



Recentring Central Greece in the Aegean Middle Bronze Age

21st – 22nd March 2024, Warsaw

The Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology at the Polish Academy of Sciences invites you to join us online or in-person over March 21st – 22nd 2024 for a specialist workshop highlighting important new assemblages and re-evaluations of known materials which are rapidly improving our understanding of the Middle Bronze Age north of the Corinthian Isthmus to Magnesia. By recentring central Greece, the workshop addresses an imbalance within Aegean prehistory which has disproportionately focused on the Peloponnese, Cyclades, and Crete when examining the crucial half-millennium between the Early and Late Bronze Age. This workshop brings together researchers generating new insights into chronology and varied production and distribution networks based on transportable material culture (particularly pottery), enabling an understanding of how central Greece was interconnected with the broader Aegean. Moreover, marking the centenary year of Hetty Goldman's pioneering excavations at Eutresis, the workshop re-evaluates the contribution of this site to our understanding of the period.

Recentring Central Greece in the Aegean Middle Bronze Age is fully funded through the PASIFIC Programme, a Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND agreement between the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Location: In-person at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences ([Al. Solidarności 105, 00-140 Warszawa](#))

To attend online, [register through Zoom](#)

Time: March 21 – 22, 2024. 9am – 6pm (GMT +1)

Organizers: Dr Christopher Hale & Dr hab. Bartłomiej Lis
Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology,
Polish Academy of Sciences

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PASIFIC



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Maria Skłodowska-Curie Actions



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Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences
Warsaw, 21st – 22nd of March 2024



Welcome to Day 1 (21/03/2024)

9:00 – 9:10	
9:10 – 9:30	Recentring central Greece Christopher Hale; Bartłomiej Lis (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences)
9:30 – 10:00 +10 min Q+A	Glancing past life in the Cephissus valley: the pottery from Kalyvia-Ayia Marina as a proxy for understanding shifts in commensal activities in the late 3rd millennium BCE Polina Kapsali (University of Cambridge)
10:15 – 10:35 +10 min Q+A	The Soutlani plot at Kirrha (Phocis) and its contribution to central Greek pottery sequences Iro Mathioudaki (UCLouvain); Despoina Skorda (Honorary Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Phocis)
10:45 – 11:00	Roundtable Discussion on preceding papers
11:00 – 11:20	Tea and coffee (provided)
11:20 – 11:50 +10 min Q+A	Chipped stone tools as a tracer of MBA changes in central Greece: the case of Mitrou (East Lokris) and Kirrha (Phocis) Marie-Philippine Montagné (Aix Marseille Univ, CNRS, Minist Culture, LAMPEA, Aix-en-Provence, France)
12:05 – 12:35 +10 min Q+A	Questioning the “spiritual poverty” of Middle Helladic Eutresis Rebecca Worsham (Smith College)
12:45 – 13:00	Roundtable Discussion on preceding papers
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch break
14:40 – 15:10 +10 min Q+A	Grey’s Anatomy: How Grey Minyan style evolves and how it pairs and merges with other MBA pottery classes Kalliope Sarri (University of Copenhagen)
15:25 – 15:55 +10 min Q+A	Regional Networks and Local Recipes for Complexity: New archaeometric results from Middle Bronze Age central Greece and their implications Christopher Hale (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences); Johannes Sterba (TRIGA Center Atominstytut, TU Wien)
16:10 – 16:40 +10 min Q+A	The Middle Helladic to Late Helladic ceramic transition in central Greece Michael Lindblom (Uppsala University)
16:50 – 17:30	Roundtable Discussion at the conclusion of Day 1
18:00 +	Dinner for workshop participants



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9:00 – 9:10

Welcome to Day 2 (22/03/2024)

9:10 – 9:30

À la recherche du temps perdu. Recent interdisciplinary research in prominent MH sites of the Spercheios valley and its contribution in recentring the region in the Aegean Middle Bronze Age

Maria-Foteini Papakonstantinou

(Director Emerita, Ephorate of Phthiotida and Evrytania)

