ascribing settlement (or even cultural) phases to already defined ceramic ones, the validation of which relies, however, primarily on the stratigraphic settlement evidence. In any case, it is undoubtedly tempting to apply some form of contextual seriation to the ceramic grave offerings of the Achaian tombs.

Following the traditional, broad chronological synchronisation of LH IIIC Achaian pottery with the sequence in other Mycenaean centres, combined with some stylistic observations, the dating of at least some warrior burials can be partially refined. The warrior buried in Chamber Tomb Θ in Clauss has been dated to the main phase of LH IIIC Middle.⁶⁶ The warrior burial of Krini-Drimaleika has been ascribed to LH IIIC Middle/Advanced, and more specifically to a chronological phase prior to the appearance of evenly-spaced banding of stirrup-jars, since none of these vessels accompanied the deceased.⁶⁷ The burial of Context 7 in Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika, in which an evenly-banded stirrup-jar is included, appears to be more recent.⁶⁸ The two warrior burials of Kallithea may belong to the period of the fully developed band decoration, namely in LH

64. Moschos 2009a: 347–354, 363–364, table 1; 2009b, p. 238, n. 18, table 1.

65. Aktypi 2017: 262, n. 612. For the lack of well stratified and published settlement deposits see Moschos 2009b: 242–243.

66. Paschalidis 2018: 80, 86, 471–474.

67. Jung 2006: 207; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994: 176, 181, 199.

68. Giannopoulos 2008: 150–151, 234–236, pls. 33–35, 49–51.

IIC Middle/Advanced and Late.⁶⁹ The warrior of Tomb A was associated with a stirrup-jar that exhibits some Close Style features, implying an earlier date than the warrior of Tomb B.⁷⁰ The warrior burial of Portes has also been dated to LH IIC Middle/Advanced–LH IIC Late.⁷¹ The warrior burial of Context 6 in Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika is most likely the latest example of the phenomenon in Achaia,⁷² dating to a phase in which the decorative tradition of banding starts to give ground to a monochrome one.

The chronological concentration of almost all well preserved and published Achaian warrior burials in LH IIC Middle and Late is therefore supported by current archaeological evidence. However, the possible precursors of the phenomenon within LH IIC are more obscure. The full publication of the Naue II sword from Krini-Agios Konstantinos by S. Kaskantiri⁷³ significantly contributes to this discussion. It demonstrates that, although the sword was found in the lower burial layer of Chamber Tomb 2 (Sector A of the cemetery) without any ceramic co-finds, it can nevertheless be approximately dated on the basis of the ceramic grave offerings of the upper burial layer of the tomb. These pottery vessels date to the phases LH IIC Early and Middle, providing us, therefore, with a stratigraphic *terminus ante quem* for the Naue II sword found in the lower layer. As a consequence, the sword of Krini-Agios Konstantinos can be dated either to the last phase of LH IIIB or to the beginning of LH IIC.

This early dating is supported by the typological and technical features of the sword, which belong to the Type Nenzingen/Reutlingen/Cetona or to Kilian-Dirlmeier's Group A.⁷⁴ From both a European and eastern Mediterranean perspective, this is an early horizon

69. Yalouris 1960: supplement pls. (Beilage) 30:3–4, 32:6.

70. Deger-Jalkotzy 2006: 160; Giannopoulos 2008: 213–214; Mountjoy 1999: 427, fig. 150:96.

71. Eder & Jung 2005: pl. CVII; Jung 2006: 205.

72. Giannopoulos 2008: 234–236, pls. 26–32, 42–48.

73. Kaskantiri 2016: 180–185, 187–188,

257–258, 354–355, drawings 15:A, Γ, pls. 131, 133:T2/X1.

74. Bianco Peroni 1970: 62–64, pls. 19, 20; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1993: 95–96, pls. 34, 35:233–236; Pabst 2013: 106, fig. 1; Schauer 1971: 132–144, pls. 58:395–399, 59–62, 63:428–432. The sword from Krini-Agios Konstantinos demonstrates that this specific type of Naue II swords was in use

in the north-western Peloponnese during LH IIC. This allows us to also classify into this type the much later Naue II sword from Spaliareika, Chamber Tomb 2, Context 6, initially ascribed to Kilian-Dirlmeier's Group B (Giannopoulos 2008: 169–170, pls. 32:48, 48:48, 78:Sp.G2–48. See below, section III.4).

of Naue II swords, occurring in Italy since the beginning of the Italian Recent Bronze Age (contemporary with the early LH IIIB in the Aegean).⁷⁵ This early generation of Naue II swords was followed, from the LH IIIC Middle/Advanced onwards in Aegean chronological terms, by the later Type Stätzling/Allerona (or Kilian-Dirlmeier's Gruppe C),⁷⁶ to which most of the other Achaian swords belong. This latter group of Naue II swords is considered to be of Aegean origins, enriching this initially western-European sword tradition with Aegean morphological features, such as the pommel-tang.⁷⁷

Consequently, the Naue II sword from Krini-Agios Konstantinos demonstrates that Naue II swords were already introduced to the north-western Peloponnese at the end of LH IIIB or at the beginning of LH IIIC, in a much earlier period than the main phase of the phenomenon of warrior burials (LH IIIC Middle and Late). This raises the question of whether the sword from Krini-Agios Konstantinos should be integrated into the same interpretative framework with the later similar finds from Achaia. Are we justified, based on this find, to trace back the phenomenon of warrior burials to the early LH IIIC (or even the late LH IIIB) period, or should we disassociate the sword from Krini-Agios Konstantinos from this possibly later context? In our view, there are at least two arguments in favour of the first scenario. Firstly, the metal weapon under discussion was unearthed at a site (Krini) and in a wider region (the Patras area) that later played a significant role in the mature phase of the phenomenon of warrior burials.⁷⁸ Secondly, it is methodologically important to note that the funerary contexts in all Achaian warrior burials have preserved for us only the time of the *final* deposition of metal weapons (e.g. swords), the real life-span of which could have been much greater.⁷⁹ This issue (which is related to the notion of the "biography of objects" and will be further addressed in sections III.4 and IV) indicates that the sword from Krini-Agios Konstantinos could have been simultaneously in use with similar weapons that have been finally interred in graves and dated by us to later phases of LH IIIC. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the sword in question dates to the period (late LH IIIB and early LH IIIC) of the first introduction in Achaia of other weapons and tools (spearheads,

75. Jung 2006: 56, 145, 149, fig. 24.

76. Bianco Peroni 1970: 66–70, pls. 21:153, 22, 23:159–163; Jung 2006: 216, pl. 11:3; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1993: 96–100, pls. 36:240–243, 37, 38, 39:254–257; Pabst 2013; Schauer 1971: 144–147, pls. 63:433–435, 64:436.

77. Pabst 2013: 110–111. See also van den Berg 2018: 207–209.

78. In the exhibition of the Museum of Patras the sword is labeled as "imported", which is also the case with some of the later Naue II swords from Achaia.

79. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers of the present paper for stressing this important point.

razors, daggers, etc.) belonging to the wider “Urnfield” metallurgical tradition, which, as we will see later in more detail, is a central component of the later LH IIIC warrior burials.⁸⁰ The assumption that the metal weapons deposited in graves in advanced phases of LH IIIC had long periods of use has potentially important implications for the general chronology and duration of the historical phenomenon that is reflected by the Achaian warrior burials.

III.3. SOCIAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WARRIOR BURIALS

As stated at the beginning of this paper, there is a strong and influential tradition in the study of burial customs to relate them to the social system and explore their potential for social structure inferences.⁸¹ Especially in cases of exceptional burial treatment, a principal socio-archaeological concern is to examine whether and to what extent the funerary material reflects aspects and ideological strategies of vertical status differentiation.⁸² This is always a difficult task that (as often rightly suggested) must consider the possibility that the funerary record and display does not necessarily reproduce the social reality of past societies but may instead aim to actively manipulate it.⁸³ Furthermore, especially regarding warrior burials, focusing primarily on issues of social status and power may result in not adequately considering a more “literal” and biographical interpretation. In this section and the following one we will see that it is possible to subject the Achaian warrior burials to a socio-archaeological analysis focusing on questions of social status without necessarily assuming a real warrior identity for the deceased in life. We will then explore a more biographical interpretation that, conversely and interestingly, treats the same burials as manifestations of a real warrior identity but doesn’t automatically equate the latter with the notion or aspiration of a high social position, at least in terms of vertical differentiations or hierarchies.

Starting from the socio-archaeological consideration, a first important observation is that the Achaian warriors were buried in normal Mycenaean chamber tombs, usually without any extraordinary architectural features. Their burials are distinguished from

80. van den Berg 2018: 248–249, 260–261 as well as 199–256 for a recent full treatment of the “Urnfield” bronzes in Achaia.

81. Moutafi 2021: 15–22.

82. Moutafi 2021: 35–36; Parker Pearson 1999: 72–94.

83. For a useful summary of bibliographical references see Arena 2015: 3, n. 10. See also Boyd 2002: 11–13, 96–98.

FIGURE 2.

The combination of grave goods and the chronology of the hitherto published LH IIIC Achaian warrior burials. After Giannopoulos 2008, table 3.

the rest of the contemporary interments mainly through their military equipment (Fig. 2). This seems to consist always of a Naue II sword and almost always of a spear as offensive weapons, occasionally combined with spear butt-spikes (Kallithea, Tomb B and

	Naue II-Sword	Spear	Spear butt-spike	Knife	Razor	Helmet - Head-gear	Shield	Greaves	Ring	Tweezers	Comb	Bronze vessel	DATING
Clauss	•	•		?						?	?		?
Clauss, Tomb Θ	•	•		•	•					•			LH IIIC Middle
Kallithea-Rabadania, Tomb A	•	•				•		•					LH IIIC Middle-LH IIIC Late
Kallithea-Rabadania, Tomb B	•	•	•	•	•	•				•			LH IIIC Late
Kangadi	•	?											LH IIIC Late (?)
Krini-Drimaleika, Tomb 3	•	•							•		•		LH IIIC Middle/Advanced
Krini-Agios Konstantinos, Tomb 2	•												LH IIIC Middle-LH IIIC Late (?)
Nikoleika, Tomb 4	•			•									LH IIIC Middle/Advanced-LH IIIC Late
Portes, Tomb 3	•	•		•		•		•				•	LH IIIC Middle/Advanced-LH IIIC Late
Spaliareika, Tomb 2, Context 6	•	••		•	•								LH IIIC Late
Spaliareika, Tomb 2, Context 7	•	•	•	•			•						LH IIIC Middle/Advanced

Spaliareika, Context 7) and defensive pieces of armour like greaves (Kallithea, Tomb A and Portes), shields (Spaliareika, Context 7) or boar's-tusk helmets (Kallithea, Tomb B). Sometimes there are objects of possible ritual function, such as knives (Clauss, Tomb Θ; Kallithea, Tomb B; Nikoleika; Portes; and Spaliareika in both burials), or pieces of jewellery (a ring in the burial of Krini-Drimalaika) and tools for personal hygiene, such as razors (Clauss, Tomb Θ; Kallithea, Tomb B; and Spaliareika, Context 6), tweezers (Clauss, Tomb Θ and Kallithea, Tomb B) or combs (Krini-Drimalaika). Richer or more exceptional grave offerings like bronze vessels (Portes) or bronze headgears (Portes and Kallithea, Tomb A) are also present in some cases.

Such funerary equipment does seem to reflect considerable wealth. Nevertheless, during the Aegean Bronze Age there are undoubtedly more impressive examples of outstanding burials. I. Kilian-Dirlmeier would ascribe most Achaian burials to Class III of the classification system she applied on the basis of the funerary gifts to the LM II–IIIA warrior tombs of Knossos.⁸⁴ Class III comprises burials accompanied by a minimal set of grave goods, usually including a sword and a spear and only occasionally a razor, a knife and pottery. The rather humble character of the chamber tombs in which the Achaian swordsmen were buried also raises the question of whether their funerary treatment indicates a special social position. However, it is much more constructive to consider these burials within their own spatial and chronological context and in Achaia of LH IIIC period there are no other graves or burial contexts that could be assigned a special or high social class.⁸⁵ Compared to the usual burials of their region and their time, the interments accompanied by this characteristic and semi-standardised military equipment clearly represent an exceptional case.

The close interaction between social prestige and military references seems to have been a widespread phenomenon in the post-palatial Mycenaean Greece. We can trace this in the many warrior themes depicted in the LH IIIC pottery. Images of marching warriors, chariots or naval battles demonstrate that martial connotations were part of the identity of the ruling elites.⁸⁶ It isn't a

84. Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985: 198.

