

Michael Kerschner (Ed.)



INTERPRETING THE POTTERY RECORD FROM GEOMETRIC AND ARCHAIC SANCTUARIES IN THE NORTHWESTERN PELOPONNESE



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OF SCIENCES
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NOVEMBER 5–6, 2020

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VICKY VLACHOU

INTERPRETING THE POTTERY DEPOSITS FROM THE SPARTAN AMYKLAION

PROVIDING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE EARLY STAGES OF CULT AND RITUAL*

ABSTRACT

The numerous pottery deposits from the Sanctuary of Apollo Hyakinthos at Amykles provide evidence for the earliest activities at the site, from the Protogeometric down to the late 8th century BC including the construction of the earliest peribolos wall that defined the sacred space. What can pottery reveal about cult and votive practices? Beyond typological and stylistic analysis, other components such as the large quantity and breakage patterns of the pots manifest the regularity of the activities at the site and the increasing number of the participants in them. The good quality of the pottery, its material aspects, the function of particular forms and their potential use as ritual utensils, votive offerings and consumption receptacles provide a view into the various stages of ritual performance. Material remains demonstrate two significant moments in the course of the early history of the sanctuary; the earliest may be placed in the latter half of the 10th century BC and the other in the second half of the 8th century BC. The distribution of the distinctive Lakonian Protogeometric pottery style in deposits from sanctuaries beyond the territory of Sparta, materialize the early connections between the sites of the southern Peloponnese, and presumably also the intra-regional movements of artisans. By the Late Geometric period, chorus performances, athletic competitions, shared consumption and dedication of prestige items outline the ritual practice and performance at the Amyklaion. Festivities at the sanctuary should be linked to the annual festival of the Hyakinthia that is attested from at least the 6th century BC onwards; the early beginnings of the festival may now be considered on archaeological evidence as well.

INTRODUCTION

The Sanctuary of Apollo Hyakinthos at Amykles near Sparta is located on the west bank of Eurotas, on top of the low hill of Agia Kyriaki. It is marked by its seniority and precedence within the Lakonian territory, providing evidence for cultic activity from around 1200 BC down to the Archaic period, and beyond into Roman times¹. Material assemblages and particularly the pottery deposits

* My warmest thanks are to Michael Kerschner for the invitation to participate in this very stimulating conference, as well as to the Austrian Academy of Science and to the Austrian Archaeological Institute at Athens for successfully hosting our online conference. For the language editing my thanks are due to Dr. Don Evely. This research is part of the »The Amykles Research Project«, directed by Prof. Stavros Vlizos under the auspices of the Athens Archaeological Society. <<https://amyklaion.gr/en/>> Photos and drawings are by the author, unless otherwise stated. – I use the following chronological abbreviations: SM: Sub-Mycenaean; PG: Protogeometric (ca. 1050/25–900 BC, after Desborough 1952 and Lemos 2002); EG: Early Geometric (EG I ca. 900–875 BC, and EG II ca. 875–850 BC, after Coldstream 1968); EIA: Early Iron Age; EPG: Early Protogeometric (ca. 1050/25–980 BC, after Desborough 1952 and Lemos 2002); MG: Middle Geometric (MG I ca. 850–800 BC, and MG II 800–760 BC, after Coldstream 1968); MPG: Middle Protogeometric (ca. 980–960 BC, after Desborough 1952 and Lemos 2002); LBA: Late Bronze Age; LG: Late Geometric (LG I ca. 760–735 BC, and LG II 735–700/690 BC, after Coldstream 1968); LPG: Late Protogeometric (ca. 960–900 BC, after Desborough 1952 and Lemos 2002).

¹ Demakopoulou 2012; Vlachou 2012; Vlachou 2017. See also, Pettersson 1992, 91–123 (with further bibliography on this issue); Antonaccio 1994, 88. 103.

from the sanctuary area show that EIA ritual activity and performance largely occupied the space of the preceding post-palatial shrine. For a period of more than two centuries, from around the mid-10th to the late 8th century BC ritual activity at Amykles seems to have maintained a hypaethral character. The earliest large-scale construction at the sanctuary may be dated to the late 8th/early 7th century BC, when a large part of the hill was delimited by the erection of the earliest peribolos wall². Comparable operations may be observed in other cult places within the Spartan territory, such as the remodelling of the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Limnai and the foundation of the cult of Menelaos and Helen at the Menelaion. If we consider these operations as the material expressions relating to the new polis institutions, then the Hyakinthia festival, as equally the festival at Orthia, should have been well established in the religious calendar of early Sparta.

