

As for the level of population, of course the evidence cannot be taken at face value. This would produce anomalies like the existence of what seem to be regional cult centres at places like Olympia when there is no archaeological evidence for the communities that supported them, and population figures would be so low generally as to be unbelievable. This is not the only period for which evidence of settlements is too slim to represent anything like a plausible population in some regions, and it is not easy to find an explanation, but it may reflect a combination of the lack of easily recognisable diagnostic material, continued later use of land occupied in the missing period, and erosion during a period of desertion. Given the capacity of long-known sites to produce unexpected evidence of what were thought to be gaps in their occupation history, as at Lefkandi,<sup>12</sup> it should also be accepted that our impression of many sites' history should be regarded as provisional and subject to revision. However, that many clearly substantial LBA sites were apparently abandoned by c. 1100, until well into the historical period if not for ever, does seem good evidence for a severe decline in the population over the transition from LBA to EIA. But putting figures on this seems to the reviewer to be beyond what the state of the evidence will allow – and if this is true of the population level, it will surely be true of the levels of demand and productivity that depend, as is pointed out by Murray, on the size of population.

This review is already too long, and the reviewer will therefore end it by saying, in summary, that, although much of the work that Murray has done in assembling and analysing the data is useful, her methodology for arriving at population estimates needs a much sounder basis, and her coverage needs to be more up to date, especially on the LBA, and to give more consideration to the role played by the islands in Aegean developments.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Lemos in *Archaeological Reports* 53 (2006–2007): 39 for early reports of Submycenaean and EPG finds on Xeropolis.

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**Chrysanthi Gallou, *Death in Mycenaean Laconia. A Silent Place*. pp. xi + 280, 248 ills incl. maps and plates. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2020. ISBN 978-1-107-89245-2, hardcover £48.**

This substantial study developed out of Gallou's postdoctoral project on the Mycenaean cemeteries of Epidavros Limera, a site on the east Laconian coast that functioned as a major port in historical times. Hence, it very usefully sorts out the exceptionally complicated history of excavations at that site (generally undertaken in response to repeated tomb

robbery) and in Chapter 4 publishes all the pottery in Sparta Museum from the excavations, which covers the whole chronological range from the very beginning of the Mycenaean development, in types considered transitional from Middle Helladic, to the latest-looking types of Late Helladic IIIC, often classified, as here, as Submycenaean (in the course of this Gallou sorts out certain and likely confusions involving the recording of some of the pottery). This is a very valuable increase in our knowledge, and yet the account does underline how much information has been lost through inadequate recording. Regrettably, it has to be said that our knowledge of another of the most clearly important cemeteries in Laconia, at Pellana well to the north of Sparta, is similarly restricted, and several others are known only from very scanty preliminary reports. Thus, while this study is comprehensive, to the reviewer's knowledge, it inevitably deals with scattered fragments of what must once have been there, to a greater extent than in other better documented, but otherwise comparable regions of Mycenaean mainland Greece like the north-east Peloponnese and Messenia, and its conclusions have to be viewed in this light. This matters particularly because a major Mycenaean palatial centre, where Linear B was used to record matters of interest to the palace administration, has now been identified in central Laconia, at Ayios Vasileios south of Sparta. We naturally want to know as much as possible about its contemporary setting in the region, and in assessing the settlement pattern and extent of land exploitation, cemetery evidence can be a useful supplement to what is provided by regional surveys and excavation.

Gallou's Chapter 1, 'Graves and burial contexts', lists all the material that she has been able to collect. First come excavated tombs, broken down by different types, viz. tholos tombs, chamber tombs (much the largest category and so subdivided regionally between East Taygetos, the Sparta plain, the Helos plain, eastern Vardounia, and the Malea peninsula), built chamber tombs, simple graves, and tombs of unspecified type or only possibly Mycenaean. Then follow sections on Mycenaean tombs reported but not excavated (including a number that are possible identifications) in each of the Sparta plain, West Parnon and the lower Evrotas valley, the Helos plain, Vardounia and Mani, and the Malea peninsula. The total of catalogue entries is 103, but the number of separate sites is far smaller, for each of the excavated or at least identified and investigated examples of tholos, chamber and built chamber tombs is given a separate number, so that several numbers may be associated with the same site, while reports of pits and cists associated with

one site are grouped under a single number. This has the advantage of avoiding the imbalance that would develop if the numerous burials on site at both Ayios Stephanos and Pavlopetri were all separately numbered. Gallou has devised her own system of numbering, following the chronological order in which tombs were excavated or reported at each site, and using extra nomenclature to distinguish the several groups of tombs in separate locations around Epidavros Limera. Each entry includes all measurements available and summarises all other details given, and full bibliographies are provided where tombs have been widely discussed.