85. Eder 2003: 40–41.

86. Eder 2003: 39–40, n. 10; Vonhoff 2008: 220, 274; Wiener 2007: 22, nn. 142–144.

coincidence that these pictorial motifs occur less in the context of the consolidated social order of the palatial times and more in the formative phases of the beginning and the end of the Mycenaean period, as an expression of the strong competition for social power.⁸⁷ The few published Achaian pottery fragments bearing pictorial decoration of war themes⁸⁸ indicate that the north-western Peloponnese was one of the areas in which social competition during LH IIIC may have involved a military ideological dimension.

Furthermore, if we take a closer look at some of Achaia's warrior burials, we conclude that the form of the tomb as well as certain combinations of grave goods or elements of funerary treatment might signify a special social status of the deceased. The deliberate construction of Chamber tomb 3 of Portes under an Early Mycenaean tumulus is worth mentioning, since it was probably intended to generate the impression of an imposing grave monument covered by a tumulus.⁸⁹ The construction of Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika is also elaborate, being the greatest in size among the tombs of its group. Regarding the grave goods, the bronze vessel buried with the deceased in Portes would ascribe his burial to the richest Class of the above-mentioned Kilian-Dirlmeier's classification. A similar message of status, power and "international spirit" is perhaps also transmitted by the extraordinary bronze headgear, found in Portes and in Kallithea, Chamber Tomb A.⁹⁰

Finally, the funerary treatment of the deceased found in Chamber Tomb Θ of Clauss is especially illuminating because there is clear excavation evidence that the sturdily built, 29-year-old male was buried more or less simultaneously with his female partner.⁹¹ According to C. Paschalidis, this pattern is encountered in other contemporary Achaian warrior burials (e.g. in Krini-Drimalaika, Portes and Kallithea, Chamber Tomb B), possibly indicating a social practice of "encouraging" the female partners of the warriors to follow them to the grave.⁹² Equally worth mentioning regarding the deceased of Chamber Tomb Θ of Clauss is the evidence of an ancestor or hero cult. Parts of sacrificed animals and two large, four-handled jars had been deposited on a bench over this person's remains during LH IIIC Late, a significant time after his burial in LH

87. Maran 2006: 143.

88. Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe 2018: 363, nos. 311–313. Sherds of another pictorial crater with warriors have been found in the Aetolian site of Thermos and ascribed to an Achaian workshop based in Voudeni (Moschos 2009a: 367, n. 104).

89. Moschos 2002: 16, fig. 7.

90. For the history of interpretation of the fragmentary example from Kallithea see Giannopoulos 2008: 216–217, fig. 30; Mödler 2017: 71–72, 192–193.

91. Paschalidis 2018: 78–80, 83–85, fig. 158, 898. The male warrior has been described in an earlier publication (Paschalidis & McGeorge 2009: 89, 108) as "physically robust" and of "impressive stature measuring 1.77m", but also as "not particularly muscular". It is not clear why this latter feature suffices to cast doubt on a possible military engagement of this individual in life (as suggested in Paschalidis & McGeorge 2009: 108 and more recently in Arena 2020: 40–42), considering his overall physique.

92. Paschalidis 2018: 472–473.

IIC Middle.⁹³ The overall treatment of the warrior burial in Chamber Tomb Θ of Clauss can be considered indicative of the elevated social status of this individual both in life and in death.

Hence, under the above outlined socio-archaeological perspective, there is considerable evidence that the Achaian warrior burials of LH IIC do record the development of a new social hierarchy or political elite, which proclaimed its social prestige through the ideological references of a “weapon burial ritual”. It is worth mentioning that the deceased having a real warrior identity in life is not a prerequisite for this interpretation.

However, the same archaeological and funerary evidence is also open to a converse interpretation: just as a social or political elite using military ideological connotations is not necessarily a real warrior elite in a biographical sense, a real warrior elite (i.e. a class of highly specialised, experienced and respected combatants or war leaders) should also not necessarily be equated with a social elite in terms of vertical status. Many of the above-mentioned archaeological aspects can be (re)interpreted in these more “literal” or biographical terms. In section IV, for instance, we will see that the warrior themes so often depicted in the LH IIC pottery may have been not only symbolic expressions of the identity of social elites but also vivid illustrations of the real warlike atmosphere of this period. Furthermore, the individuals eventually buried as elite warriors (in general and in Achaia) most likely represent only a small subset of people actually involved in military activities,⁹⁴ but this does not necessarily imply a purely ideological burial use of military attributes for socio-political legitimisation purposes. The same fact can be interpreted in terms of real military hierarchies, especially since sword-bearing individuals are often considered local war leaders of larger warrior groups armed with spears.⁹⁵ Similarly, we will see in section IV that the bronze headgears found in Portes and in Kallithea were probably not just *insignia dignitatis*, but rather belonged to a real and functional helmet type that was widely distributed in the eastern Mediterranean and associated with the period and the activities of the Sea Peoples.

Finally, the occasional combination of weapons with personal

93. Paschalidis 2018: 83, 85–86, figs. 154, 156–157.

94. Eder 2003: 39. See also Moutafi 2021: 270, 280, 286, fig. 7:14 for some palaeodemographic indications in the funerary evidence of Voudeni suggesting an LH IIC increase in young adult males. Their burials are not accompanied by weapons. However, their increased number could imply the involvement of these young adults in violent activities.

95. Kristiansen 2018: 3, 27–29, 41.

grooming tools (razors, tweezers and combs) in the Achaian warrior burials may represent the same heroic ideal of military prowess and physical beauty that we encounter in the Homeric epics associated with real warriors.⁹⁶ This aspect of the "weapon burial ritual", which the Achaian finds share with many other Bronze Age warrior burials across Europe, plays a central role in P. Treherne's essay on the "warrior's beauty" and the bodily aesthetics of warfare.⁹⁷ This article was mentioned at the beginning of the present paper as an example of a non-functionalist interpretation of warrior burials that associates them not with ideological strategies for social display but with a specific life-and-death style centred on certain forms of masculine beauty and with the profound "existential anxiety evoked by the death of a(n important) member of society".⁹⁸ In this case, the burial rite aims to highlight the beauty of the deceased to counteract the horrifying experience of the mutilation and decay of the corpse. Moreover, the "beautiful dead" of the warrior enabled him to "transcend death" by inscribing his individual biography and achievements on the collective memory of the community. The above-mentioned evidence of an ancestor or hero cult in the case of Chamber Tomb Θ of Clauss might indicate that the warrior in question did indeed achieve this kind of "immortality". Interestingly, I. Moutafi's recent bioarchaeological analysis of burial finds from the Achaian Mycenaean cemetery of Voudeni detected an increase in the general importance of male identity in some funerary expressions during LH IIIC.⁹⁹ This observation could be compatible with the above line of interpretation, with the male warrior's beauty in death, in Treherne's terms, representing a "superlative" expression of a more general tendency to underscore the male identity in funerary rites.

This more "literal" approach to (the Achaian) warrior graves re-constructs warrior lives out of warrior burials and associates funerary rituals with existential dimensions of death in general and with certain collective perceptions of a warrior's death in particular. Moreover, this specific kind of *εὖ θνήσκειν* ("dying well") described by Treherne could have included the notion of a warrior's "noble death" in battle as a prerequisite for the "weapon burial ritual", something

96. Eder 2003: 40; 2006: 557. Tweezers have been also interpreted as instruments for extracting arrowheads from wounds, i.e. as part of the military equipment of real warriors. See Paschalidis 2018: 430–431.

97. Treherne 1995.

98. Treherne 1995: 123.

99. Moutafi 2021: 280–281.

that would also explain the restriction of the latter to only specific individuals. The extent to which this “literal” or biographical approach can contribute to our understanding of the burial finds under study should become clearer in the following sections.

III.4. HEREDITARY SOCIAL STATUS OR JUST WARRIOR ATTRIBUTE? THE CASE OF SPALIAREIKA, TOMB 2

The two interpretative pathways outlined in the previous section (i.e. the socio-archaeological, focusing on issues of social status and power, and the biographical, aiming to trace real warrior identities and lives) can lead us to address in different ways another important issue regarding the LH IIIC Achaian warrior burials: the existence of possible lines of continuity in hereditary terms.

To begin again with the socio-archaeological perspective, if we consider the evidence discussed in the previous section as indicative of an elevated social status of the Achaian individuals buried as warriors, a further research question pertains to hereditary character. Such a hypothesis finds little support from the excavation evidence of the Achaian tombs. In most cases, the buried warriors have no exceptional precursors or successors in the funerary sequence of their graves, being clearly the only burials displaying an elite character. This interesting state of affairs suggests two things: firstly, that this social or ruling class may have originated from parts of the society that possessed no significant status in former periods; and secondly, that the LH IIIC Achaian social landscape may have been too unstable to allow the retention of social power in a hereditary manner. The first point can be called into question because of the possibility that some valuable grave goods (especially metal ones) of older high-status burials may have been subjected to “legal looting” in the course of the tombs’ use.¹⁰⁰ It is also possible that in previous periods (i.e. in Achaia of LH IIIB) the social rank in certain districts was expressed in other ways than the funerary display. With regard to the second point, it is true that in most Achaian graves there is only one warrior burial to be found. There is, however, one significant counter example.

100. For the notion of “legal looting” of secondary burials see Paschalidis 2018: 464, n. 173.

Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika, with dimensions 4.30 x 3.60 m, was excavated in 1989–1990 in the locality of Lousika, in western Achaia.¹⁰¹ The tomb yielded an assumed six burials (two of which were apparently cremations), 36 ceramic vessels and 16 bronzes, which were found neatly arranged in seven contexts inside the chamber (Fig. 3). Chronologically, they seem to cover the whole LH IIIC period. However, the refined dating of each context is a difficult task, since the above-mentioned orderly placing of the burials

101. Giannopoulos 2008: 101–104, 221–237; Petropoulos 2000: 68–76, drawings 4–7, figs. 4–10, 21–46; 2017; van den Berg 2018: 225–233, fig. 45.

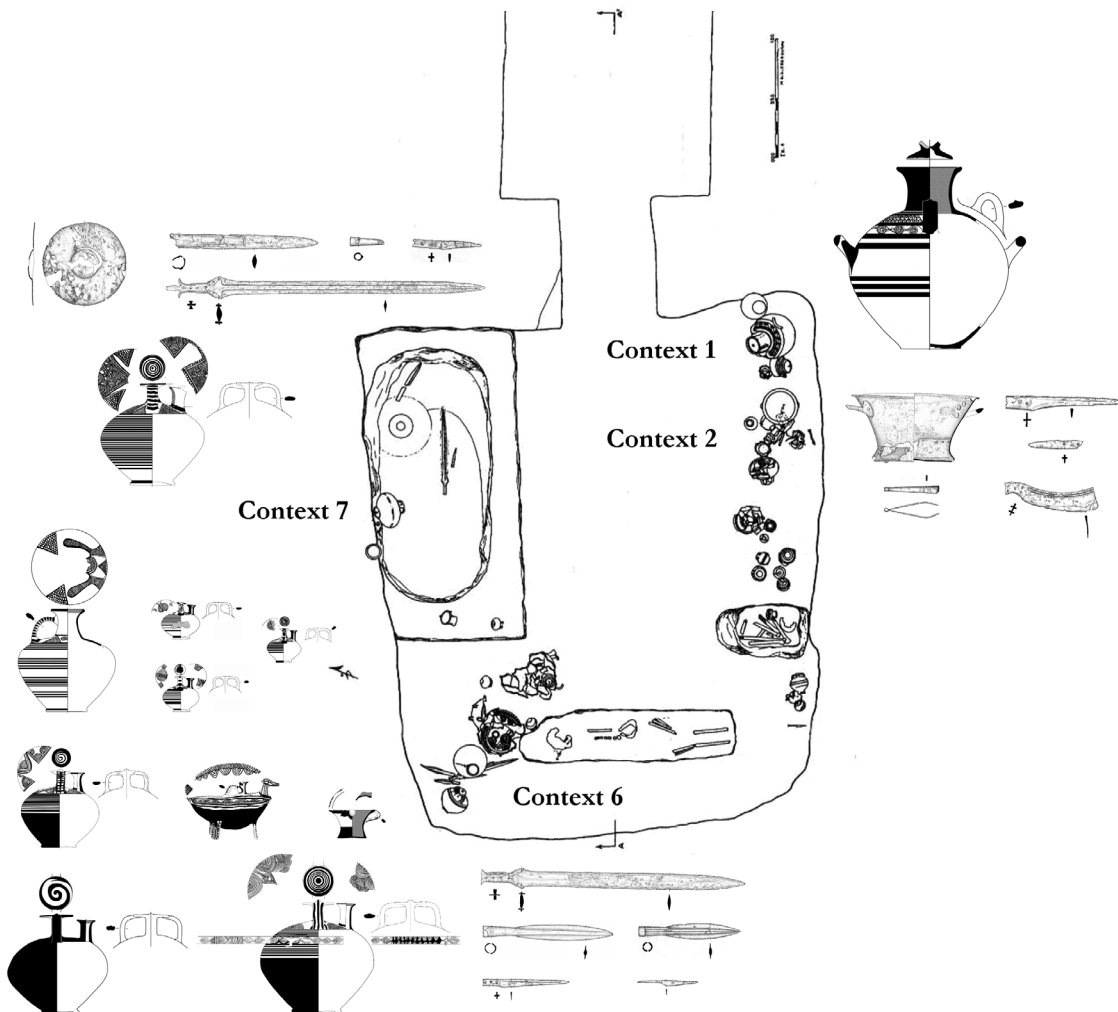


FIGURE 3.
Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika Lousikon. Selection of grave contexts and grave goods (various scales). After Giannopoulos 2008, pls. 6, 21, 23, 26–35.

and their grave goods inside the chamber proved to have been the result of one or more secondary (re)arrangements. Consequently, each context does not necessarily represent a closed chronological unity, and some grave goods had been dislodged from their primary context. Nevertheless, the most impressive feature of the tomb was not the arrangement of these micro-contexts but rather an extraordinary "horizontal stratigraphy" of outstanding interments, two of which are typical LH IIIC Achaian warrior burials.