Scholars place the cult of Hyakinthos on the hill of Agia Kyriaki much earlier than that of Apollo. First P. Calligas and later on A. Petropoulou suggested a date around the end of the 9th century BC, based on the material evidence from the hill. Miniature clay vessels, namely in the form of aryballoi, hydriae and skyphoi have been taken as ritual utensils and gifts to a heroic cult for Hyakinthos³. This interpretation draws comparisons to pottery sets found in tombs and shrines related to heroic cults of the late 8th century BC⁴. The arrival of the cult of Apollo has been partly recognized in the material collected from the early excavations at the sanctuary. One such is the handle of a bronze object inscribed with a name of a certain Δορκονίδα and dated to the very end of the 7th century BC⁵.

By the Late Archaic period, myth, texts and the architectural remains of the famous »Throne of Apollonos en Amyklai« [Ἀπόλλων(ος) ἐν Ἀμυκλαίοις] (IG V 1.823) that dominated the sanctuary area provide a rich account of the cult and of the Hyakinthia festival honoured annually at the site. Mythological narrations explain that Hyakinthos, a handsome youth, was accidentally killed by the discus of Apollo; he was thus worshipped as a hero thereafter⁶. Euripides mentioned the Pannychis by the Eurotas, founded by Apollo in memory of Hyakinthos that comprised female choruses and animal sacrifices⁷. Herodotus made a reference to the Hyakinthia in connection with the Athenian embassy seeking military aid from Sparta against the Persians at 479 BC⁸. Yet, the components of the cult of the »divine pair«, that of Apollo and Hyakinthos at Amykles, have been largely considered as having been shaped at an earlier date before the late 6th century BC and prior to the popularity later accruing to the sanctuary and its festival⁹.

The earliest mention of the Hyakinthia links the festival to the conspiracy of the Partheniai, an event that led to the foundation of Taras¹⁰. The signal for the attack was given during the athletic contest (ἀγών) and in the presence of all the Spartans, who participated at the festivities. Although the historicity of the event remains a matter of individual opinion, the foundation of the only Spartan colony has been traditionally dated to the late 8th century BC (706 BC). Recent archaeological finds from the sanctuary area have thrown some light on the early stages of the cult and

² Vlzos 2009; Vlzos 2012; Vlzos 2018; Vlzos 2019.

³ Calligas 1992, 46; Petropoulou 2012, 153 f.; Petropoulou 2015.

⁴ According to Petropoulou (2012, 157 f. endnote 7) »the hydrias were perhaps used for the preparation of the bath often found in connection with hero cults«. This is largely based on Hägg 1987; Ekroth 2007, 102.

⁵ SEG 11 (1954), 129 no. 689; Petropoulou 2012.

⁶ The earliest mention of the myth is given in fragment 171 of the »Catalogue of the Women«, largely dated to the 6th cent. BC. See also Moreno Conde 2000; Moreno Conde 2008, 9–11.

⁷ Eur. Hel. 1465–1474. See also Dietrich 1975; Calame 2001, 181 f.; Moreno Conde 2008, 13 f.; Petropoulou 2012; Petropoulou 2015.

⁸ Moreno Conde 2008, 21; Petropoulou 2015.

⁹ Nilsson (1906, 130) was among the first to note that the festival at Amykles was older than the cult of Apollo at the site; West 1985, 156, 95 no. 3; 180; Petropoulou 2012.

¹⁰ Strab. 6, 3, 2 = FGrHist 555 F 13 [from Antiochus' work Περὶ Ἰταλίας (Πολιτεῖαι)]. For a discussion, see Kōiv 2003, 108–118; Nafissi 1999, 254–258; Cartledge 2002, 106 f.; Luraghi 2003, 115–117; Kennell 2010, 35 f.; Petropoulou 2012, 153 f.

ritual at the Spartan Amyklaion¹¹. Ritual practice and performance were progressively shaped by the communities existing in the wider area, and negotiated through participation and elite display. This paper considers the early ritual activity and performance at the Amyklaion hill by assessing the material remains and in particular the numerous pottery deposits investigated during the most recent work at the site. Pottery dating from the 10th to the late 8th century BC serves as an indicator for identifying the activities and performance within a cultic context on the hill.