When the results are closely examined, they may well seem disappointing, because at quite a number of sites only the remains of certain or likely tomb chambers, and sometimes their dromoi, survive, and all trace of their original contents has been lost. Further, many of the excavated tombs at the recognised cemeteries (fewer than a dozen, in fact) proved to have been robbed in ancient or modern times. Of the cemetery sites only Epidavros Limera is obviously large, though Pellana included some very impressive tombs, and as well as looting, both sites have suffered from inadequate recording. The distribution pattern shows a fairly even scatter down the Evrotas valley from Pellana to the Helos plain, some on the natural route to Epidavros Limera, and a notably dense grouping (which at least partially reflects Gallou's own investigations) in the Vatika plain at the end of the Malea peninsula, to which the now well-known underwater site of Pavlopetri, off the island of Elaphonisi, is adjacent.

Chapter 2, 'Burial architecture', discusses all details of the graves, which are divided into two basic categories, tombs of simple form and tombs of complex form. It makes at once a very pertinent point that often seems to be overlooked in discussions of the foundation and use of cemeteries, that 'the active presence of experienced architects and skilled groups' would have been required throughout the Mycenaean period (p. 83); one can often get the impression that the local villagers are thought to have constructed the tombs, which seems likely only for the simplest types. All aspects are covered – orientation, construction and chronology, and for tombs of complex form also location and the various primary and secondary architectural elements. Chapter 3, 'Burial customs and rites', introduced with a section on the preceding Middle Helladic material, attempts to reconstruct the complete suite of funerary activities: the preparation of the body for burial and the lamenting of the dead, the transporting of the body to the grave and the process of burial, and, more observable from the data

obtainable by excavation, the provision of offerings, their positioning and potential significance (but this concentrates on 'warrior burials', the 'lord of Vapheio', and children), and finally the secondary rites after the original burial, covering ground that is beginning to be familiar. Ch. 4, as noted above, publishes all the pottery that can be associated with the Epidavros Limera tombs, with drawings and often photographs of each item, and a lengthy Epilogue, subtitled 'Breaking the tomb's silence', ends the text.

The presentation of the material is exemplary, and while the account of burial rites relies largely on analogy from later represented or recorded custom, supported at points by citations of Mycenaean-dated scenes like those on the Tanagra larnakes, it seems generally plausible. The discussion of tomb architecture is also essentially unproblematic, except on the question of the source of the chamber tomb type which makes up such a large proportion of the tombs of Mycenaean date, and its relationship to the stone-built types similarly composed of a dromos, stomion and chamber. While it is true that an apparently Early Bronze Age cemetery of rock-cut tombs of similar type has been identified near Pavlopetri, and others of similar date are now known at sites in the Malea peninsula (p. 96), it seems a bit of a stretch to see the development of the Mycenaean chamber tomb type as influenced by these, which date anything up to a millennium earlier, rather than the tradition represented at Knossos and Kastri on Kythera and perhaps also the uncertainly dated tombs of Phylakopi, which are not all necessarily early.<sup>1</sup> There is certainly a case for seeing a local development at the beginning of the Mycenaean period at Epidavros Limera, where there is evidence for a distinctive local tradition, but whether this could have influenced Pellana, where a rather different type was clearly established by Late Helladic IIA, might seem open to question, since there is a considerable distance between them; both are also some distance from the region of Pavlopetri. In a period which seems to have been increasingly dominated by competitions of display between emerging 'elites', in tomb types and burial customs as in other features, local traditions that tried to emulate what was reported from elsewhere could have developed, both in rock-cut and stone-built tombs. But the whole question of the development of rock-cut chamber tombs in the Aegean in the later Middle and early Late Bronze Age, their adoption in various rather restricted regions (interestingly, there is little trace of them in Crete outside the neighbourhood of Knossos), and their influence

on or possibly from the similar stone-built tombs needs further investigation.

The bringing together in the Epilogue of all evidence from the tombs and significant site excavations, in an attempt to develop an outline history of Mycenaean Laconia, is in the reviewer's opinion, a brave but doomed attempt. We have not yet fully absorbed the impact of the remarkable discoveries at Ayios Vasileios, which, though apparently large, had given no hint of being of special importance previously, and was tentatively identified as the Pharis of the Homeric Catalogue of Ships (a place totally lacking a mythical 'footprint') only because it was in an appropriate place.<sup>2</sup> This demonstration that central Laconia was, after all, the centre of a palatial principality (against the reviewer's expectations, if cautiously expressed)<sup>3</sup>, provides a salutary reminder of the well-worn maxim, absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. But the background to this development is still very obscure, and Mycenaean Laconia remains very poorly known in comparison with other major regions of the Peloponnese. There is a notable shortage of 'ordinary' settlement excavations, which has led to more importance being attributed to Ayios Stephanos than seems justified by the recovered evidence, which consists largely of pottery deposits and the mainly unremarkable burials previously mentioned. There is also a clear mismatch between the distribution of sites where there are important architectural remains (Ayios Vasileios and the Menelaion; Pavlopetri, where much of an extensive, probably early Mycenaean town plan has been mapped, should perhaps be added), and the distribution of sizeable cemeteries and tombs that are demonstrably important from their structure and/or contents, the Vapheio tholos (surely too far from Ayios Vasileios to be associated with it), Epidavros Limera, and Pellana.