On the south-eastern side of the tomb (Fig. 3), in Contexts 1 and 2,¹⁰² grave offerings were found accompanying two possible cremations dating to the first half of LH IIIC. In Context 1, the ashes were placed in a fine four-handled jar,¹⁰³ while in Context 2 there were placed in a bronze kalathos.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, the content of these two vessels was destroyed in the course of cleansing the finds, so that the initial impression of the excavator M. Petropoulos, who identified the remains of cremations, could not be definitely proved. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the four skeletal remains uncovered in the chamber were not associated with these contexts (a secondary burial of a 40-year-old woman was found in the pit 1 on the eastern side of the chamber, while three further skeletal remains were discovered before the north-western wall). If we question the existence of the cremations, we will leave ourselves with two groups of grave offerings (in Contexts 1 and 2) without a burial of reference. This fact, combined with the long experience of the excavator, makes it very probable that the contents of both vessels under discussion were correctly recognised. If this is indeed the case, interesting observations concerning the possible social significance of these cremations can be made.

Having yielded both cremations and normal burials, Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika raises the question of the reasons underlying the occurrence of different burial rites in the same tomb. Although in other similar cases, like in the graves of Perati, no particular feature could be recognised as exclusively characterising the cremated persons,¹⁰⁵ in the tomb of Spaliareika we have another set of evidence. Here the cremations seem at first glance to belong to persons of significant status. This is certainly true for Context

102. Giannopoulos 2008: 221–230, pls. 20, 21, 22, 23, 36, 37, 38, 39.

103. Giannopoulos 2008: 155–156, 223–224, pls. 21, 37, 79:Sp.G2–8.

104. Giannopoulos 2008: 168, 224–225, pls. 23:19, 39:19.

105. Iakovidis 1969–1970: 43–45.

2, in which a bronze vessel was used as an urn, while the other bronze grave goods, including two knives (Sandars's Class 1a¹⁰⁶), a razor (Weber's Type II, Subvariant IIb¹⁰⁷), tweezers and two whetstones, resemble the set of equipment that accompanies the later warriors. A beautiful four-handled jar with a kylix's sherd as a lid served as an urn in the cremation of Context 1. On stylistic grounds, Context 2 can be dated to either the later part of LH IIIC Early or an early part of LH IIIC Middle/Developed, whereas the cremation of Context 1 seems to date to LH IIIC Middle/Advanced.¹⁰⁸

These contexts evidently predate the warriors buried in the same tomb, and the interments may therefore belong to their possible social forerunners. Indeed, their burials do give the impression of a formative social phase. The sets of grave goods are not yet standardised, and the cremation, rarely practiced in the Aegean during this period, might have been a strategic choice to display privileged knowledge of foreign innovative rites.¹⁰⁹ This choice was only an episode in the course of the tomb's use, given that both before (the secondary burial in the pit 1 dating to LH IIIC Early) and after (the warrior burials, see below) these two cremations, normal burials occur in the same tomb. Rather than a gradual change of the burial rite, what we see in Spaliareika is more probably a social strategy in a period in which a new sense of identity was negotiated and aspired to. If we view the other side of the chamber with this perspective, we can perhaps see the result of this process.

On the north-western side of the tomb (Fig. 3), two typical Achaian warrior burials were uncovered, dating to the second half of LH IIIC. As we already mentioned in the discussion of chronology, the earliest among them is probably the one associated with a typical, evenly-banded stirrup jar of LH IIIC Middle/Advanced or Late. This vessel belonged to Context 7 of the chamber, together with a Naue II sword (Type Stätzling/Allerona or Kilian-Dirlmeier's Gruppe C), a spearhead (related to Avila's Type III¹¹⁰), a spear butt-spike, a shield boss and a knife (Sandars's Class 1a¹¹¹), as well as a conulus of clay.¹¹² An essential part of this context was, however, missing: the "owner" of the armour. No burial or cremation was found associated with these weapons, although the small clay conulus, which

106. Sandars 1955: 175–177, fig. 1.

107. Weber 1996: 138–141, pl. 34:297–298, 35, 36:311–313.

108. Giannopoulos 2008: 221–223.

109. For a much more detailed presentation of this argument see Giannopoulos 2008: 225–230 and especially 228–230. For the view that cremation as a minority rite in LH/LM IIIC chamber tomb cemeteries was introduced to the Aegean from Italy see Ruppenstein 2013: 187–189.

110. Avila 1983: 19–21, pl. 6.

111. Sandars 1955: 175–177, fig. 1.

112. Giannopoulos 2008: 150–151, 234–236, pls. 33–35, 49–51. For the bronze shield boss see also Jung & Mehofer 2008: 128.

probably came from a piece of clothing, suggests the presence of a burial in this part of the grave. Among the nine vases that accompanied the other warrior burial of the tomb, found before the north-western wall (Context 6),¹¹³ there are four, three small stirrup-jars and a narrow-necked jug (Fig. 3, placed between the finds of Contexts 6 and 7), which, judging from their band and shoulder decoration, are closely related to the stirrup jar of Context 7. In contrast to these, the other five pots found in Context 6, three further stirrup jars, a cup and a bird vase, favour monochrome decoration and probably date to an advanced stage of LH IIIC Late. Consequently, they belong to the last interment of the tomb, which appears to be the warrior buried before the north-western wall with his Naue II sword (Type Nenzingen/Reutlingen/Cetona or Kilian-Dirlmeier's Group A and imported from Italy),¹¹⁴ two spearheads (Avila's Types VII and VIII¹¹⁵), a razor (Weber's Type V, Subvariant Vb,¹¹⁶ recently reclassified as a knife of Fontana di Papa Type¹¹⁷) and a knife (Sandars's Class 1a¹¹⁸).

The peculiarities of Contexts 6 and 7 present a good example of the above-mentioned secondary character of the excavated contexts, which may characterise many other Mycenaean chamber tombs. Reconstructing the primary associations of burials and grave goods in the case of Tomb 2 of Spaliareika on the basis of an anthropological examination, the skeletal remains of Context 6 belonged not to a single burial but to three different persons.¹¹⁹ It is therefore highly probable that one of these interments was the warrior of Context 7. For reasons unknown, his remains and most of his pottery offerings were placed together with the burials and grave goods of Context 6, when the last burial of the tomb took place. Interestingly, his set of weapons was spared by this new arrangement, betraying perhaps an intention to keep the two "unities" of status-bearing objects (i.e. the two sets of weapons) separate.

This extraordinary sequence of outstanding burials uncovered in Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika is a unique phenomenon in Achaia of LH IIIC. From the above, socio-archaeological point of view, the prominent burials under discussion probably represent high-status individuals, and Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika is the only example

113. Giannopoulos 2008: 234–236, pls. 26–32, 42–48.

114. Giannopoulos 2008: 169–170, pls. 32:48, 48:48, 78:Sp.G2-48; Mehofer & Jung 2017: 396. According to the exhibition labels in the Museum of Patras, the other Naue II sword of the tomb (Context 7) is "imported" as well.

115. Avila 1983: 46–53, pl. 15:101–102, 16.

116. Weber 1996: 156–157, pl. 41:351–357.

117. van den Berg 2018: 87–90, 225–226, fig. 46.

118. Sandars 1955: 175–177, fig. 1.

119. Papathanasiou 2002–2005: 191–192, pl. 1.

of a grave possibly handing down the successive stages of a gradual social evolution, which eventually resulted in the crystallisation of the warrior class. If we accept this argument, the group of people buried in this grave, whether it was a family or something closer to the Homeric "oikos", would have gone through a formative social phase (LH IIIC Early–Middle) to later attain a more pronounced and homogeneously expressed social identity and status (LH IIIC Middle/Advanced–Late). However, even in this case, it is not directly discernible whether the special social position was inherited or simply retained by later members of the group by virtue of their personal qualities.

It should be noted that the aforementioned socio-archaeological interpretation applies the same interpretative framework both to the two typical warrior burials and to the two prominent burials in the same tomb that are not accompanied by weapons. This raises the question of whether the same finds can be approached from a converse point of view, at least partly deconstructing the above sketched social analysis. In this case, the two cremations of Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika are the ones that should perhaps be subsumed into the more biographical line of interpretation centred on the two warrior burials of the grave. This alternative analysis explores the possibility that what was handed down from the older to the younger occupants of this grave was not a high social position (or the aspiration to it) but simply the warrior attribute and military equipment.

In section III.2, we pointed out that the period of use of the metal weapons found in the Achaian warrior burials could have been much longer than the dating of their final deposition. Certain elements of the military equipment associated with the two warrior burials of Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika (e.g. the swords and the spears) could therefore have been used over a long period of time by more than one member of the same family, being handed down or even awarded (as the arms of Achilles were in the *Little Iliad*) to other/younger family members after the death of their initial owner. If this is indeed the case, then the metal weapons in question might have been passed to the next generation not only as functional

weapons but also as objects with powerful “biographies” derived from the heroic narratives associated with their previous owners.¹²⁰ On this premise, we could argue that Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika contained the remains of at least *four* warrior burials, the additional two being identified by the cremations found in the grave (Contexts 1 and 2). As we already saw, Context 2 where the bronze vessel used as an urn was associated with two knives, a razor, tweezers and two whetstones strongly resembles a typical Achaian warrior burial, minus its sword and spear. The cremation of Context 1 was not associated with metal objects, but the use of a four-handled jar as an urn, covered with a kylix’s sherd, is reminiscent of the Protogeometric warrior burial of Stamna in Aetolia.¹²¹ In this case, a cremation was also found in a four-handled jar, covered by a shield boss, and was accompanied by an iron version of a Naue II sword and a small bronze spearhead.¹²² Despite its later dating, the burial context of Stamna attests to the association of cremations in four-handled jars with funerary equipment typical of the earlier, LH IIIC Achaian warrior burials. Consequently, Context 1 of Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika could represent the remains of an initial warrior burial that was deprived of its weaponry in the course of the tomb’s use.

Regarding the choice of cremation as a funerary rite from the standpoint of the present alternative analysis, the “social strategies” of the socio-archaeological approach may be considered “practical necessities”. If we assume a real warrior identity in life for the cremated individuals of Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika, we could advance the hypothesis that cremations were chosen as the best way to carry home the remains of these warriors, who may have died fighting overseas. This interpretation is inspired by a passage in Book 7 of Homer’s *Iliad*, where Nestor suggests that the Achaeans burn their dead near their ships so that the cremated remains can be taken home.¹²³ Regardless of the relationship between Homer and Bronze Age archaeology, the above passage from the *Iliad* highlights a practical aspect of ancient warfare, well known also from Classical antiquity,¹²⁴ which could be relevant to the present discussion. It is worth mentioning that LH/LM IIIC cremations also

120. For the notion of the “biography of objects”, especially in Homer, see Bennett 2004; Whitley 2002: 220–221.

121. Christakopoulou 2001; Eder 2006: 564.

122. Christakopoulou 2001, figs. 10–14.

123. Mylonas 1948: 63–64.

124. Kurtz & Boardman 1971: 190–191.

occur and coexist with inhumations in Crete (especially the eastern part of the island), the Aegean region that has yielded the second largest concentration of warrior burials accompanied by Naue II swords.¹²⁵ Especially interesting is the context in the two tholos tombs of Mouliana,¹²⁶ where each grave has yielded more than one warrior burial, and where a warrior inhumation was found together with a warrior cremation in Tholos Tomb A. These comparable finds of tombs containing more than one warrior, some of them inhumated and some cremated, might support the biographical interpretation of cremations being chosen as a means to more easily bring back home the remains of real warriors who died abroad. The use of two outstanding vessels as urns for the two cremations of Chamber Tomb 2 of Spaliareika (a high-quality four-handled jar and a bronze kalathos) could therefore be interpreted not in terms of social display but as a "ritual substitute", i.e. compensating for the lack of proper inhumation burial rite.

