

The Wider Island of Pelops

Studies on Prehistoric Aegean Pottery
in Honour of Professor Christopher Mee

Edited by

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ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Summertown Pavilion

18-24 Middle Way

Summertown

Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80327-328-0

ISBN 978-1-80327-329-7 (e-Pdf)

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Cover: View of Mt. Taygetos from the Neolithic - Bronze Age settlement at Kouphovouno.
In foreground, pithos fragment, Phylakopi, Melos (NAM acc. no. 26505).

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Preface

The Wider Island of Pelops offers readers a snapshot of current research in the field of ceramic studies across the prehistoric Aegean. It captures a wide gamut of theoretical, contextual, and scientific approaches and, in so doing, serves as a fitting tribute to Professor Christopher Mee, who through his own research contributed so much to our understanding of prehistoric Aegean pottery, its myriad functions, and its utility in conveying social and cultural meaning.

The volume is, in part, formed of contributions offered to a two-day conference held in honour of Chris at the Upper House of The British School at Athens (BSA) across September 18th and 19th, 2017. This meeting was organised by two of Chris' former students at the University of Liverpool, David Smith and Angelos Papadopoulos, with generous support from the director and administrative staff of the BSA, to whom the editors of this volume are indebted, and with the help of funding from the Institute for the Study of Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP).

The remainder of the papers included here were offered to the volume subsequently, by friends and colleagues who had worked with Chris, and others who have followed his research. These include contributions by Robin Barber, Julien Beck and colleagues, Lisa French†, Walter Gauss, Mercouris Georgiadis, Chrysanthi Gallou and colleagues, Margarita Nazou and Aris Papayiannis. The seventeen papers which make up this volume are united by their common ceramic focus and, collectively, cover the broad histories of the Neolithic and Bronze Age, and the myriad and shifting relationships that linked the settlements of the Peloponnese to so many others beyond its limits.

Across almost a decade of fieldwork at the Laconian site of Kouphovouno, Chris Mee proved himself to be an inspiring colleague and leader. His co-directors in that project, Bill Cavanagh and Josette Renard (**Chapter Four**), here utilise the architecture and objects uncovered during the recent excavations (1999-2007) to explore the theme of 'territoriality' in the Peloponnese during the Neolithic period. The analysis of identity expression at Middle Neolithic Kouphovouno at the level of structure, village, *terroir*, and territory, provides the foundation for discussion of a Late Neolithic site characterised by very different forms of material culture, patterns of settlement, and horizons of cultural influence and exchange. Framed by the ebb and flow of multiple small-scale population movements which served to foment social and technological innovation, ceramics adopted a new significance in the negotiation of tensions and the furtherance of opportunities arising from the contextual dynamics of tradition and transformation within, and beyond, the Neolithic community.

The Neolithic cave site of Alepotrypa at Diros has long served as a keystone for our interpretation of the rich and complex later Neolithic Laconian landscape. New excavations and survey in the area of Ksagounaki have furthered our understanding of the period in the immediate hinterland of Alepotrypa, and now important work by Stella Katsarou and Andreas Darlas (**Chapter Eleven**) has begun to populate the, previously obscure, Final Neolithic coast of the western Mani peninsula. The caves and rock shelters of this region evidence a deep history of human activity reaching back into the Palaeolithic period, although two caves in particular, Skoini 3 and Skoini 4, are highlighted for the extraordinary contribution that they make to our understanding of death, meaning-making and social reproduction during the final phase of the Neolithic. Based on the evidence of a highly unusual male-female double burial in Skoini 3 and a second, likely also male-female, at Skoini 4, Katsarou and Darlas recognise a communal concept of the afterlife expressed through the mortuary reproduction of household metaphors, the observation of which served to regulate power dynamics amongst the living, and monumentalise the 'wild' Maniote landscape through the dead.

The prehistoric landscape of the southern Peloponnese is addressed in rather different fashion by Lisa French † (**Chapter Six**), whose own contribution considers the place of Mycenae in the Argive Plain during the Neolithic and Early Helladic period, with reference to a modest assemblage of EN-EH pottery recovered from historic excavations and survey across the acropolis of Mycenae itself, and at several sites in its hinterland.

A short distance to the southeast of Mycenae, the comprehensive study by Eva Alram-Stern and colleagues of LN to EH I pottery from a series of well-defined contexts revealed by Katie Demakopoulou's recent excavations at Midea offers important insight into the economy of the site, and its place in the socio-technological landscape of the wider Argive Plain (**Chapter One**). The examination of ceramic shape and decorative categories is complimented by the results of a programme of thin section petrography and Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) analyses which provide important material and technological detail to our understanding of ceramic production and consumption

at the site. Networks of knowledge and practice emerge from the analysis of diachronic patterns in fabric and firing choices, as does the existence of circulatory networks which afforded the people of Early Helladic Midea access to products from at least as far afield as Aegina, on the Saronic island of Kolonna, c. 75km to the west.