9:30 – 9:50

+10 min Q+A

A Kamares Cup from Middle Helladic Agia Paraskevi at Lamia and its implication for the synchronisation of chronologies

Tobias Krapf (Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece); **Maria-Foteini**

Papakonstantinou (Director Emerita, Ephorate of Phthiotida and Evrytania)

10:05 – 10:35

+10 min Q+A

Local Middle Helladic pottery in the Spercheios valley: Ceramic categories from levelling and cleaning deposits in Frantzi and from a use deposit in Lygaria

Efthymia Karantzali (Director, Ephorate of Phthiotida and Evrytania)

10:45 – 11:00

Roundtable discussion on preceding papers

11:00 – 11:20

Tea and coffee (provided)

11:20 – 11:50

+10 min Q+A

New evidence for the ceramic traditions and the exchange networks in Attica in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE

Anthi Balitsari (F.R.S.-FNRS, UCLouvain)

12:05 – 12:35

+10 min Q+A

Connectivity and interaction between communities of southern mainland Greece (Aspis-Argos and Vranas-Marathon) and central Greece during the MBA

Anna Philippa-Touchais (French School at Athens);

Gilles Touchais (University Paris 1)

12:50 – 13:20

+10 min Q+A

Ayia Irini IV, Kea, and central Greece

Donna May Crego (Independent Researcher); **Natalie Abell** (University of Michigan); **John C. Overbeck** (University at Albany [SUNY])

13:30 – 13:45

Roundtable discussion on preceding papers

13:45 – 15:15

Lunch break

15:25 – 15:55

+10 min Q+A

Central Greece and Kolonna. Observations on the Middle Bronze Age ceramic sequence, imports, and exports

Walter Gauß (Austrian Archaeological Institute, Austrian Academy of Sciences)

16:10 – 16:40

+10 min Q+A

What can coastal western Anatolia tell us about the Middle Helladic period in Greece? Twenty years on

Peter Pavúk (Charles University)

16:55 – 17:10

Roundtable discussion on preceding papers

17:10 – 17:40

Closing thoughts on the state-of-the-art for Middle Bronze Age central Greece

Joseph Maran (University of Heidelberg)

17:40 – 18:30

Round table discussion: Where to from here?



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Abstracts

Arranged alphabetically by last name of first author.

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Anthi Balitsari*

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New evidence for the ceramic traditions and the exchange networks in Attica in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE

Diachronically, Attica has always formed an important stepping-stone between mainland Greece and the insular Aegean world. However, in contrast to other periods, which have thus far been studied in impressive detail (e.g., Archaic-Classical), the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE, which mainly corresponds to the Middle and early Late Helladic period, is still poorly understood. The evidence presented here derives from the comparative study of three significant sites: Plasi-Marathon, Thorikos-Lavrion, and the Athenian Agora. A comprehensive analysis of pottery and fabrics, with the additional use of ceramic petrography and Wavelength Dispersive X-Ray Fluorescence (WD-XRF) techniques have been conducted. The primary objectives of this project include the identification of specific recipes used by the local workshops and the quantification of consumption choices. Through this, the ultimate purpose is to delineate the interregional connections and regional deviations. Based on the data collected thus far, it becomes evident that Thorikos and Athens are deeply intertwined with the network in the Argosaronic gulf, primarily influenced by Aegina. Plasi, on the other hand, seems to have been somewhat on the periphery of these connections, but there is still evidence suggesting its involvement in inland trade routes.

Donna May Crego*

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Natalie Abell

University of Michigan

John C. Overbeck

University at Albany (SUNY)

Ayia Irini IV, Kea, and central Greece

It has long been clear that Ayia Irini on Kea had close ceramic and other links with central Greece during the MBA. Recent work in both the mainland and the Cyclades provides new opportunities to evaluate the extent of those connections over time. On Kea, the authors have been clarifying how the assemblage of local and imported pottery developed over the course of Period IV at Ayia Irini. This paper presents an updated overview of ceramic connections between Keian and central Greek communities over time on the basis of recent publications and our ongoing analyses of the morphological, stylistic, technical, and fabric characteristics of the Period IV ceramic assemblage at Ayia Irini.