THE POTTERY DEPOSITS FROM THE AMYKLAION AND THE DATING OF THE LAKONIAN POTTERY: STATE OF SCHOLARSHIP

Pottery from the Spartan Amyklaion represents up to now the largest corpus of EIA material in the wider region of Lakonia. The earliest excavations were conducted by Ch. Tsountas in 1890, followed by Furtwängler in 1904, and then by Furtwängler and Fiechter in 1907¹². Pottery deposits from the area of the later altar of the sanctuary were contained in a layer of black fatty earth first investigated by Tsountas¹³. The composition of these deposits and the presence of animal bones and burnt remains is typical in Greek sanctuaries, representing both burnt sacrificial remains and residues from the consumption of food and drink¹⁴. There are only two published pots from these early excavations at the Amyklaion, both exhibited today in the National Archaeological Museum at Athens. They were both found in the area around the altar, along with numerous metal and terracotta finds¹⁵. Yet it was only after the works by E. Buschor and W. von Massow in 1925 that the pottery of the PG style was discussed separately from that of the Geometric period and a number of mostly fragmentary pots were illustrated¹⁶. Pottery deposits were investigated largely to the south of the later altar and mainly along the Archaic peribolos wall. The dating, however, of the material remained tentative, as the largest part came mainly from unstratified deposits within the sanctuary area. The PG material was related to the early phases of the sanctuary and was considered as used for liquid offerings of milk and oil, and equally as utensils for the sacrifice left behind by the participants after the ritual activities. Unlike the distinctive PG style, the material of the following Geometric period was compared to the Attic series, thus providing a chronological framework for the Amyklaian series.

A synthesis and classification of the available material from Sparta was first offered by V. R. d'A. Desborough, followed by P. Cartledge and completed by W. Coulson¹⁷. Desborough characterizes the distinctive PG style as the ›Amyklaian style‹ and specified that this was represented at Amykles and equally at Sparta. He further suggested a chronological framework for the production and use of the PG style from the 11th down to the 9th century BC, largely in accordance

¹¹ Vlachou 2017; Vlizon 2017; Vlachou 2018.

¹² Tsountas 1892; Skias 1907, 104–107; Fiechter 1918; Buschor – von Massow 1927; for a short history of the excavations in the sanctuary area, see Demakopoulou 1982, 29–42; Calligas 1992, 31–33; Pettersson 1992, 92–99; Moreno Conde 2008, 61–69; Vlizon 2009, 11–13; Vlizon 2012.

¹³ Tsountas 1892, 1–26. The deposition of the LBA and EIA material was marked in certain areas by the existence of a clay layer, on top of which later material was deposited. Moreno Conde 2008, 66 and n. 239, has associated this situation with work undertaken for the construction of the Throne in the Archaic period, and it has been used as an argument in favour of the continuity of ritual activity in the same area from the Mycenaean to the Geometric period.

¹⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood 1993; Morgan 1999, 319–321; Ekroth 2017.

¹⁵ For the two pyxides, see Tsountas 1892, pl. 4, 1–2; Kaltsas 2006, 61 f. nos. 12, 13. Metal finds from the Amyklaion include an iron sword, two more iron blades, an iron knife, bronze earrings and finger-rings, bronze hair fasteners, bronze pins, small bronze double axes, parts of bronze tripods, a small bronze lyre, and a number of bronze and terracotta animal figurines, among others. For the metal finds, see Calligas 1992, 34–39 and figs. 13, 14. Also, Buschor – von Massow 1927, 34–37 and fig. 17, Beil. 7, 8. For the bronze figurines once serving as attachments to the handles of bronze tripods recovered from the recent excavations on the hill, see Vlizon 2017, 79 f. 83 f. 86, 88. For parallels to the bronze jewellery, see Raftopoulou 1998, 133 f. figs. 12, 15. A large number of the metal finds from the Amyklaion have been dated to the late 10th and the mid-8th cent. BC.

¹⁶ Buschor – von Massow 1927, 12–15, 24–53 pls. 2–12.