The idea of tombs containing a chain of "inconspicuous" warriors (i.e. successive owners of the same set(s) of weapons that is ultimately found associated only with the last interment(s) in the burial sequence) is a possibility worth considering for other Achaian warrior tombs. In Chamber Tomb 3 of Krini-Drimalaika, for instance, the warrior equipment was found associated with only one of the four primary burials of the upper burial layer of the tomb.¹²⁷ However, at least one of the other three adult individuals might have been the previous owner of the weapons and perhaps also of the silver ring found on the right forefinger of the "main" warrior.

In the previous and the present section, we examined how a principally socio-archaeological interpretation of the warrior burials which in its extreme versions can downplay or question a real warrior identity of the deceased in life can be contested by a biographical approach that reinterprets the material evidence under the perspective of real warrior lives. These two lines of interpretation are not necessarily conflicting, of course, since a funerary rite involving weapons could theoretically reflect *both* real warrior biographies and high social status aspirations. However, as rightly stated, "the extent to which warrior values can be exclusively

125. For a summary of the finds with all primary bibliographical references see Giannopoulos 2008: 176–178, 229.

126. Deger-Jalkotzy 2006: 163–165; Kanta 2003: 180; Xanthoudides 1904: 22–50, fig. 7, 11.

127. Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994: 173–176, fig. 2, pls. 24–26.

equated with social status, or whether status might be expressed or achieved in a variety of other ways, is unclear".¹²⁸ If we focus rather on real warrior biographies, we pave the way for a more general historical understanding of the finds under study.

IV. LH IIIC WARRIOR BURIALS: A HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

In our view, the ultimate research challenge regarding the LH IIIC warrior class of the north-western Peloponnese is its historical interpretation. The origins of this phenomenon are of great significance, since the archaeological excavations carried out in this region in recent decades have revealed the largest group of warrior burials in the Aegean and the largest number of Naue II swords found in a single region of the eastern Mediterranean. In fact, if we adopt a broader definition of the north-western Peloponnese, comprising not only Achaia but also parts of Elis and Arcadia, we can list a remarkable number of 24 Naue II swords (16 in Achaia, five in Elis and three in Arcadia).¹²⁹ Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that the known warrior burials are part of a much larger jigsaw puzzle, more pieces of which may be revealed in future excavations.

The strikingly large concentration of LH IIIC warrior burials in the north-western Peloponnese has provoked many different interpretations, corresponding to well-known theoretical traditions in archaeological thought. For instance, the late prosperity of the Mycenaean north-western Peloponnese has often been explained by migrations from the former palatial centres.¹³⁰ This research view is influenced by the ancient mythological sources about Tisamenos, Agamemnon's grandson, having led the Achaians of the Argolid and Laconia to a new homeland after their expulsion by the Dorians. This new homeland was the north-western Peloponnese, which was eventually renamed Achaia by its new inhabitants.¹³¹ The hypothesis that Achaia's cultural prosperity in LH IIIC should be attributed to refugees from the former palatial regions, based as it is on a literal reading of ancient traditions about migrations and

128. Frieman *et al.* 2017: 50.

129. For the swords found in Elis (in Goumero, Alpheiousa and Mageiras) and Arcadia (in Palaiokastros) see Paschalidis 2018: 15, 417–418, with further bibliographical references; Salavoura 2015: 493–496; Vikatou 2012a: 366, fig. 740; Vikatou 2012b: 70, 72, fig. 9.

130. See, for instance, Vermeule 1960: 18–20. For a summary of the state of research, especially in the 1960s, see Giannopoulos 2008: 17, with further bibliographical references.

131. For the myth of Tisamenos as well as all the other ancient mythological traditions about Achaia see Anderson 1954; Giannopoulos 2008: 11–16; Mele 2002; Petropoulos 2016: 219, 221, 227; Rizakis 1995.

massive movements of people, follows some early theoretical tendencies in archaeological interpretation.¹³² This doesn't mean that a migrationist hypothesis is necessarily wrong, but there are some compelling archaeological arguments against it.

If we look at the development of the Achaian settlement pattern in the transition from LH IIIB to LH IIIC, we will not detect any radical changes. The great majority of LH IIIC sites in Achaia already existed in the preceding phases, and the same is possibly true even for a few sites supposedly founded in LH IIIC.¹³³ This continuity is further documented by the incessant use of chamber tomb cemeteries, where no important increase in graves during LH IIIC has been observed.¹³⁴ Moreover, the results of the recent bioarchaeological study of mortuary customs in the Voudeni cemetery do not support the hypothesis of a population change in the period in question.¹³⁵ A detected, minor conceptual shift in the funerary sphere towards more bounded and individualised distinction during LH IIIC takes place within an already familiar and established context of burial choices. This fact is interpreted by I. Moutafi as reflecting a response to changing social needs rather than the sudden influx of a new population.¹³⁶

There is also crucial excavation evidence that the buried warriors of LH IIIC were part of this continuity. There is only one Achaian warrior burial (the burial of Krini-Agios Konstantinos, see above, section III.2) that could be dated to the sub-phase LH IIIC Early, i.e. to the period immediately following the collapse of the palatial system. As mentioned in the discussion of chronology, the bulk of the Achaian warrior burials date to an advanced phase of LH IIIC (LH IIIC Middle and Late), contemporary with the greatest prosperity of the local pottery production. This raises the question of whether the emergence of this warrior class reflects the defensive and protection needs of local Achaian communities against migrations and invasions in the turbulent period around 1200 B.C.¹³⁷ This hypothesis can be examined anew, considering that the metal weapons found in the Achaian warrior burials probably had much longer life-spans than the dating of their final deposition (as outlined in sections III.2 and III.4). In this case, the earliest phases of

132. Marini 2017: 505–507. For the history of migrationist explanations in archaeology see Prien 2005.

133. See the statistics and survey of sites in Papadopoulos 1979: 172–176, updated in Giannopoulos 2008: 95–97, Arena 2015: 8–14, Paschalidis 2018: 1–15 and van den Berg 2018: 186–190.

134. Moschos 2009a: 348.

135. Moutafi 2021: 279, 287.

136. Moutafi 2021: 279.

137. Papadopoulos 1979: 184; 1999: 273.

the phenomenon (later attested in most warrior burials in Achaia) could have indeed been contemporary with the great watershed of the late 13th century B.C. However, as we shall see below, the warrior groups under consideration should most probably be connected more with offensive than defensive activities.

An “auxiliary hypothesis” that could protect the “core” of the migrationist view¹³⁸ is that the integration of the emigrants may have gradually taken place in already existing Achaian settlements, resulting in the unfolding of Achaia’s cultural prosperity in the second half of LH IIIC instead of the beginning.¹³⁹ Although this argument makes sense, it is difficult to explain why there are no significant amounts of material culture brought by the newcomers during the early stages of LH IIIC in Achaia¹⁴⁰ and, above all, why the presumed refugees would chose to bury their dead in chamber tombs already in use by the indigenous population. This is exactly the great difficulty that needs to be overcome if the phenomenon of warrior burials is going to be exclusively addressed in migrationist terms.

The examination of the entire context of the Achaian warrior tombs yields significant evidence regarding the origins of the deceased. The observations of N. Yalouris (in relation to Chamber Tomb A of Kallithea) were pioneering in this respect, since he pointed out that before the tomb was used for the warrior’s interment, a secondary burial had carefully taken place in a hollow in the back of the chamber. This special care for the remains of the older dead was interpreted by Yalouris as an indication that the warrior belonged to the same local family, which, according to the pottery found in the grave, had lived in the region since LH IIIB.¹⁴¹ Many years later, one of the most important warrior tombs, Grave 3 of Krini-Drimalaika, reinforced this interpretation. In this tomb two different burial layers were distinguished.¹⁴² The warrior was buried in the upper, later layer, dating to LH IIIC Early–Middle, and under this layer another, older one was revealed by the excavators. Here, the bones of c. 10 individuals were found, accompanied by pottery spanning LH IIIA–IIIC Early.¹⁴³ The warrior was therefore buried in a tomb that had been in use since the 14th century B.C. and that

138. The terms “auxiliary hypothesis” and “core” are part of the epistemological vocabulary of scientific testing, especially advanced by philosophers of science like K. Popper and I. Lakatos. See Losee 2001: 153–154, 204.

139. Papadopoulos 1979: 176; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994: 200.

140. Some finds that could perhaps be deemed indications of small-scale population movements or of the temporary presence of foreign populations, like the dagger of the Pertosa Type and especially the quantitatively significant Handmade Burnished (*impasto*) pottery and the violin-bow fibula from Teichos Dymaion (Gazis 2017: 463–465; Gazis 2022: 92–93; Jung and Mehofer 2013: 182), point to the direction of southern Italy (Marini 2017). Finds of earlier, LH IIIB2 pottery imported from the Argolid and found in coastal Achaian sites (Moschos 2009a: 348) are not necessarily related to migrations.

141. Yalouris 1960: 45.

142. Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994: 173–197, fig. 2, pls. 24:b–d, 25, 26:d.

143. Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994: 194–197, figs. 19–24.

undoubtedly belonged to a local group of people. We encounter the same phenomenon in Chamber Tomb Θ of Clauss, which, as the secondary burials render obvious, had been used since the beginning of LH IIIA.¹⁴⁴ A similar situation can further be observed in Nikoleika, where the first use of Chamber Tomb 4 dates to the Early Mycenaean period (LH IIB).¹⁴⁵ Even in Spaliareika, where the use of Chamber Tomb 2 started in LH IIIC Early, the anthropological examination of one of its interments revealed a cranial feature, a surplus of skull bones, that suggests a genetic affinity with three burials found in the tombs 1 and 10 of the same cemetery.¹⁴⁶ As in Krini-Drimaleika and in Clauss, the burials of the last-mentioned graves date to LH IIIA.¹⁴⁷ Other cases are less clear, but it is certainly not coincidental that nearly all well-preserved burial contexts hitherto published indicate the same thing: that the Achaian warriors of LH IIIC are not the emigrant refugees of Tisamenos. They were persons of local origin, most of whom lived several decades after the turbulences associated with the end of the palatial system and were buried in the tombs of their ancestors.

Even in this case, further auxiliary hypotheses can be postulated to defend the migrationist scenario. For instance, under the assumption that former palatial noblemen from the Argolid first reached Achaia during LH IIIC Middle and were incorporated into the local families through intermarriages,¹⁴⁸ the geographical origin of such an elite migration could be sought in other directions, as reflected in the view that some of the Achaian warriors "were indeed mercenaries of northern origin that stayed in Greece to become local rulers".¹⁴⁹ The possibility that individuals of foreign origin were occasionally buried in chamber tombs of local Mycenaean families cannot, of course, be excluded, as demonstrated by the Burial Γ in Chamber Tomb H of Clauss.¹⁵⁰ This 25–35-year-old male was accompanied by grave goods comprising both local Mycenaean pottery and artefacts of foreign, Italian origin (a razor of the Type Scoglio del Tonno, apparently a northern Italian import,¹⁵¹ and handmade pottery with northern Italian features), with the latter finds leading to his identification as a possible Italian immigrant in Achaia.¹⁵² However, it is not clear to what extent foreign artefacts should be

144. Paschalidis 2018: 82, 86.

145. Petropoulos 1995: 234; 2007: 257–264, figs. 57, 58, 77, 78, 85.

146. Giannopoulos 2008: 242; Papathanasiou 2002–2005: 192, 196, pl. 1.

147. For these tombs see Giannopoulos 2008: 100–101, 105–106, 110–111, 122–123.

148. Pabst 2013: 125–126.

149. Kristiansen & Suchowska-Ducke 2015: 384.

150. Paschalidis 2018: 69–71, 73, 429, fig. 128; van den Berg 2018: 203–204, 220–224, fig. 42.

151. Jung *et al.* 2008: 91.

152. Paschalidis 2018: 429; van den Berg 2018: 222.

equated with foreign people (from a traditional culture-historical and migrationist viewpoint) or be better explained in terms of diffusion or hybrid cultural identities.¹⁵³ Therefore, although the idea of a foreign, inconspicuous “infiltration” into LH IIIC Achaia is theoretically possible, it is not easily supported by the present burial evidence.