As the final results of the Dutch excavations at Geraki (1995–2009), in Laconia, progress toward publication, Joost Crouwel provides a conspectus of the FN and EH pottery assemblage (**Chapter Five**). The FN settlement is remarkable in Laconia, and indeed, the wider Peloponnese, for the monumental fortification wall by which it was enclosed; the associated ceramic assemblage is relatively modest, but demonstrates affinities in shape and surface treatment with other important Final Neolithic sites both within, and beyond, Laconia. Very low quantities of probable EH I material (including fruitstands, bowls and mat-impressed bases) evidence a phase of occupation absent from the built record as currently known, and offer something to the discussion of the elusive Laconian EH I period. A far larger volume of pottery, and a wider repertoire of shapes, belong to EH II; most of those vessels which make up the assemblage seem entirely at home in the Laconian-northeastern Peloponnesian tradition — and none more so than those in the eponymous, elaborate and, seemingly, defiantly Laconian, Geraki Ware — raising intriguing questions around the modes by which the community at Geraki engaged with sites further afield.

The third, and final, contribution to focus on the FN and Early Bronze Age (EBA) moves beyond the Peloponnese, to Attica, where recent excavations have made it one of the most closely explored regions of Greece, and offer an unprecedented opportunity to analyse social and cultural identity within a ‘small-world’ or ‘micro-regional’ framework. Here, incorporating data from Kontra Gliate and Thorikos, Margarita Nazou (**Chapter Twelve**) addresses the definition of a ceramically, and socio-culturally, discrete, Attica. The modern region, and its borderlands and coastscapes, emerge from her analysis as ceramically heterogenous; better understood to consist of multiple stylistic (or socio-cultural) zones which emerge as the result of a complex interaction of shared knowledge and practice, and idiosyncratic responses to multiple and various pressures, imperatives and opportunities over time. For now, much about the region remains obscured by difficulties of chronology, and by inequivalence in the archaeological record across the Attic interior, although as Nazou makes clear, these are surely only temporary barriers to understanding, which are already well on their way to being broken down.

The Argolic Gulf would seem to offer similar potential for the application of a small-world framework, although the extraordinary results of recent work by Julien Beck and colleagues undertaken at Lambayanna in the Argolic bay of Kiladha, make clear the folly of restricting analysis to dry land (**Chapter Three**). Located close to the famous ‘Fournoi Cluster’ of the Stanford University Argolid Exploration Project, underwater survey has revealed a substantial, and hitherto unknown, EH I-II settlement, fortified at least at its western (seaward) limit by a monumental wall. Terracotta rooftiles hint at the existence of monumental architecture elsewhere in the settlement, while a substantial assemblage of ceramics, and ground and chipped stone, as with other elements of the site, invites comparison with the EH II type site of Lerna on the western coast of the Gulf. Lambayanna is one of a number of Bronze Age sites to be discovered submerged off the Peloponnesian coast (with the EH settlement at Salandi, a short distance to the north, and the remarkable LN-PG site of Pavlopetri off the Laconian Malea peninsula, **Chapter Seven**). These discoveries promise much, although there is, as yet, no evidence at Lambayanna of the elusive ceramic EH III.

The EH III ‘gap’ in the Peloponnese has long presented a challenge to archaeologists; Chris Mee among them. In Laconia, at least, the visibility of the period has been improved somewhat by the work of Emilia Banou and Ioanna Efstathiou-Manolakou, by the recent underwater survey at Pavlopetri, and by the work of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Laconia. To be included among this latter, are recent excavations at the EH-LH site of Karavas Soustianon, the results of which are presented here by Aris Papayiannis (**Chapter Fourteen**). EH architecture is largely absent from the site, probably as the result of extensive levelling activity during the later Bronze Age, but stratified fills, and several pits, have, collectively, yielded a substantial, and important, volume of EH III pottery. Much of this material can be paralleled at Lerna IV, although the absence at Karavas of wheelmade classes (including Fine Gray-Burnished) is a notable point of distinction. The rarity of pattern-painted decoration within the Karavas assemblage is particularly significant, given its identification as a key marker for EH III, and may go some way toward explaining why the phase has, historically, proved so difficult to recognise from surface collection.