¹⁷ Desborough 1952, 283–290; Coulson 1985; Coulson 1988; Coulson 1991; Cartledge 2002, 70–80.



1 Topographical plan after the 2019 excavations at the Amyklaion (© Th. Bilis – M. Magnisali, The Amykles Research Project). Marked is the location of the pottery deposits discussed in the text, identified and excavated between 2006 and 2013

with the early impression expressed by Furtwängler of the long duration of this individual style in Lakonia. Coulson provided extensive catalogues of the pieces found at Amykles up until 1925, and from the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, the Acropolis of Sparta, and the Heroon. Along with the pieces stored in the storerooms of the Sparta Archaeological Museum, he also considered the published fragments from the British and German collections (at the Ashmolean, at Cambridge, at Mainz, and at Heidelberg) and those in the collections in Greece of the American School at Athens, the British School at Athens and the German Archaeological Institute. In his pioneer publication of the »Dark Age Pottery of Sparta« in 1985, Coulson counted 1,300 pieces in all major collections and he actually published one third of those, approximately 500 pieces, that formed his typology (shape and decoration) of the Spartan »Dark Age« pottery.

Coulson was also the first to suggest the evolution of certain types of the PG pottery style directly from the Mycenaean repertory, and thus to demonstrate a certain continuity of shapes and deco-

rations in the local pottery production¹⁸. His observations draw equally on comparable examples from the concurrent pottery production of Messenia. The presence of stemmed kylikes with ribbed stems, and equally the preference for the kantharos and the latticed decoration have been discussed in the context of the ceramic style of the West Greek koiné¹⁹. Freehand, standing packed triangles and cross-hatching are among the commonest motifs of PG Spartan pottery, already apparent in the decoration of the latest series of the figurines offered to the post-palatial shrine²⁰. Yet the shiny black paint, the grooves and ridges used in separating patterned registers (or not), as well as the density of the typically superimposed and patterned bands, reveal the individuality of the PG Lakonian style.

During the last decades, work undertaken by the Ephorate of Antiquities has provided additional evidence concerning the PG and Geometric pottery production in the wider area of Sparta. An important site was investigated further to the south in the plain and along the Eurotas, in between the modern villages of Peristeri/Solaki and Filisi. The chamber tombs that have been identified and partly investigated in this area date from LH IIIA to LH IIIC, and until the SM/EPG in certain cases, thus providing evidence for the much-discussed transition period in this area and the continuity of the occupation into the EIA²¹. The settlement of the same period extended over some distance close to the modern village of Filisi, where a settlement of the EIA was also identified as well as a pithos burial of the Geometric period²². In the area of the modern village of Amykles, a small group of twelve PG tombs was identified and excavated by E. Zavvou²³. The published pottery, a kantharos from grave 7 and a trefoil oinochoe from grave 14 belong to the types commonly found in the Amyklaian deposits.

The rich material from the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia formed the basis for the classification of the sequence of the Lakonian Geometric pottery devised by J. P. Droop and E. A. Lane²⁴. The very fragmentary material from the Amyklaion, as well as that from the Sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos on the acropolis, provided only ancillary information. J. N. Coldstream noted in his treatment of the Lakonian style, »no regional Geometric style is enshrouded in deeper obscurity than Lakonian«²⁵. He placed the beginning of the Geometric style after the mid-9th century BC²⁶. I. Margreiter was the first to present the continuous development of the Lakonian pottery style from the Protogeometric down to the Archaic period²⁷. Among the 347 pieces in her catalogue representing the PG and Geometric material, the pottery from the Amyklaion represents only a small part, not exceeding a total of 70 pieces. For the dating of the Lakonian pottery, she followed earlier studies in placing the beginning of the PG style at Sparta in the late 10th century and the beginning of the Geometric style late in the 9th century BC.

New evidence from the ongoing excavations at the sanctuary as part of »The Amykles Research Project« offered the opportunity to revisit the material afresh. Pottery deposits were mainly identified along the newly discovered LG or Early Archaic peribolos wall (fig. 1). These deposits

¹⁸ A provenance from the preceding Mycenaean repertory has been demonstrated for several Lakonian shapes, such as the carinated skyphos (from the Mycenaean stemmed bowls), the flaring skyphos (from the Mycenaean conical bowl), the krater (from the Late Mycenaean deep bowls with horizontal handles) and certain types of cups: see Coulson 1985, 38 f. 44 f. 57 f. 61–66; Coulson 1986, 35–48. 55 f.; Coulson 1988; for the Lakonian isolation as a reason for the late occurrence of the Protogeometric style in the region, see Desborough 1952, 284. 287 f.; Cartledge 2002, 70–80; contra Pettersson 1992, 97–100.