To the aforementioned archaeological counterarguments (opposing large-scale migrations especially from the destroyed Mycenaean palatial centres) we would add a linguistic one: in historical antiquity, the ancient dialect spoken in Achaia and its colonies in *Magna Grecia* was the West Greek Doric.¹⁵⁴ If the LH IIIC north-western Peloponnese had indeed been flooded with refugees from the former palatial regions, one would perhaps expect Achaia to linguistically resemble Cyprus, where (due to Mycenaeans settling there following the downfall of the palatial system) we find the so-called Arcado-Cypriot dialect.¹⁵⁵ This is the Greek historical dialect most strongly related to the Mycenaean Greek of the Linear B tablets, which is considered to be the official written variant of the wider East Greek dialects spoken in Late Bronze Age southern Greece.¹⁵⁶ This complication can be bypassed, of course, if we accept another massive migration at the end of the Bronze Age, this time of the Dorians, who displaced the speakers of palatial “Achaian” (East Greek) from the north-western Peloponnese. Indeed, a literal reading of the ancient mythological sources would require us to accept a succession of at least three different ethno-linguistic groups in prehistoric north-western Peloponnese (Ionians, Achaians and Dorians).¹⁵⁷ However, the more migrations we postulate, the more difficult it becomes to substantiate them archaeologically, especially considering the lines of cultural continuity between the final Mycenaean and the Early Iron Age Achaia, e.g. in the burial customs and pottery traditions.¹⁵⁸ And, as we shall see, the more population and linguistic hiatuses we assume under the often “paradigmatic” influence of ancient literary sources, the more we implicitly tend to understate the perspective of other aspects of continuity between the end of the Late Bronze Age and early historical antiquity.

153. van den Berg 2018: 224, 263–264.

154. Horrocks 2010: p. 14, map 1;
Méndez-Dosuna 2007: 444, 452.

155. Panayotou 2007.

156. Horrocks 2010: 16, 19–21.
Vermeule's assumption (1960: 20, n. 29) that some early inscriptions from the Achaian colonies in southern Italy preserve traces of an Arcado-Cypriot substrate is not entirely persuasive, since some of these dialectal features are instead related to Ionic and may reflect dialectal contacts between different groups of Greek colonists within *Magna Grecia*. See Méndez Dosuna 2013.

157. Sakellariou 1991. The mythological traditions about migrations are, however, themselves often inconsistent, as the problematic chronological position of Tisamenos in relation to the legendary return of the Heracleides demonstrates. See Prinz 1979: 291–292, 297–298, 346.

158. Gadolou 2008: 243–247 (burial customs), 278, 282–284 (pottery traditions).

Explicitly or not, recent interpretations of Achaia's LH IIIC prosperity and warrior class have partially shifted away from migrationist explanations to a more processual theoretical stance. An attempt to focus on internal social transformations exploring some of the socio-archaeological questions outlined in sections III.3 and III.4 has been combined with elements of environmental determinism that stress Achaia's advantageous geographical setting. The latter aspect has been part of a more general endeavour to elucidate the effect that the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces had on the north-western Peloponnese, with research focusing particularly on Achaia's external contacts during LH IIIC, especially with the West. This line of interpretation can be embedded into the wider picture of historical developments and cultural encounters in the late 2nd millennium B.C. central and eastern Mediterranean.

According to a more internal view of LH IIIC Achaian social developments, the warrior elite in this region were primarily the product of local political transformations. Social processes culminated in the formation of a new, military ruling class, certain aspects of which could nevertheless have been influenced by small newcomer groups from the Argolid.¹⁵⁹ These processes are thought to have been closely connected with the decisive role that Achaia played during LH IIIC as mediator and front-line contact between the West (i.e. the Adriatic cultures) and the Aegean. This important research aspect has been highlighted very effectively by scholars such as S. Deger-Jalkotzy, B. Eder and R. Jung.¹⁶⁰ The special relationship between the north-western Peloponnese and the peninsula of the Apennines in this period is clearly illustrated by the presence in Achaia of the so-called "Urnfield bronzes", which are the weapons and other metal artefacts belonging to the contemporary Late Bronze Age central European, Carpathian and Italian metallurgical traditions.¹⁶¹ These include Naue II cut-and-thrust swords, spearheads with fully cast sockets (e.g. the specimen from Mitopolis, which bears the same incised blade decoration as a spearhead from Lombardy), daggers of the Pertosa Type (subtype of the Peschiera daggers, apparently copies of the Cetona Naue II swords on a smaller scale)¹⁶² and dress accessories (e.g. violin-bow fibulae), like

159. Moschos 2009a: 346, 348, 353, 384–385.

160. Deger-Jalkotzy 2006: 169; Eder 2003: 44–46, 49; 2006: 557–559; Eder & Jung 2005; Jung & Mehofer 2013; Jung *et al.* 2008.

161. Jung 2009: 72; Jung & Mehofer 2013: 175; Jung *et al.* 2008: 86.

162. Jung 2009: 73; van den Berg 2018: 83–85, fig. 12.

the finds from Teichos Dymaion, as well as specific razor types (e.g. the already mentioned Scoglio del Tonno specimen from Clauss).¹⁶³ The fact that these finds reached the north-western Peloponnese and the Aegean bears witness to the eastward dissemination of this metallurgical tradition.

Almost every example of military equipment, especially bronze weapons, bespeaks western European influences or links, as demonstrated by round shields like the one from Spaliareika (Tomb 2, Context 7, see section III.4). This type of round shield, characterised by a central handgrip underneath a protruding metal boss, appears for the first time in the Aegean during the later part of LH IIIB and can be traced back to northern and central Europe, where round shields were in use from at least the central European Middle Bronze Age.¹⁶⁴ The introduction of this shield type to the Aegean could be related to the new defensive needs caused by the adoption of the innovative, slashing Naue II swords.¹⁶⁵ Italo-Mycenaean contacts are also attested by the greaves from Kallithea and Portes,¹⁶⁶ since the characteristic S-shaped bronze wire used as a fixing device can be found in the same form in a fragmented greave from Calabria.¹⁶⁷

Equally impressive are the headgears made of bronze stripes and rows of rivets that accompany the warrior burials in Portes and Kallithea, Chamber Tomb A. They represent a helmet type with a wide distribution in the eastern Mediterranean, either as real metal finds (in Achaia, Kefalonia and Crete) or as iconographic depictions (in Naxos, Kos, western Anatolia and Cyprus).¹⁶⁸ It is especially important that these headgears appear on the reliefs in the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu as the helmets of certain groups of the Sea Peoples.¹⁶⁹ These pictorial representations, in which the lower part of the helmet with the horizontal bronze stripes and the rivets is combined with an upper part with vertical stripes of apparently organic material, attest to the association of this type of defensive equipment with the warlike activities that affected Egypt in the early 12th century B.C., decades before the final deposition of the Achaian finds. Since these special metal artefacts have no typological forerunners in the Aegean, there is good evidence

163. For the major finds in Achaia with further bibliographical references see Giannopoulos 2008: 246–247; 2009: 119; Jung 2009: 73–75, fig. 1:3 (spearhead from Mitopolis); Jung & Mehofer 2013: 182 (finds from Teichos Dymaion); Moschos 2009a: 380, n. 158; van den Berg 2018: 199–256.

164. Jung 2018: 274.

165. Jung & Mehofer 2008: 132–133.

166. Both ascribed to the “Type Kallithea” in Mödlinger 2017: 241–245, pl. 40.

167. Clausing 2002: 163–168, fig. 8:6; Giannopoulos 2009: 119; Jung 2009: 76; Jung & Mehofer 2008: 130; van den Berg 2018: 200–201, fig. 40:3.

168. Giannopoulos 2008: 205–206, 232; Jung 2009: 78–79, 82–83, fig. 2; Moschos 2009a: 358; Yasur-Landau 2013. See also the rivets found along with the Naue II sword, the spearhead and the greave that accompanied the LH IIIC warrior burial in Chamber Tomb 8 of Mageiras in Elis (Vikatou 2012b: 70, 72, fig. 9).

169. Jung 2009: 78–79, 82–83, fig. 2; 2017: 31, 33, fig. 4:1; Mödlinger 2017: 71–72.

that these also trace their origin to the Italian peninsula and more specifically in Middle Bronze Age finds in the region of Veneto.¹⁷⁰ By LH IIIC this kind of helmet was apparently widely used both in the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkano-Carpathian region.¹⁷¹

The Italo-Mycenaean metallurgical connections have been further elucidated (beyond the typological, technological and iconographic evidence) by chemical copper characterisation studies conducted in recent years by R. Jung and M. Mehofer.¹⁷² A large number of Italian and western Greek metal artefacts were analysed yielding important research results. A first conclusion is that most of the metal artefacts found in western Greece were produced with locally available copper imported from Cyprus.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, a small number of typologically Italian bronze finds from Achaia (some of the Naue II swords, a spearhead with a fully cast socket and the Scoglio del Tonno razor from Clauss) show similar chemical features to metal finds from Italy, indicating that these finds were most probably imported from the peninsula of the Apennines.¹⁷⁴ Strong chemical affinities have also been discerned in two categories of metal weapons that are typologically very close and which hitherto were confined to Italy and western Greece. These are the spearheads with fully cast sockets and incised dashed decoration and the Naue II swords with a blade showing a double-stepped profile in the distal part close to the tip, like the sword of the Cetona Type from Context 6 of Spaliareika, Tomb 2.¹⁷⁵

These strong affinities are indicative of a direct exchange of military know-how between Italy and the Aegean, and of the crucial

170. Jung 2009: 83, fig. 8.

171. van den Berg 2018: 203. An interesting link with the Balkano-Carpathian region is also discernible in the combination of headgears and greaves in Achaian warrior burials (Portes and Kallithea, Chamber Tomb A) and in Carpathian hoards, see van den Berg 2018: 235, fig. 50.

172. Jung 2009; Jung & Mehofer 2013; Jung *et al.* 2008; Jung *et al.* forthcoming; Mehofer & Jung 2017. See also van den Berg 2018: 66–67.

173. Jung 2009: 74; Jung & Mehofer 2013: 178; Jung *et al.* 2008: 90; Mehofer & Jung 2017: 392, 396. The local production of foreign types of bronze artefacts in LH IIIC Achaia had been already postulated in

1960 by Vermeule (1960: 21).

174. Jung 2009: 75; Jung & Mehofer 2013: 178; Jung *et al.* 2008: 88, 91–92; Mehofer & Jung 2017: 392, 396; Paschalidis 2018: 418–419.

175. Jung & Mehofer 2013: 182; Jung *et al.* 2008: 91–92, figs. 6, 7; Mehofer & Jung 2017: 396. For the Naue II sword from Spaliareika see also above, section III.4.

mediating role of western Greece, and especially Achaia, in this process. Southern Italy apparently played a similar intermediary role between the north of the peninsula and the Aegean, as suggested by close links between the two regions in several aspects of material culture (e.g. the presence of LH IIIA–IIIB pottery and Mycenaean weapons in southern Italy, and the southern Italian parallels of the Handmade Burnished Ware and the Wheelmade Grey Ware from the Aegean).¹⁷⁶ The intensification of contact between the north-western Peloponnese and southern Italy, especially in LH IIIC, is further demonstrated by the Achaian-style pottery found in Italy (see above, section III.2) and the exchange of objects with symbolic significance.¹⁷⁷ These contacts are thought to have developed through personal relationships, occasions of mutual hospitality and gift exchange.¹⁷⁸

The intensity of these post-palatial, Italo-Aegean contacts, with the strong presence of western cultural elements in Greece, has led Fr. Iacono to evoke the concept of the Orientalizing period and to describe a “Westernizing” phase of the LH IIIC Aegean, in which the previously peripheral Italian societies temporarily achieved a core status.¹⁷⁹ According to a recent network analysis by K. van den Berg, the close interaction between southern Italy and Achaia should be understood in terms of their function as autonomous, small-scale “nonpalatial hubs” in interregional networks already existing in the Palatial period that managed to “bypass” the crisis of c. 1200 B.C. and maintain Italo-Aegean connectivity.¹⁸⁰ This network perspective departs from established centre-periphery models by questioning, for instance, the assumption that the Mycenaean palaces monopolised the Aegean external relations, and by approaching Achaia and southern Italy not simply as intermediaries between other or greater regions (e.g. the wider Aegean and northern Italy or central Europe respectively) but rather as focal points of independent interregional networks that included links to the Balkans and Cyprus.¹⁸¹ In our view, these “networks” and “links” are perhaps better understood in terms of common enterprises between individuals and groups from the regions in question who shared a common level of socio-political complexity.¹⁸² Combining all the aspects

176. Jung & Mehofer 2013: 180–182; Jung *et al.* 2008: 93; Moschos 2009a: 380. The intermediary role of southern Italy in the Late Bronze Age contacts with Greece is also illustrated by the line of eastward diffusion of the finger-rings with spiral discs during the LH IIIA period. See Giannopoulos 2009.