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Walter **Gauß***

Austrian Archaeological Institute, Austrian Academy of Sciences

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Central Greece and Kolonna. Observations on the Middle Bronze Age ceramic sequence, imports, and exports

The ceramic sequence from Kolonna on Aegina offers a welcome opportunity for observations on pottery originating from central Greece discovered at the site. Pottery from central Greece is represented in the Kolonna settlement since the Early Bronze Age. The first imports may even reach back to Early Bronze II times, and since the Early Bronze III period characteristic fine grey burnished pottery is attested. The total share of imports ranges at Kolonna, between 10 and 25% of the total assemblage depending on the chronological phase, with Cycladic and central Greek pottery being the most common groups. The proportion of central Greek pottery increases from the Early Bronze Age III period to around the middle part of the Middle Bronze Age, whereas a decline can be observed from the second half of the Middle Bronze Age to the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. The second part of the lecture will attempt to compare these observations with the finds of Aeginetan pottery and their chronological position at central Greek sites. Finally, based on the central Greek imports at Kolonna and the Aeginetan pottery found in central Greece some conclusions will be drawn about the nature of the relationships.

Christopher **Hale***

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Johannes Sterba

TRIGA Center Atominstytut, TU Wien

REgional Networks and LOcal Recipes for Complexity: New archaeometric results from Middle Bronze Age central Greece and their implications.

The Regional Networks and Local Recipes for Complexity project (RENLORC) sampled Middle Bronze Age (Early Helladic III – Late Helladic I) pottery spanning all major tableware classes and a range of suspected imports sourced from numerous central Greek sites and subjected them to combinations of petrographic thin-section examination and neutron activation analysis. The results provide new insight into the production of major unpainted tableware classes such as Fine Grey Burnished (Grey Minyan) pottery and Dark Burnished pottery, and decorated classes such as Dull Painted, Matt Painted, and Bichrome Painted pottery. While some of these classes belong to limited sources of production, their wide distribution reveals a highly interconnected central Greece. Moreover, these analyses have tested previous macroscopic identifications of imports from the wider Aegean and identified new imports, providing evidence for diachronically varied interaction along different routes with important implications for the transition to the Late Bronze Age.



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Polina **Kapsali***
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Glancing past life in the Cephissus valley: the pottery from Kalyvia-Ayia Marina as a proxy for understanding shifts in commensal activities in the late 3rd millennium BCE

Kalyvia-Ayia Marina in the Cephissus valley was excavated early in the 20th century. The light-on-dark pattern-painted pottery named after this site, the ‘Ayia Marina’ pottery, is considered characteristic for identifying the EBA III period across the central Greek mainland. Too little is, however, still known about the site. This talk aims at presenting the first results stemming from the study of the late EBA (- early MBA) ceramic material from Kalyvia-Ayia Marina.

This presentation will briefly cover the history of research at the site and present the early questions and ambiguities that were born out of the encounter with the relevant archaeological remains. It will then discuss the difficulties of modern study of an old material. Issues of chronology will also be explored. The main part of the talk will focus on the presentation of what is conventionally characterised as ‘Ayia Marina’ pottery, particularly the identified shape repertoire and surface treatments. This wide ceramic category will be explored along with other ceramics from the site that could belong to the same chronological phase. The formal features of the ‘Ayia Marina’ pottery will be compared to earlier (EBA II) ceramics attested at the site. This diachronic investigation aims at exploring how the pottery from Kalyvia-Ayia Marina can contribute to a better understanding of changes in the field of commensality during the later part of the third millennium BCE across the central and southern Greek mainland.

Efthymia **Karantzali***
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Local Middle Helladic pottery in the Spercheios valley: Ceramic categories from levelling and cleaning deposits in Frantzi and from a use deposit in Lygaria

The settlements Frantzi and Lygaria are located in the central part of the Spercheios valley, although Frantzi is closer to the east. They can both be called inland sites compared to Agia Paraskevi and Mitrou. Frantzi is a prehistoric site founded in the MH period which continued to be inhabited until the end of the Mycenaean palatial period (LH IIIB–IIIC Early). Lygaria is a site with a long history, inhabited during prehistoric and historical times.