¹⁹ EIA pottery from Lakonia has been discussed within the ceramic style of the West Greek koiné, a broad category of pottery, which typically includes Achaia, Elis, Arkadia, Messenia, Aitolia and the Ionian islands. For a recent discussion, see Voyatzis 2017 (with further bibliography).

²⁰ Demakopoulou 1982, pls. 17, 4; 21, 56; 22, 59. 60; 28, 70; 30, 72; Demakopoulou 2012, 110 f. for the matter of continuity from the LBA to the EIA shrine.

²¹ Themis 2001–2004, 286 f.; Themis 2007, 460–463.

²² Zavvou – Themis 1999, 187; Zavvou 2001–2004, 25.

²³ Zavvou 1996.

²⁴ Droop 1929, 52–68; Lane 1933/1934, 99–115.

²⁵ Coldstream 1968, 212.

²⁶ Coldstream 1968, 212–219.

²⁷ Margreiter 1988.

contained mixed pottery dating from the LBA to the Early and the Late Archaic periods, most probably representing the result of at least two large cleaning operations on the hill in relation to the construction of the two successive enclosure walls, in the late 8th/early 7th century BC and again in the Late Archaic period. Of interest to this discussion are the stratigraphical trenches that were made during the 2019 operations on the hill, in contact with the south wall of the Geometric peribolos. LBA pottery was found with PG and Geometric pottery in the lowest layers, while higher layers contained pottery dated down to the late Archaic period²⁸. Joining fragments from the earlier excavations on the hill and the most recent works have been also identified, thus confirming the widespread disturbances caused by the re-organisation and the large-scale constructions on the hill in the Late Archaic period.

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS: PROTOGEOMETRIC POTTERY AND RITUAL ACTIVITY

The earliest evidence of cultic activity has been dated to the late 13th century BC in a time of profound changes in the human and cultural landscape of the wider area of Sparta and Lakonia, marked by the final abandonment of the Mycenaean installations at Agios Vasileios, most probably the largest administrative centre of that time in Lakonia, and at the Menelaion²⁹. The importance of this post-palatial hypaethral cult on the hill of Agia Kyriaki is reflected in the associated material remains. Large terracotta figures, numerous small figurines of the Psi and Phi types, small handmade animal figurines and larger wheel-made bull figures, as well as quantities of nicely decorated pottery of a mainly sympotic character represent the visible remains of ritual activity on the hill; these have been considered within the context of regular gatherings, most probably as part of a festival with a mainly regional character. The site is among the few sacred places in the Peloponnese where ritual activity was maintained in the EIA and intensified around the middle of the 10th century BC. K. Demakopoulou has argued for the ritual continuity at the LBA shrine throughout the 11th and possibly even the very beginning of the 10th century BC, although at a much lesser frequency, on the basis of the material deposited.

On the other hand, the large corpus of material found on the hill points to an apparent increase in the number of visitors, and possibly the rate of visitation during the latter half of the 10th century BC. Although the evidence from the first half of the 10th century BC is still weak, the presence of a few fragments that seem related to the MPG style elsewhere leave no doubt that activity progressively resumed well before the middle of the 10th century BC³⁰. Consequently, it is possible on material evidence to propose a slight revision of the date previously suggested for the beginning of the EIA activity and thus to narrow the much-discussed



2 Fragment of a skyphos decorated in a SM/EPG style from the Amyklaion (photo V. Vlachou)

²⁸ Vlizos 2019. This has been equally stressed by Buschor after the excavation and uncovering of the Archaic peribolos wall. Buschor – von Massow 1927, 10. 32 f.

²⁹ Demakopoulou 1982, 80 f.; Wright 1994, 65; Pettersson 1992, 92–99; Demakopoulou 2009; Demakopoulou 2012.

³⁰ Vlachou 2012, 114 fig. 1 a. b; Vlachou 2018, 100 f. fig. 4, 3 a. b.