This makes all attempts to establish some kind of sequence of the rise and fall of potential centres of power questionable. We have no means to establish what the palatial principality's history or the extent of its control were, and cannot even be certain that another such major site will not suddenly emerge from obscurity. To make the assumption that it will not is to fall victim to the positivist idea that what has been found is an adequately representative sample of what was once there, which the discovery of Ayios Vasileios has already demonstrated to be fallacious. The reviewer will not waste space on debating this or that particular

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dickinson 1983: 64.

<sup>2</sup> Hope Simpson and Lazenby 1970: 74.

<sup>3</sup> Dickinson 1992: 112.

interpretation, then. But he would comment that talk of ‘settlers’, sometimes identified as ‘refugees’, arriving at sites in postpalatial times reflects what he believes to be a totally outdated approach. What are these ‘refugees’ supposed to be fleeing – the fabled ‘Dorian invasion’, perhaps? But, even if some original event brought ‘Dorians’ into Laconia, it is hard to believe that anyone who still believes in this would date it as early as c. 1200 BC. In fact, the notion that any such ‘invasion’ brought about the collapse of the Mycenaean palace principalities is surely completely outdated, and the reviewer firmly believes that since this ‘tradition’, like all the Greek traditions of population movement, has taken its shape through a series of developments in the historical period, generally motivated by political considerations of the day, it has no value as a historical source.

It remains to comment that the text contains a number of misprints and other errors, but most are easily spotted. The editor might have taken the trouble to explain to Gallou the difference between “inferred” (meaning deduced) and “implied” (meaning suggested), since the former often seems to be used when the latter is obviously meant, but occasionally which meaning is intended is unclear. Only one serious omission has been noticed: Dickinson 1996, referred to on p. 96, is not cited in the Bibliography; also, on p. 241, a reference to Dickinson 2004 should be read as 2014. In a text heavy with references and reports of data there may be more, but it is most unlikely that any are of great significance. Overall, this is a very useful and revealing survey, and anyone wishing to discuss Mycenaean burial evidence in Laconia would do well to make good use of it and follow its system of cataloguing the cemeteries and individual graves.

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**James C. Wright and Mary K. Dabney (with contributions by Phoebe Acheson, Susan F. Allen, Kathleen M. Forster, Paul Halstead, S.M.A. Hoffman, Anna Karabatsoli, Konstantina Kaza-Papageorgiou, Bartłomiej Lis, Rebecca Mersereau, Hans Mommsen, Jeremy B. Rutter, Tatiana Theodoropoulou, and Jonathan E. Tomlinson), *The Mycenaean Settlement on Tsoungiza Hill (Nemea Valley Archaeological Project III)*, Vols. I (Context Studies) and II (Specialist Studies). pp. xlii + 1191: 494 ills, 149 tbls. Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2020. ISBN 978-0-87661-924-7, hardcover \$150.**

This pair of volumes completes the publication of the Bronze Age phases of the prehistoric site of Tsoungiza, close to the site of the sanctuary of Zeus at ancient Nemea, which in historical times hosted one of the major four panhellenic festivals of athletic games (Vol. I of the Project published the Early Bronze Age remains). It is one of a series of prehistoric sites in the upland plains and valleys that are found in the hilly country between the central Argolid and the western Corinthia, watered by three rivers running north to the Corinthian Gulf (as shown on a useful map: p. 4, fig. 1.1). Two of these were the centres of the small independent city states of Phlious and Kleonai in historical times, which bracket the Nemea territory so closely as to make the development of an independent community unlikely, and there seems no doubt that Tsoungiza, though now the best documented of the string of prehistoric sites spread through the region, would have been overshadowed by more important neighbours in Mycenaean times, such as the long known Zygouries to the east, south of ancient Kleonai.<sup>1</sup> But Tsoungiza was close to the Tretos Pass that was part of a natural route between the Argolid and Corinthia, which may well have contributed to what significance it had, and Mycenae itself is reckoned only a three hours' walk away through this pass (p. 5; unfortunately, no map illustrates this relationship, though potential connections between Mycenae and Tsoungiza are much discussed in the Conclusions).

Archaeological interest in the site dates back to explorations by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA) in this region from 1892,

<sup>1</sup> Blegen 1928.