Excavation at the Doka plot revealed the southern part of a late MH house in a fragmented condition due to Mycenaean building activity. The stratified material found inside the apsidal house is sufficient for general conclusions about the pottery sequence and the material culture at Frantzi during the period of house’s use in MH III–LH I. Moreover, earlier MH ceramic material found below the Mycenaean phases will also be discussed with evidence from a small stratified context.



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Lygaria, north of the Spercheios river and NW of Frantzi, was excavated during public works for the new railway line. Despite the fragmentary preservation of the ceramic material, due to the continued use of the site and contemporary agricultural activities, the evidence from the apsidal houses indicates their limited use during the transitional MH III–LH I phase or even later.

The analysis of MH pottery will demonstrate the pattern of local pottery production and consumption in Frantzi and Lygaria. The work focuses on the differentiation of local pottery varieties, defined macroscopically by fabric and style characteristics. The study will present specific local options for the morphological and technical characteristics of ceramics and local preference of consumption patterns. Despite the fragmentary nature of the material, an attempt will be made to show interregional connections and regional divergences. Useful for this effort were the stratified sequences at Pefkakia and Mitrou, as well as assemblages from the Spercheios valley and Thessaly.

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Maria-Foteini Papakonstantinou
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A Kamares cup from Middle Helladic Agia Paraskevi at Lamia and its implication for the synchronisation of chronologies

From 2006 to 2017, a series of buildings covering EH III to MH III has been excavated by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Phthiotida and Evrytania at Agia Paraskevi, East of Lamia. Several of the buildings still contained their inventory of vases in well preserved destruction deposits. In the destruction layer of the second phase of the apsidal building 4, half of a Kamares cup has been retrieved among complete vessels and sherd material. While a few sites in central Greece and Thessaly have produced Minoan or Minoanizing sherds, this find is so far unique regarding its good state of preservation and context. In this paper, the cup is being presented for the first time. The vase is associated, in a closed deposit, with local and other imported vases, including Grey Minyan, Δ1β and imported matt painted, Adriatic ware, as well as coarse cooking and storage vessels. While the Grey Minyan pottery allows to compare the assemblage with MH II Early at other sites along the Euboean Gulf, such as Pefkakia and Mitrou, a connection to chronologies further south can be established thanks to the Kamares cup. A few Cycladic imports at Agia Paraskevi, including a fragmented painted pithos with parallels from Akrotiri, further strengthen the links that will be discussed in detail, both in terms of exchange models and potential for the synchronisation of chronologies.



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Michael **Lindblom***
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The Middle Helladic to Late Helladic ceramic transition in central Greece

In 2024 we celebrate the centennial anniversary of the first excavations at Eutresis. The ceramic analysis by Hetty Goldman at this Boeotian settlement represented a watershed in the ceramic definition of the Late Helladic I-II periods in that it underscored some apparent and still valid differences in the makeup of domestic assemblages in the area compared to the northeast Peloponnese. This paper summarizes the most important developments that have occurred in the identification of the Middle Helladic III –Late Helladic I transition since Goldman's pioneering publications. It ends with some subjective recommendations to disentangle synchronous variability and diachronic change in the localized production and consumption of pottery on the central (and southern) Greek mainland.

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Despoina Skorda
Honorary Director,
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The Soutlani plot at Kirrha (Phocis) and its contribution to central Greek pottery sequences

The prehistoric settlement of Kirrha on the north coast of the Gulf of Corinth has been well known since the French excavations in the central part of the Magoula in 1937-38, which brought to light the remains of an extensive prehistoric settlement. These pre-war excavations showed that Kirrha was continuously inhabited from EH II to LH IIIC period, with the Middle Bronze Age being the best represented period. The rescue excavations that have been carried out in the area since then have provided a wealth of new information on the development of the settlement and its relationship with other areas of central Greece and the Aegean. Excavations in 1983 at the Soutlani plot in the western sector of the settlement brought to light extensive architectural remains which, according to the stratigraphy, belong to different periods and provide evidence for a complete - uninterrupted - sequence from the beginning to the end of the Middle Bronze Age. This paper presents the Middle Bronze Age pottery assemblage from the Soutlani plot and its stratigraphic and typological significance, contextualising the material in relation to other Middle Bronze Age assemblages.