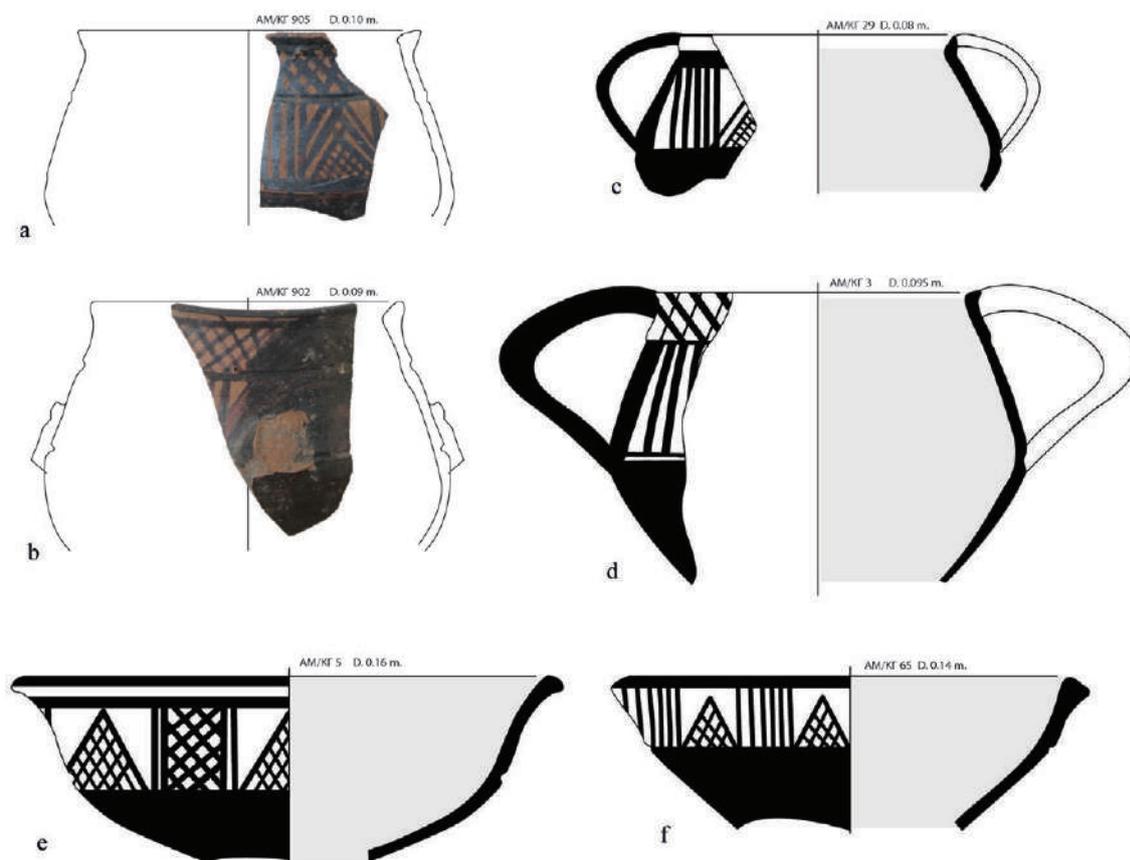
A



B

3 A: Selection of PG skyphos fragments decorated with triangles and latticed motifs from the Amyklaion; B: a–d Selection of PG fragments with painted and incised decoration, inv. AM/KΓ 13 (a), AM/KΓ 161 (b), AM/KΓ 2640.8 (c), AM/KΓ 1058 (d) (photo V. Vlachou)

chronological gap of the transitional period at the site. A single fragment of a skyphos is from a unique piece at Amykles, decorated with zigzags and hand-drawn semi-circles on a dark ground (fig. 2). Comparable although not identical pots can be seen from Athens, Kerameikos



4 Drawings of the characteristic PG open shapes: skyphoi (a. b), kantharoi (c. d) and lekanides (e. f) (photo V. Vlachou)

PG grave 22 and PG grave 4 dated to the EPG³¹. Among the earliest pieces, those that combine latticed patterns (triangles, lozenges and panels) resemble the EPG/MPG style of the Argolid, as well as the Protogeometric style of Ithaka (fig. 3)³². The latter are distinguished by their decoration of rectilinear motifs and plastic incised rings; they date to the Polis II/Aetos I phase³³. This largely corresponds to Coulson's DA II phase for Messenia and Lakonia³⁴. Although extremely fragmentary, the specimens from the Amyklaion mark the beginnings of what becomes a continuous and distinctive pottery tradition in this area.