177. See, for example, the golden ring from Drosia and its parallels in Italy. Eder & Jung 2005: 488; Giannopoulos 2009: 119; Papadopoulos 1979: 140, figs. 280:c, 324:e.

178. Jung & Mehofer 2013: 185, where they assume that certain Naue II swords of Italian origin could have reached Greece in the form of valuable gifts, comparable with the Homeric *ξείνια*. See also Jung *et al.* 2008: 92.

179. Iacono 2013.

180. van den Berg 2018.

181. van den Berg 2018: 251–256.

182. Eder & Jung 2005; Jung 2005: 62; Jung & Mehofer 2013: 184–185.

of the already cited archaeological research, we could perhaps gain insights into the nature of these enterprises.

It has been rightly pointed out that the spread of Italian-type bronze weapons in this period coincides in both its chronological and geographical distribution with the seafaring war activities of various groups traditionally subsumed under the label "Sea Peoples".¹⁸³ It is worth noting that these activities are not exclusively restricted to the chronological horizon outlined by the eastern Mediterranean (e.g. Egyptian, Hittite and Ugaritic) historical and iconographic accounts of the late 13th and early 12th century B.C. Other literary sources indicate that certain contingents of the warrior groups later designated as Sea Peoples had been active since the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep III (c. 1391–1353 B.C.) and the following Amarna period, i.e. before the main diffusion (or, in theoretically more neutral terms, circulation) phase of the "Urn-field bronzes".¹⁸⁴ This fact makes us share M. Bietak's scepticism as to whether depictions of the swords of the Sea Peoples especially in the time of Ramesses III (c. 1184–1153 B.C.) are realistic or rather anachronistic representations inspired by earlier waves of intruders.¹⁸⁵ In any case, it is reasonable to assert that these warlike activities not only predated but possibly also post-dated the phase of their more dense historical attestation around 1200 B.C. The term "Sea Peoples phenomenon", used by more recent scholarship, expresses exactly this broader sense of a historical reality that extended throughout most of the 12th century B.C.¹⁸⁶ And there can be no doubt that the turbulent decades after the fall of the once dominant kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean provided a very appropriate historical setting for the unfolding of naval war operations.¹⁸⁷ In addition to the more traditional and much debated, principally migrationist perception of the Sea Peoples,¹⁸⁸ we can now view these operations as including highly mobile raiding and piratic activities¹⁸⁹ as well as the disruption or protection of trade missions and traveling merchants.¹⁹⁰ Within this context, as has been rightly pointed out, "we can reasonably speculate that people from the Aegean could have been involved in any such Sea Peoples activities, particularly given their long heritage at dominating the seas".¹⁹¹

183. Mehofer & Jung 2017: 396–397.

184. Bietak & Jung 2007–2008: 219–220; Jung 2018: 273; Knapp & Manning 2016: 118, 135.

185. Bietak & Jung 2007–2008: 221. The sword forms reproduced in these representations are Near Eastern (Type Ugarit), Mycenaean (Sandars' Type C) and south Italian (Thapsos-Pertosa). See Jung 2018: 27, 275; Mehofer & Jung 2017: 389–390, fig. 1.

186. Fischer & Bürge 2017: 11.

187. Molloy 2016: 367–369.

188. For a critique with further references see Knapp & Manning 2016; Middleton 2018 and especially 109–110.

189. Hitchcock & Maeir 2014. For the phenomenon of piracy in the Aegean during the post-palatial period see also Samaras 2015. For its association with Achaia see also Moschos 2016.

190. Kristiansen & Suchowska-Ducke 2015: 361–362, 366, 371, 384.

191. Molloy 2018: 84. The ethnic identification of certain parts of the Sea Peoples with groups from the Aegean in general or Mycenaean Greece in particular has been often proposed within the context of the "Aegean migrationist" view on the Sea Peoples. For a summary see Middleton 2018: 98–100.

From this point of view, the Aegean, and especially the north-western Peloponnese of LH IIIC, could have preserved for us one of the most important bodies of archaeological attestation of the same phenomenon. This archaeological evidence comprises not only the plethora of warrior burials and Italian-type bronze-work but also important indications regarding the real combat use of the weapons. For instance, despite the fact that the smiths of the north-western Peloponnese were perfectly capable of producing Naue II swords using locally available Cypriot copper, weapons of this kind were in certain cases still imported from Italy. This is an indication that the Italian artefacts were highly appreciated for their quality from the viewpoint of real combat needs.¹⁹² The real use of Achaian Naue II swords has been further attested by the recent detailed examination of their construction features and especially the observed combat traces in their blades, which are part of a forthcoming publication.¹⁹³ In this respect, it is interesting that while we have sufficient evidence that the LH IIIC weapons found in graves of the north-western Peloponnese were really used, we have no substantial indications that they were principally used *inside* the north-western Peloponnese. On the contrary, the archaeologically well founded prosperity that this region experienced during the later parts of LH IIIC is not easily compatible with its perception as a large battlefield of several competing minor warlords. Rather, prolonged periods of war and conflict have been more plausibly associated with population and settlement crises.¹⁹⁴ Consequently, although some more sporadic, internal violent incidents cannot be excluded, we should perhaps abandon the idea of a “static”, land-based warrior elite (or even a social elite using military references) and instead imagine this region as an advantageous base for launching overseas offensive expeditions or as a “recruitment pool” for such war operations.

This interpretation is strengthened by the presence of the same “Urnfield” weapon types, the “material *lingua franca*”¹⁹⁵ of contemporary multi-national warrior groups, in other conspicuously coastal regions of the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean (e.g. Aegean Islands, Crete and Cyprus).¹⁹⁶ Perhaps the most telling case is the

192. Mehofer & Jung 2017: 396.

193. Jung, Moschos and Mehofer, forthcoming. I would like to thank R. Jung and M. Mehofer for the permission to include this information in the present text. See also Jung & Mehofer 2008: 113–114; 2013: 177–178.

194. Molloy 2012: 98.

195. Molloy 2016: 368.

196. Giannopoulos 2008: 175–178, 233.

assemblage of LH IIIC Late bronze weapons, including a Naue II sword, found in the small island of Meganissi, east of Lefkas.¹⁹⁷ This island is often related to Homeric "Taphos", the notorious homeland of pirates and raiders.¹⁹⁸ This particular case makes us recall the stimulating thoughts of V. Pantazis, who very lucidly highlighted the similarities between the Sea Peoples and the Homeric heroes as well as between the character of the early *basileis* and that of naval leaders.¹⁹⁹ The maritime interconnections, through the north-western Peloponnesian coast and subsequently the Alpheios river, also offer the best explanation for the striking similarities in the military equipment accompanying the warrior burials of Chamber Tomb A in Kallithea and Chamber Tomb 8 in Mageiras, Elis.²⁰⁰ The fact that some warrior burials at a considerable distance from each other within the wider region of north-western Peloponnese show stronger resemblances in their sets of weapons than others that are geographically more adjacent, suggests that the archaeological evidence under discussion should be understood in terms of proximity at sea, on the ships, rather than on land. If individuals from different parts of the north-western Peloponnese served in the same naval armed groups, they may have shared common elements of fighting equipment that were later deposited as grave goods in the warriors' different places of origin. These common military features could have sometimes served as distinctive elements and important identity markers for enhancing group bonds,²⁰¹ which could be another crucial factor that ultimately led to their deposition in graves.

The naval character of LH/LM IIIC warfare interactions seems to be further corroborated by the contemporary iconography, in which images of fully armed warriors on ships and shipboard battles became especially popular.²⁰² For instance, the impressive crater fragments from Kynos have been rightly interpreted as more or less historical documents, depicting real raiding and looting enterprises.²⁰³ According to M. Kramer-Hajos, this "sailor-warrior" society of the Euboean Gulf is a maritime variant of the LH IIIC warrior society reflected in the phenomenon of warrior burials in regions like Achaia.²⁰⁴ In our view, the extrovert warrior society of the

197. Vikatou 2017: 370, pl. CXXX:b–f.

198. Vermeule 1960: 20; Vikatou 2017: 369.

199. Pantazis 2009. See also Hitchcock & Maeir 2014: 627, 632 as well as Emanuel 2017.

200. Vikatou 2012b: 70, 72, fig. 9.

201. Hitchcock & Maeir 2014: 626; Middleton 2018: 110.

202. Papadopoulos 2009: 75–76, fig. 9:10; Vonhoff 2008: 186–187, tables 34, 35. For a LH IIIC Late crater sherd from Voudeni bearing pictorial decoration of rowing warriors see Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe 2018: 363, no. 311 (description under no. 313).

203. Kramer-Hajos 2012: 814.

204. Kramer-Hajos 2012: 815.

post-palatial north-western Peloponnese is just another example of the same sea-based warrior or, perhaps more concretely, piratic culture of this period. Moreover, the diachronic association of piratic enterprises with defensible promontories providing lookouts for spotting passing ships²⁰⁵ might be the key to deciphering both the hitherto enigmatic function and the mixed material culture (in the late LH IIIB and LH IIIC periods) of Teichos Dymaion, the fortified acropolis near the Araxos promontory.²⁰⁶ Interestingly, Teichos Dymaion has important elements in common with the defensible settlement of Aigeira in eastern Achaia²⁰⁷: location near the sea; fortifications; a mixed ceramic repertoire (including Mycenaean pottery and Handmade Burnished Ware); and destructions during LH IIIC. These similarities probably indicate the association of both sites with the same nexus of seaborne threats and opportunities.

Finally, in view of the maritime nature of these interconnections and enterprises, it is questionable whether the deterministic, traditional archaeological vocabulary used to describe the distribution of certain weapon types (e.g. “diffusion”, “dissemination” or “imported”) is always appropriate. As B. Molloy has stated, it is possible that “imported” weapons and technological traditions were in fact acquired and shared in geographically less directional, “third space” cultural encounters aboard ships.²⁰⁸ It is even possible to imagine young warriors from the north-western Peloponnese being recruited by seafaring armed groups and receiving weapons from the ship’s arsenal, without ever becoming aware of their exact provenance. The apparently Aegean origins of the Naue II swords of the Stätzling/Allerona Type further indicate that, in the course of such seaborne common enterprises, what we called “Urnfield bronzes” were probably perceived and experienced as a pan-European

205. Hitchcock & Maeir 2014: 628–630.

206. Teichos Dymaion fulfills also almost all the criteria for identifying pirate bases listed by Samaras 2015: 191–192.

207. For a summary of the older and

more recent archaeological research on the Mycenaean settlement of Aigeira with further bibliographical references see Gauss 2015; Gauss 2019; Giannopoulos 2008: 83–93.

208. Molloy 2016: 347–348. For a summary of the postcolonial notion of “third space” see van den Berg 2018: 9–10.

technological horizon. Consequently, the spread of this weaponry tradition can perhaps be explained better through the cultural interactionism of the so-called "transcultural perspective"²⁰⁹ or through concepts of cultural hybridity²¹⁰ than by traditional diffusionism.

V. THE LH IIIC NORTH-WESTERN PELOPONNESE AS "ACHAIA"

This interplay between history, geography and bronze technology (richly illustrated in the archaeological record) significantly illuminates the late Mycenaean prosperity of a region in the north-western corner of the Peloponnese, which very interestingly bears the name Achaia. As we already mentioned, ancient tradition chronologically situates the association of this place name with the north-western Peloponnese in the period after the Dorian invasion and relates it to the migration of Tisamenos and his Achaians from the Argolid and Laconia. Modern scholarship has hitherto sought to pinpoint the exact period, in which the toponym Achaia was ascribed to the north-western landscape of the Peloponnese, within the context of historical and archaeological research of the Archaic period. The prevailing approach focuses on the formation processes of a common Achaian ethnic identity in the course of the Second Greek Colonisation and the founding of the First Achaian League.²¹¹ According to this view, it was within this historical context that the ethnonym Achaian and the toponym Achaia were gradually established as designations for the inhabitants of the north-western Peloponnese and their region. In the earliest phases of these developments, it is possible that the name Achaia was restricted to the eastern part of the later homonymous ancient landscape, the cities of which actively participated in the colonisation of southern Italy.²¹² Furthermore, the tradition about Tisamenos, which was used in the Archaic period by the Spartans in their efforts to create kinship ties with the Achaians,²¹³ has been considered an artefact of the contemporary formation processes of the Heracleides legend.²¹⁴ These lines of ancient historical research are undoubtedly

209. Maran 2017.

210. van den Berg 2018: 9–11, 136–137, fig. 31:4.