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Marie-Philippine **Montagné***

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Chipped stone tools as a tracer of Middle Bronze Age changes in central Greece: the case of Mitrou (East Lokris) and Kirrha (Phokis)

Most of our knowledge from the Aegean Bronze Age comes from pottery. Indeed, this artefact is a wonderful common thread for tracing trade networks as well as cultural and culinary habits, with unbeatable chronological accuracy when compared to other artifacts. Nevertheless, even though chipped stone tools are not very evocative of this period, they remain a privileged witness. The study of obsidian and flint is of considerable interest: unlike bronze tools, which are subject to numerous recasts, stone tools are preserved, and with them, a wealth of information. These artefacts can be examined within a context of major socio-economic upheaval in Greece. Thus, the study of chipped stones tools shows several deep changes through the Greek Bronze Age, including within their raw materials, their production, and their typology. Chronological fluctuations can be highlighted, as well as variation in exchange networks, but also the socio-economic position of the users. This talk will present case studies from two MBA sites on both sides of central Greece, Mitrou (East Lokris) and Kirrha (Phokis), both with long-term occupation and a different direct sea access. The study of their chipped stone tools reveals common characteristics and important differences, the reasons for which will be explored.

Maria-Foteini **Papakonstantinou***

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***À la recherche du temps perdu*¹. Recent interdisciplinary research in prominent Middle Helladic sites of the Spercheios valley and its contribution in recentring the region in the Aegean Middle Bronze Age**

For a hundred years, Lianokladi remained the only excavated prehistoric settlement in the Spercheios valley and a point of reference in the literature for the production of a specific category of matt-painted pottery ($\Delta 1\beta$). In search of lost time, archaeological research within the valley and the south shore of the Malian gulf has made significant progress in recent decades, revealing various aspects of the MH cultural identity of a geographical unit apparently closed but actually wide open to communication by sea routes and mountain passes.

The interdisciplinary program “Archaeological and Paleogeographical Research in the Spercheios Valley” (APEKS) investigates three prehistoric sites with long-term habitation in different locations of an imaginary axis that runs in a W-E direction through the valley up to the exit of the Malian gulf (Lianokladi - Agia Paraskevi - Raches). Together with the rescue excavations at Lamia Castle, Amouri and Frantzi, it does not only outline the life circle of each of these settlements during the MH period, but also of the entire valley. The results provide the opportunity for a preliminary overall assessment of the cultural idiosyncrasies from EH III – MH I to MH III – LH I in the fields of domestic architecture, urban organization of settlements, their art and craft production and household economy, as well as the investigation of the impact of their interaction with the neighbouring regions and the Aegean. Particularly



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in the field of pottery studies, the steps that have been taken allow the distinction of local workshops and highlight the significant role of the settlement of Agia Paraskevi - the only gateway to "sea trade" for the valley - during the Middle Helladic period.

¹ In search of lost time

Peter **Pavúk***

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What can coastal western Anatolia tell us about the Middle Helladic period in Greece? Twenty years on

The paper is conceptualized as an update to my contribution at the Salzburg workshop in 2004. Over the past two decades, new material evidence has come to light, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the typological variety of Middle Helladic shapes along the west Anatolian coast. Special attention is given to the now better-recognized diversity, including the Grey Ware finds on the East Aegean Islands. The paper also delves into a new set of ¹⁴C dates from Troy, offering fresh perspectives on the early second millennium and its potential implications for typo-stratigraphic development and synchronisms within Early Troy VI.

By integrating these new findings, the paper proposes a revised working model that assesses the dynamics of contacts and the range of potential partners during the Middle Helladic period. This comprehensive update aims to contribute to the evolving narrative of the MH period in Greece, shedding light on the complexities of cultural interactions and exchange networks in the broader Aegean region.