The EH III period also features large in Walter Gauss’ analysis of the parallel Early and Middle Helladic histories of the key sites of Korakou in the Corinthia and Kolonna on Aegina (**Chapter Eight**). Kolonna, of course, stands apart from the vast majority of mainland sites as a monumental survivor of the major socio-structural and economic changes which characterised the later EH and the transition to the Middle Bronze Age. Notwithstanding hints of monumental architecture at EH Korakou, Gauss’ reassessment of the stratigraphy and ceramic material from Carl

Blegen's early excavations makes clear differences between the two, as currently understood, and draws on the EH-MH transition, at which both sites may have suffered destruction, as a crucial point of divergence in their respective trajectories. This might reasonably be considered to represent the organic rhythms of settlement in two distinct, if connected, parts of southern Greece, but Gauss highlights too the distorting effects of methodology in the history of excavation, and proposes that, with the future excavation of EH and MH Korakou, the two sites might prove to have been not so different after all.

The transition to the Middle Bronze Age is also addressed by Robin Barber (**Chapter Two**), this time in the first of two contributions to present material from the Cycladic site of Phylakopi on Melos. Here, Barber considers the chronological relationship between the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age in the Cyclades and on the mainland and, more specifically, on the relationship between pottery of the Cycladic 'Geometric' and Aeginetan-mainland Matt-painted styles, following a proposal first put forward by Robert Buck that the former predated the latter and, likely, served as its inspiration. Supported by new data from recent excavations at Akrotiri, Barber makes a renewed case for the identification at Phylakopi of Duncan Mackenzie's proposed Phase II-i, a 'transitional' phase between EC III and the MC period.

A rather different set of questions is asked of Phylakopi by David Smith (**Chapter Sixteen**), who presents a diachronic analysis of cooking vessels and culinary practice at the site, based on the restudy of material recovered during the 1896-1899 excavations of the British School at Athens; an important lens through which to view the networks within which Phylakopi operated, and the manner in which those connections were integrated into the socio-cultural identities of its inhabitants. Early Cycladic practices emerge from analysis as fairly typical of the wider archipelago, with important ceramic parallels from Dhaskalio and Akrotiri; subsequent contact with Middle Minoan Crete prompts the reproduction of Minoan cooking shapes by Melian potters, and, more rarely, the arrival to Phylakopi of genuine Cretan imports, suggesting the adoption of Cretan cooking styles, if not, necessarily, the introduction of Cretan cuisine, and not, it seems, to the detriment of Melian practices. During the Late Cycladic, and particularly during LH III, the presence of rare shapes, such as the 'Mycenaean' griddle pan, align at least some components of dining at Phylakopi with those of 'palatial' centres on the mainland and Crete, suggesting the sometime reproduction of perceived 'elite' dining behaviour and, together with the earlier Minoanising component, offering an important perspective on the complex and cross-scale choices which underpinned the emergent phenomena of 'Minoanisation' and 'Mycenaeanisation' in the later Bronze Age settlement.

The contributions of Gauss, Barber and Smith illustrate the rich rewards to be won through the mining of unpublished ceramic material from historic excavations. Angelos Papadopoulos' discussion of Mycenaean ceramics and other material recovered during the late 19th century AD British Museum excavations at Episkopi-Bamboula (Kourion Site D) on Cyprus, represents something of a cautionary tale, illustrating the difficulties that might accompany any attempt to do so (**Chapter Thirteen**). Navigating an incomplete and, sometimes, contradictory paper record, and the uncertainty arising from problematic storage in the years immediately following excavation, Papadopoulos is, nevertheless, able to tease out important detail from the Cyprus Museum 'share' of this otherwise little-known assemblage, and further illuminate the economic and social networks which connected mainland Greece and Cyprus during the Late Bronze Age.

Mercouris Georgiadis (**Chapter Nine**) and Iphiyenia Tournavitou (**Chapter Seventeen**) transport us to the island of Kythera, and to the remarkable peak sanctuaries at Leska and Ayios Georgios sto Vouno, respectively. The two sites each present a very different perspective on the peak sanctuary phenomenon as it was adopted, or adapted, outside of Crete. The site at Leska, in the west of the island, has yielded no trace of architecture, nor any metal objects. It has, however, yielded a MM-LM I ceramic assemblage in Kytheran fabrics which included Minoanising drinking, serving and cooking vessels, and rare examples of more specialised shapes (ring-handled basins, rhyta and braziers), attesting to the importance of consumption — although not, it appears, the act of cooking itself — in ritual practice at the site, and the role played by the communities of Kythera in articulating the connection between Crete and the Peloponnese.