211. Morgan 2002; Morgan & Hall 1996: 198, 215; Petropoulos 2016: 223–224, 227–228.

212. Morgan 2002: 96; Petropoulos 2016: 227.

213. As Pausanias describes, Tisamenos' bones were carried off by the Spartans from Helike to Sparta. See Fragoulaki 2013: 193–194; Morgan and Hall 1996: 198.

214. Prinz 1979: 289–291, 298, 346–347; Schmitt 2010.

important, since they chronologically focus on the period immediately predating the first written attestation of the name Achaia as the designation of the north-western Peloponnese in the work of Herodotus (5th century B.C.).²¹⁵

Nevertheless, some years ago²¹⁶ we posed the question of whether this historical inquiry should be enriched and updated in light of the Late Bronze Age archaeological and philological research. The almost century-long, ongoing “Ahhiyawa” debate²¹⁷ has demonstrated that the place name under consideration definitively predates historical antiquity and the end of the Mycenaean period. The term is encountered in the Hittite texts referring to a major and politically important part of the Aegean world in the Mycenaean Palatial period. However, it is unclear whether the north-western Peloponnese also belonged at that time to the wider “Ahhiyawa” territory or was associated with this name. This association can be further called into question if we believe the testimony of Homer’s *Catalogue of Ships* and accept the views stating that the basic structure of this much debated subject of Homeric research dates to the Mycenaean period.²¹⁸ According to the *Catalogue of Ships*, eastern Achaia is associated with the name Aigialos, whereas western Achaia is considered part of the territory of the Epeians.²¹⁹

If the Mycenaean north-western Peloponnese was initially not associated with the name Achaia, questions arise about the time and conditions of its name change. Since we now know that the toponym under discussion was already in use in Late Bronze Age Greece, it is perhaps reasonable to examine whether it was in this period that certain historical processes paved the way for its first association with the north-western Peloponnese. This examination should not be considered an anachronism,²²⁰ but as an attempt to trace ancient realities that may go beyond modern disciplinary boundaries. In the words of J. Papadopoulos, “the systemic divide between the disciplines of Aegean and central Mediterranean prehistory, on the one hand, and classical archaeology, on the other, is to be regretted, since it has obscured continuities that should have been obvious”.²²¹ Our present inquiry is in fact further motivated by the second product of 20th century archaeological research that is

215. Giannopoulos 2008: 11; Mele 2002: 72.

216. Giannopoulos 2008: 248–252.

217. For the “Ahhiyawa” question see, for instance, Eder & Jung 2015: 126–130; Fischer 2010; Kelder 2010: 21–34; Kelder 2013; Latacz 2001: 151–160.

218. Latacz 2001: 262–294 with research history and further bibliographical references.

219. Giannopoulos 2008: 248–249; Hope Simpson & Lazenby 1970: 57, 68–72, 96–99, maps 3, 5.

220. Schmitt 2010. Nevertheless, in different parts of his review of Giannopoulos 2008, the German historian takes an ambivalent position on this issue. The reason is that he interestingly criticises the present author for both anachronism (for tracing the toponym Achaia and the myth of Tisamenos back to the Late Bronze Age) and an excessively “synchronic”, Late Bronze Age approach (for not considering the possibility that, as in the early historical period with “koiranoi” or “archagetai”, the LH IIIC Achaian ruling elite could have been designated by more than one name).

221. Papadopoulos 2001: 440.

relevant to this discussion: the phenomenon of LH IIIC warrior burials and Achaia's general prosperity at the end of the Mycenaean period. As a result of this archaeologically well substantiated picture, we now know that the designation of the most significant political unity of the Mycenaean Palatial period was eventually connected with the region of the Peloponnese that experienced the latest cultural growth in Late Bronze Age Greece.²²²

We also know that historical accounts of the late 13th and early 12th century B.C. associate warrior groups related to the Sea Peoples' activities (and, hence, to the contemporary metallurgical *koine* in the eastern Mediterranean) with the ethnonyms Aqayawaša and (Ah)hiyawans.²²³ Considering the exceptionally strong presence of "Urnfield bronzes" in the numerous warrior burials of the LH IIIC north-western Peloponnese, a link between the ethnonyms and the region under discussion possibly becomes tangible for the first time. Even the chronological difference between the LH IIIC Middle and Late warrior burials and the historical accounts around 1200 B.C. is now bridged not only through the early 12th century B.C. Naue II sword from Krini-Agios Konstantinos (see above, section III.2) but also through the high possibility that the weapons interred in the Achaian graves had in fact a much longer life-span than the one suggested by the dating of their final burial context. It would therefore be constructive both to seriously address this ethnonymic-toponymic issue and to see it as an effect of the interaction between the prosperous north-western Peloponnese and Italy at the end of the Late Bronze Age.

In our effort to outline this possibility, it is useful to draw once again upon the popular anthropological distinction between the "etic" and "emic" perspective. In our case, the etic perspective refers to the way the LH IIIC north-western Peloponnese might have been perceived by contemporary Italian cultures, and the emic perspective alludes to the self-definition of the last Mycenaean population of the north-western Peloponnese. It is reasonable to think that Italian cultures may have viewed the north-western Peloponnese during LH IIIC as the last stronghold of the former, greater Achaia. Consequently, this region could have been perceived as *pars pro*

222. The same toponym survived in antiquity also as the name of the southernmost landscape of ancient Thessaly ("Achaia Phthiotis"). It is reasonable to suspect that in this region as well this place name somehow relates to the Mycenaean past and to the former palatial territory of Thebes.

223. These ethnonyms appear in the Egyptian inscriptions recording the attack of Libyan tribes and Sea Peoples against Egypt in year 5 of Pharaoh Merneptah (1224–1214 B.C.) as well as in the Hittite–Ugaritic royal correspondence in the time of Ugarit's last king Ammurapi. See Jung 2018: 285–286, 294–295 with further bibliographical references.

toto for the greater part of Late Bronze Age Greece that was known with this name during the Mycenaean Palatial period.²²⁴

Moreover, from an Annalist *longue durée* point of view²²⁵ on the relations between western Greece and Italy during antiquity, a comparable situation must be mentioned: almost 1,000 years after the period we examine in this paper, at the end of the 1st millennium B.C., the confrontation between the expansionist Romans and the Second Achaian League led not only to the final defeat of the Greek military forces but also to an interesting naming process. The Romans eventually gave the name Achaia to a province that encompassed not only the north-western Peloponnese but almost all of southern Greece, the Euboea and the Cyclades.²²⁶ Intriguingly, these are roughly the same parts of Greece and the Aegean that were apparently subsumed under the same name more than 1,000 years earlier, in the Mycenaean Palatial period. It might therefore be reasonable to wonder whether a similar naming process took place at the end of the Late Bronze Age. According to this scenario, just as the Romans later “inductively” transferred the toponym Achaia from a more particular to a greater geographical and political territory, the Adriatic cultures of the Late Bronze Age might have “deductively” reduced the same place name from a former, greater political unity to their main counterpart in the twilight of the Mycenaean period.²²⁷

A Late Bronze Age association of the toponym Achaia with the north-western landscape of the Peloponnese can perhaps also be comprehended from an emic point of view, considering the self-perception and ideological orientation of the LH IIIC population, and especially of the more distinguished individuals of this region.²²⁸ More specifically, it might be interesting to question whether aspects of the Mycenaean Palatial period could have served as a point of reference for the self-identification of a prosperous post-palatial community with significant external relations. It would be reasonable to assume that within the context of multi-ethnic coalitions of warrior groups from different regions of the Mediterranean, the need for an appropriate self-identification became much more pronounced for each of the participant contingents. The Egyptian

224. Giannopoulos 2008: 248–249; 2009: 125.

225. For the main concepts and the contribution of the influential Annales School of Historiography to archaeology see, for instance, Bintliff 1991.

226. Alcock 1993: 17–18, fig. 3.

227. In the centuries between the Late Bronze Age and the Roman period, another comparable example of identity influence exerted by the Italian side upon the north-western Peloponnese is the effect of the Achaian colonial ethnicity on the mother-region. See Morgan & Hall 1996: 200, 214–215.

228. Giannopoulos 2008: 249–251.

literary sources that differentiate between several ethnic groups of the Sea Peoples bear witness to this phenomenon,²²⁹ while the importance of collective names for the very essence of pre-modern *ethnie* has been adequately underlined by prominent scholars like A. Smith.²³⁰ Consequently, the active engagement of LH IIIC north-western Peloponnesian warriors in multi-national seafaring war or piratic expeditions could have generated a gradual process of identity negotiation. This may have led these groups acceding to the wider and internationally well-established Ahhiyawan/Achaian identity of the Mycenaean Palatial era, no matter if and to what extent they felt part of this identity in earlier periods.

Finally, a more difficult question to explore archaeologically is whether identity in LH IIIC Achaia can be embedded into the wider line of research focused on the so-called nostalgic reminiscence of the Mycenaean Palatial past in LH IIIC Greece. Scholars such as S. Deger-Jalkotzy and J. Maran²³¹ have repeatedly pointed to archaeological evidence indicating that the LH IIIC communities developed a specific pattern of reference to certain components of the palatial past. This approach towards the past apparently combined elements of the two types of cultural memory distinguished by J. Assmann: the founding memory, where the present receives its meaning under the light of a powerful past, and the counter-present memory, where the past is idealised from the viewpoint of a deficient present.²³²

This leads us to an interesting research question concerning the prosperous and extrovert north-western Peloponnese of the LH IIIC Middle and Late: namely, whether the aforementioned specific attitude towards the palatial era could have been developed in an apparently non-palatial region of the Mycenaean world that lacks the visible and prominent material remains of the palatial past. In our view, this could only have been the case if this specific reference to the palatial era had been *transferred* to the north-western Peloponnese by individuals once associated with the Mycenaean palaces. The hypothesis could then be put forward that the LH IIIC Middle and Late warriors of the north-western Peloponnese were in some cases the descendants of disenfranchised soldiers or

229. Bietak & Jung 2007–2008: 219–225.

230. Smith 1988: 22–24.

231. Deger-Jalkotzy 1995: 375–376; 1996: 25–28; Maran 2006; 2011; 2015: 283–286.

232. Assmann 1992: 78–83; Maran 2011: 171.

mercenaries who were once at the service of one or more Mycenaean palaces. After the demise of the palaces, these soldiers might have returned to their homeland in the north-western Peloponnese, bringing with them a positive recollection of the palatial past as well as stories of real or claimed interconnections with the palatial dynasties. It is worth considering whether certain warrior burials dating to the late LH IIIB or early LH IIIC that are furnished with some of the earliest “Urnfield bronzes” in Achaia such as the warrior from Krini-Agios Konstantinos or the Burial Δ in Chamber Tomb 1 of Mitopolis (accompanied by a dagger, a knife, a razor and two spearheads with fully cast sockets)²³³ could be attributed to such returning soldiers who might have previously coexisted with Italian mercenaries and artisans.²³⁴

The possibility that a deliberate reference to the palatial period was developed, especially in LH IIIC Achaia,²³⁵ is reinforced by I. Moutafi’s recent bioarchaeological study. According to her careful analysis, during LH IIIC a subtle shift is discernible in the burial customs of the Achaian cemetery of Voudeni towards an increased preservation of individuality.²³⁶ This process of singling out individuals may reflect a desire to maintain a particular, named memory of ancient, high-status persons. This emphasis on specific lineage rather than a more collective and abstract descent is interpreted by the author as part of a legitimization process and could be of particular interest to the present argument.

According to this hypothesis, the possible attempt of Achaia’s LH IIIC high-ranking warriors not only to accede to the wider Ahhiyawan/Achaian identity but also to claim an ancestral interconnection with members of the prestigious palatial families might have generated the emergence of related founding (in J. Assmann’s terms) myths. If there is some truth in this scenario, then Tisamenos might have indeed arrived in Achaia in LH IIIC, but not as the leader of the Achaians of the Argolid and Laconia. Instead, he could have arrived as a founding legend associated with repatriated soldiers of the former palaces, carrying home tales of links with the palatial dynasties. These tales perhaps came to form the earliest layer of a mythological tradition that was eventually reshaped

233. Christakopoulou-Somakou 2010: 33–34, 147; van den Berg 2018: 216–220 as well as 213 for a discussion of chronology and arguments in favor of a LH IIIB2 date for this burial.