Anna **Philippa-Touchais***

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Gilles Touchais

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Connectivity and interaction between communities of southern mainland Greece (Aspis-Argos and Vranas-Marathon) and central Greece during the MBA

The concept of centre and periphery, well discussed for the Mycenaean period, is quite incompatible with the structure and political organization of communities during the Middle Bronze Age in mainland Greece. These communities seem to have been organized in groups of settlements, forming clusters, in smaller or larger regions. A set of clusters within a region with some geographical cohesion, shared cultural features and strong social bonds could be considered to constitute a 'centre'. In this sense, we believe that in the MBA there were many 'centres' throughout mainland Greece. Some of them or even some communities within them flourished from the beginning of the MBA, mainly because of their openness, connectivity and interaction at a local, regional or supra-regional level. These elements can be usually best perceived through the analysis of the pottery.



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In this paper we will focus on data from the ceramic production and consumption of certain MBA communities from southern mainland regions, mainly Aspis-Argos in the Argolid, and Vranas Marathon but also some more communities from Eastern Attica, in relation to the production of communities in central Greece and Thessaly (mainly Eutresis and Pefkakia). By comparing the characteristics of each region's local pottery production, but also imported vessels and the incorporation of new technologies and typologies into local productions, the aim is to understand how connectivity and interaction contributed not only to the pottery diversity, but also to deeper changes in the fields of both everyday and symbolic practices, perceptions, and social structures.

Kalliope Sarri*

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Grey's Anatomy: How Grey Minyan style evolves and how it pairs and merges with other Middle Bronze Age pottery classes

Minyan pottery is the outstanding ceramic category of the Middle Bronze Age as far as the region of central Greece is concerned. The further we move away from this area, the more its distribution decreases numerically and qualitatively, while attempts to imitate it can be observed. The category reflects important technological innovations, mainly the use of the fast potter's wheel, but also a particular aesthetic that is not directly comparable with earlier or later ceramic techniques. Its emergence and widespread distribution in the Aegean have raised questions about when, where, and how this particular style of pottery was first created, how it became established as a standardized table ware, and under what conditions it spread to surrounding areas where other ceramic traditions prevailed. The presentation will discuss the above questions in the light of new evidence and, in particular, attempt to trace elements of the adoption of Minyan features in the ceramic production of other regions as well as evidence of the incorporation of exogenous elements in the local ceramic tradition.

Rebecca Worsham*

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Questioning the “spiritual poverty” of Middle Helladic Eutresis

Hetty Goldman's excavation at Eutresis was pioneering both with regard to her own situation as a woman directing archaeological work in mainland Greece, but also for its elucidation of the Bronze Age—especially the Early and Middle Helladic periods—in this area. In her summation of her work on the prehistoric settlement, Goldman (1931, 234) notes that:

“... the Middle Helladic settlement has the character of a poorer and more isolated community than the Early Helladic. Not only were the houses smaller and less well constructed, but they do not seem to have known so simple a device as the pivot stone for swinging the door... A certain corresponding spiritual poverty is suggested by the complete absence at Eutresis as elsewhere of any object suggesting religious beliefs and practices.”



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This lack of MH religious practice is contrasted with the “definite religious beliefs in a deity or deities of human form” indicated by the decoration of ceramics of the LH period (Goldman 1931, 236), as well as the possible example of religious activity especially in Room III of House L, dated to EH II (Goldman 1931, 18-20; Whittaker 2014, 67-68).

I argue in this paper that the enduring impression of the “spiritual poverty” of MH Eutresis, and the MH period in general, is an illusion resulting from the flattening effect of periodization as well as faulty assumptions regarding what ritual practice and supporting belief structures should look like (largely derived from later periods with greater access to wealth). Especially household-based ritual practice is poorly understood for the Bronze Age, and particularly for the MH period, in spite of Whittaker’s (2014) excellent analysis of the subject. Using Eutresis as a case study, I suggest that especially beliefs around ancestors were regularly enacted within the space (and sometimes the physical framework) of the house, as indicated by the treatment of the domestic architecture throughout the MH period.