A similar articulatory role can be recognised at Ayios Georgios sto Vouno, which dominates views from the site of Kastri, and across the southeastern part of the island, and which yielded a far larger, and much more varied, material assemblage than its western Kytheran counterpart. The evidence from this site, and from others on Crete, are used by Tournavitou to re-examine the use of fire in peak sanctuary ritual. The distinction of ritual from more pragmatic concerns (heat, light) is, now, a difficult undertaking, although historical and ethnographic examples of fire ritual provide potential parallels for their use in the Bronze Age Aegean, and, fires emerge from Tournavitou's

analysis as a relatively common feature of the peak sanctuary record. From site to site, however, the evidence for prehistoric fire or pyre use is highly variable, and oftentimes uncertain, and the manner in which they may have been deployed as ritual apparatus, including for the destruction of ceramics and other votive objects, is far from clear. The latter practice may have been observed only relatively sporadically, perhaps dictated by atypical circumstance rather than by religious orthodoxy, although we are reminded, too, of the variety of ways in which fire has been incorporated into historic and modern ritual, which may leave no material trace.

The excavation of the Mycenaean palace at Ayios Vasileios by Adamantia Vasilogamvrou and colleagues represents one of the most important excavations of recent times, and offers a compelling response to long-standing uncertainty over the location of a 'palatial' centre in Laconia. With work ongoing, the site has already yielded a wealth of material — including a large number of Linear B tablets — which promises to reframe the political geography of the region, and illuminate the relationships that the Eurotas Valley enjoyed with the wider Aegean during the Middle and Late Helladic periods. In **Chapter Ten**, Eleftheria Kardamaki and colleagues examine the middle and later palatial ceramic assemblage of LH IIIA2 to LH IIIB2 (-IIIC Early) from the area of the North Cemetery and the court, addressing the chronological relationship between the Argive and Laconian ceramic sequences, and clarifying key differences in the representation of particular shapes and decorative schema at Ayios Vasileios compared to other sites in Laconia, and to contemporary Argive centres. The causal factors which underpin these differences — economic, political or social, or some combination thereof — for now, remain obscure; their resolution contingent on further excavation and ever more refined analyses.

The final Mycenaean period, LH IIIC, is considered from opposite ends of the Peloponnese by Jeremy Rutter (**Chapter Fifteen**) and Chrysanthi Gallou (**Chapter Seven**). At Aigeira, on the southern shore of the Corinthian Gulf, analysis of material from a number of substantial, and well stratified, LH IIIC deposits has resulted in the identification of five distinct LH IIIC ceramic phases. Rutter's detailed analysis of this assemblage offers a complex picture of the settlement's shifting priorities, practices, and, perhaps ideologies, through its final settlement phase. Hand manufactured (including coil-built) vessels in several imported and local fabric classes are shown to appear during the earlier part of the sequence (APP 1-3) alongside more typical wheel-thrown Mycenaean shapes, in an assemblage characterised by conservatism of shape and an unexpected heterogeneity of ceramic technologies. Low numbers of sherds belonging to the later sequence, APP 4 and APP 5, hint at change, but are, currently, too few to make clear their significance. Distinctions in the form and decoration of vessels intended for private and public use make clear the retained value of ceramics for framing social interaction.

Gallou and colleagues offer a contemporary view from southern Laconia, exploring themes of connectivity and communication at the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. During the post-palatial flux of the late 12th and early 11th centuries BC, several Laconian coastal sites, including Epidauros Limera, enjoyed a period of relative prosperity; the latter buoyed by integration within both Peloponnesian and wider Aegean, Attic, Cycladic and Cretan networks and, perhaps, by the arrival of migrants displaced from former palatial centres, whose influence is manifest in ceramic innovation. The authors also present important new ceramic evidence for post-palatial occupation at the now-submerged settlement of Pavlopetri, a site which, along with Epidauros Limera, provides a rare example of survival on the Laconian coast after LH IIIC Middle. The LH IIIC Late to Protogeometric material from Epidauros Limera makes clear the survival of Cretan, Cycladic, Dodecanesian and mainland relationships, and characterises the site as something of a Postpalatial cultural melange. It was, the authors propose, a combination of strategic advantage, deeply-rooted and far-reaching socio-economic networks, socio-cultural commonality and an emergent resilience to the most disruptive effects of the dissolution of palatial power structures, which allowed the harbour settlements of southern Laconia to adapt and thrive, at the threshold of the first millennium BC.

D.M.S and W.G.C.