234. For the partly similar idea that central European and Italian material elements possibly reached Achaia through refugees from the Argolid see Moschos 2009a: 353, 384; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994: 200.

235. For the hypothesis that some of the early Achaian rulers possibly claimed descent from the Pelopids see also Anderson 1954: 72. Petropoulos 2012: 205 advances a similar argument to explain the early association of the toponym Achaia with the eastern part of the modern prefecture in the Archaic period.

236. Moutafi 2021: 278–283, 287–288.

into the historical context of the Archaic period. It was probably in the latter period in the course of the colonial enterprises, the crystallisation of ethnic identities and the final formation of the myth of the Heracleides that the potentially much older tradition about Tisamenos became more closely associated with eastern Achaia and the prosperous city of Helike.²³⁷ From our point of view, it is an open question whether the 8th century B.C. restriction of the toponym Achaia to the eastern part of the modern prefecture (before its later expansion to the western part as well) should be considered as a secondary development, in relation to the potentially much wider usage of the same designation for the north-western Peloponnese at the end of the Late Bronze Age.

In any case, it is important to stress that the construction of a legitimising memory in the Early Iron Age eastern Achaia, through a line of ceremonial activities going back to the end of the Bronze Age, has already been archaeologically traced in the site of Trapeza near Aigion, possibly the ancient polis of Rhypes.²³⁸ Moreover, both in Trapeza in eastern Achaia and in the settlement of Mygdalia in western Achaia, a link between the Archaic and the Mycenaean period is visible in the Archaic temples that were constructed in close proximity to significant Mycenaean habitation remains.²³⁹ Indeed, the temple in Mygdalia was erected at the top of the hill, on the ruins of a LH IIIC Middle and Late impressive megaroid building that the excavators associate with the contemporary warrior burials found in the neighbouring cemetery of Clauss.²⁴⁰ Considering also the Geometric activities revealed in Mycenaean cemeteries in Achaia, which are indicative of ancestor worship,²⁴¹ there is already significant archaeological evidence that certain Achaian communities of the Early Iron Age and the Archaic period had developed specific patterns of reference to their Late Bronze Age past, and these could also have included mythological and ethnonymic-toponymic components.

Last but not least, the ambiguity surrounding the term "Achaian" in the colonisation period may be of interest to the present discussion. This ambiguity is preserved in the foundation legends of the south Italian Achaian colonies, where narratives related to the

237. For the connection of the myth of Tisamenos with eastern Achaia see Mele 2002: 70; Morgan & Hall 1996: 198, 214; Petropoulos 2016: 219, 221.

238. Borgna & Vordos 2019.

239. For the position of the Archaic temple in Trapeza in relation to the Mycenaean remains see Borgna & Vordos 2019: 25, fig. 1. For Mygdalia see Papazoglou-Manioudaki & Paschalidis 2021: 481–482, 484, fig. 9.

240. Papazoglou-Manioudaki & Paschalidis 2021: 481–482.

241. For a summary of the finds with further bibliographical references see Gadoulou 2017: 285.

colonisation by the historical region of Achaia coexist with *nostoi* traditions recounting the arrival of Homeric Achaians to the same regions.²⁴² It is, of course, perfectly possible to consider this “merging” of the Homeric (and at the same time Mycenaean palatial) with the historical meaning of the term as a product of the colonisation period.²⁴³ Nevertheless, it is worth considering the possibility that, apart from undoubtedly serving a synchronic cause in the period of western colonisation, this coalescence echoed an older association as well: one recalling the much earlier, north-western Peloponnesian “Achaian” enterprises in southern Italy at the end of the Bronze Age.²⁴⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Reconstructing past warrior lives out of warrior burials is a difficult task, full of theoretical and methodological complications. A main aim of the present paper was to show that the LH IIIC warrior burials of the north-western Peloponnese represent an interesting case study for two often contesting (rather than complementary) lines of interpretation. On the one hand, socio-archaeological analyses of the funerary record addressing issues of vertical social status, elite display and identity construction sometimes end up warning against the so-called “biographical fallacy”. They question the real warrior identity of the deceased through an interpretation of the evidence that stresses the symbolic character of the grave offerings and is enhanced through the use of respective, and hence theoretically laden, terminology (“burial with weapons”) or punctuation (“warrior burial” in quotation marks). On the other hand, the more biographical approach mainly explored in the present study maintains the also non-neutral traditional terminology (warrior burial) and seeks to highlight the pitfall of a possible “critical fallacy”, i.e. the minimisation of the possibility of real warrior biographies by overly criticising a “literal” reading of the mortuary evidence. In this context, we tried to demonstrate that the specific finds under study may be more persuasively interpreted under a more biographical perspective, exploring different historical and social questions related to real warrior identities in life and death.

242. Morgan 2002: 99; Morgan & Hall 1996: 212–214.

243. Especially as an effect of the rivalry between the Achaian colonies and Doric Taras. See Morgan & Hall 1996: 213–214.

244. See also Papadopoulos 2001: 445, 448, n. 313.

The 24 Naue II swords of LH IIIC date hitherto found in chamber tombs of the north-western Peloponnese correspond to at least an equal number of warrior burials, representing the greatest concentration of such finds known in the Aegean. Most of these warrior tombs have been excavated within the borders of the historical and modern region of Achaia. The burials are distributed all over the region, although the great number of rescue excavations taking place in the area of Patras may give the inaccurate impression of a greater concentration in this region. Most of the warrior burials can be dated to the second half of LH IIIC (LH IIIC Middle/Advanced–Late), corresponding to the greatest prosperity phase of local pottery production. Nevertheless, by disassociating the period of use of the military equipment found in graves from the dating of its final deposition, it is possible to trace the earliest phases of the phenomenon back to the beginning of LH IIIC. The warrior burials in question are distinguished from other contemporary interments by virtue of similar (but not always identical) finds of military equipment, possibly betraying the association of the different warriors from the north-western Peloponnese with different armed groups and fighting traditions. Apart from the Naue II swords, this equipment comprises other offensive and defensive weapons, most of which relate to the eventually pan-Mediterranean horizon of the “Urnfield” metallurgical tradition. The warriors are buried in normal collective chamber tombs, which often contain older burial layers dating to LH IIIA or even LH IIB. Especially regarding Achaia, this important excavation evidence provides a strong argument in favour of a local origin of the LH IIIC warriors. In the absence of other material evidence pointing to significant population changes, it seems that both the phenomenon of warrior burials and the prosperity of the north-western Peloponnese at the end of the Mycenaean period should be principally disconnected from migrationist hypotheses based on ancient mythological traditions.

The historical reality that these traditions might reflect should first be sought in the archaeologically well-documented interaction between the north-western Peloponnese and the central

Mediterranean during the LH IIIC period. The metallurgical and, to a certain extent, the ceramic *koine* encompassing western Greece and parts of the peninsula of the Apennines and the Balkans at the end of the Mycenaean period indicates special relationships and common enterprises of prehistoric groups characterised by comparable social structures, identities and needs. The archaeological attestation of these contacts, including the “coat of arms” of the Achaian warrior burials, the Naue II sword, highlights the crucial role of the LH IIIC north-western Peloponnese in the intensified contacts between the Adriatic and the Aegean within the wider context of contemporary eastern Mediterranean developments. In the new world, following the demise of the Mycenaean palaces and the other kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean, the once peripheral north-western Peloponnese apparently managed to take full advantage of its privileged geographical position²⁴⁵ to actively participate in multi-ethnic maritime and piratic expeditions and, finally, to experience its most prosperous period in the Bronze Age. Consequently, it seems that a proper understanding of the final Mycenaean north-western Peloponnese requires of us a certain “Gestalt shift”: i.e. that we approach this region not only as an aspect of post-palatial Mycenaean Greece but also as part of the wider “Sea Peoples phenomenon” of the 12th and 11th century B.C. eastern Mediterranean. More concretely, the LH IIIC rich “warrior’scape” of the north-western Peloponnese could now be considered the most important burial testimony, the “sepulchral Medinet Habu”, of the Sea Peoples.

If this is indeed the case, then the warrior burials under study bear witness to a non-migrationist aspect of the wider “Sea Peoples phenomenon”, related to the concept of *nostos*. Interestingly, according to J. Emanuel, *nostos* is the element that differentiates the otherwise very similar tales of Odysseus in the Second Cretan Lie in the *Odyssey* and the “Sherden of the Sea”, one of the groups of the Sea Peoples.²⁴⁶ These similarities between certain activities of the Sea Peoples and the Homeric “freebooting predatory warfare”, as defined and analysed by van Wees,²⁴⁷ can be added to the other Homeric references in the present paper, suggesting that

245. It is certainly worth mentioning that the advantageous geographical setting of the north-western Peloponnese did not play any decisive role in other phases of the Late Bronze Age, for instance in the course of the Early Mycenaean exchange networks connecting the Peloponnese with central and northern Europe (see, for example, Graziadio 1998; Maran 2004). In this period Achaia was apparently overshadowed by other Peloponnesian centres. This fact demonstrates the limits of environmental determinism and the interpretative importance of the historical context.

246. Emanuel 2017.

247. van Wees 1992: 207–258.

Homer's "tenacious legacy" can still help us penetrate the world of the Aegean Late Bronze Age. It might even offer us a final and almost functionalist socio-archaeological insight into the LH IIIC warriors of the north-western Peloponnese, which, in this context, could be considered as the funerary equivalent of the epic narrative idealising the real nature of warfare: just as the epics often portray freebooters as prestige warriors fighting high-status wars,²⁴⁸ so the funerary rites in question could have used the "weapon burial ritual" to turn certain great *ληϊστῆρες* (pirates or freebooters in Homer²⁴⁹) into respected warlords.²⁵⁰ This practice could be interpreted as articulating the need of the whole community (and not just of specific individuals or groups) to idealise and, hence, legitimise the piratic or predatory warfare that contributed to its prosperity. Thus, departing from the idea of a ruling class, whose members are buried as elite warriors to enhance their social or political power, we can view the mortuary finds under study as encapsulating the collective experience of a warlike historical reality in a funerary rite that reflects both the existential anxiety evoked by death and the pressing subsistence anxieties of life.²⁵¹

Apart from the Homeric associations, the concept of *nostos* has also another theoretical implication. Returning home to be buried in the ancestral land and grave could indicate that, just as distinct material culture is not to be equated with distinct ethnic identities, so too should hybrid material culture, "choice, hybridisation and connectivity"²⁵² in the course of intense trans-cultural contacts, not always be equated with hybrid, disintegrated or non-existent ethnic identities. In other words, the concept of *nostos* is compatible with the possibility that a sense of strong and local ethnic identity can persist under the surface of material hybridity. The very strong presence in LH IIIC of a hybrid metallurgical tradition, associated with the chronological and geographical coordinates of the Sea Peoples (and hence with ethnonyms like Aqayawaša and (Ah)hiyawans) in a region of the north-western Peloponnese later historically known as Achaia, could be a possible indirect indication of such a state of affairs.

248. van Wees 1992: 250.

249. See van Wees 1992: 208.

250. For the partly comparable idea of a homology between the funerals of "warriors", this time of the Early Iron Age, and the narrative structure of the *Iliad*, see Whitley 2002: 227.

251. For the suggestion that Mycenaean burial customs were in general rather collectivist and group-oriented and, hence, not particularly suitable for the projection of elite status, see Boyd 2016: 212–214.

252. Middleton 2018: 111.

In our view, the designation of the most significant political entity of Late Bronze Age Greece was probably “inherited” (in both etic and emic terms) within the historical and cross-cultural context of the late 13th and 12th century B.C. central and eastern Mediterranean by the region of the Mycenaean Peloponnese with the latest cultural prosperity and the most important external contacts. From this standpoint, the earliest strata of the later mythological tradition about Tisamenos can be traced back to the late LH IIIB and LH IIIC developments in the north-western Peloponnese, by replacing the old migrationist hypothesis with a new repatriation one involving an earlier episode of *nostos*: i.e. former soldiers of the Mycenaean palaces originating from the north-western Peloponnese and returning home after the palatial collapse to become the forerunners of the later LH IIIC warriors. From this perspective, the Mycenaean post-palatial period can be deemed a chronological and cultural horizon that may have contributed not only to the formation of the Homeric epics²⁵³ but also to other, founding mythological traditions that later shaped the ethnic identities of historical antiquity.

253. Deger-Jalkotzy 1991: 28–29.

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