Pottery of the PG style is quite homogeneous. It is easily distinguishable by the hard-fired fabric that varies in colour from light brown to red and the good quality of the black paint that gives a metallic shiny impression, possibly due to the high firing conditions³⁵. It should be noted however that not all pieces possess this metallic sheen to the black paint; some may be distinguished macroscopically by the clay, that is usually lighter and buff in colour and possibly indicates a different

³¹ Kübler 1943, pls. 3 inv. 924; 4 inv. 921. 922; Kraiker – Kübler 1939, pl. 63 inv. 554.

³² The best parallels are from the Asine material, see Wells 1983.

³³ Heurtley – Lorimer 1932/1933, 43 fig. 26 b and pl. 3; Souyouzoglou-Haywood 1999, 190 no. 112; 191 no. 143 and pls. 41 V117; 42 b. Beyond decoration techniques, both closed and open shapes are comparable. See also a krater from Kalapodi, Jacob-Felsch 1996, 32 no. 453 and pl. 47.

³⁴ This phase covers approximately a century, from the early 10th to the 1st quarter of the 9th cent. BC (995/990–875 BC). For a discussion, see Souyouzoglou-Haywood 1999, 142 f. The Amyklaian material however cannot be dated before the 2nd quarter of the 10th cent. BC Also, Coulson 1985; Coulson 1986.

³⁵ For chemical analysis of the Protogeometric pottery from Amykles and Tegea and a discussion of the results, see Fenn – Ponting – Voyatzis 2014, 571–584.



5 Fragmentary lekanis from the Amyklaion, inv. AM/KΓ 267 (photo V. Vlachou)

production centre, although not necessarily one outside of Sparta. PG pottery lacks any trace of slip; the surface of the vessels is very well polished. The production techniques and firing of this class of pottery bear clear witness to the high degree of specialization involved, and thus point to the activity of some of the craftsmen and workshops installed in this area.

The fineware assemblage demonstrates a consistently high presence of small- and medium-sized open vessels that should have served as the basic equipment for the consumption of food, drink and presumably also for libations. The commonest shapes in the pottery deposits are four in number: the carinated skyphos, with a rim diameter that does not exceed 0.10 m and a stemmed foot (fig. 4 a. b); the kantharos that largely follows the shape of the skyphos, thus making the distinction between the two quite difficult (fig. 4 c. d); the one-handed cup, solidly painted inside and out; and a variant that is characterized by a shallower profile, much wider at the rim and with a lip that overhangs the body. This type is better described here as a lekanis, as it is usually equipped with two horizontal handles and a stemmed foot (fig. 4 e. f). The decoration of the surface is organized in single or successive patterned zones repeating a small repertory of linear patterns frequently latticed. The introduction of concentric circles seems a slightly later addition, possibly in the late 10th and through the 9th century BC (fig. 5). All types have black glazed variants, covered in a metallic and shiny glaze inside and out; grooves are consistently added immediately below the lip and around the belly³⁶.

Large open vessels are scarce and their greatly fragmentary state does not allow a systematic study of their profile. The range of the types is possibly connected to the range of their functions, either as containers of liquids or other materials. Different types coexist; commonest is the type with almost straight walls, close to the shape of the smaller bowls³⁷. The diameter of largest specimens ranges between 0.30 and 0.48 m. Whether all these had a function as kraters for the drinking carried out at the site, or served as containers of some kind is impossible to say. In any case they provide some evidence as to the quantity of the provisions during the rituals on the hill.

Large amphorae and large vessels for storing and carrying greater quantities of food and drink are entirely absent³⁸. There are only a few sherds possibly from oinochoae or hydriae. On the

³⁶ Coulson 1985, 34–58 Types A–L. P–R. For the new finds from the Amyklaion, see Vlachou 2012; Vlachou 2018.

³⁷ Vlachou 2012, 115; Vlachou 2018, 104.

³⁸ Cf. the paucity of large closed vessels in other early sanctuaries; Isthmia: Morgan 1999, 392 f. Olympia: Eder 2009, 205. Kalapodi: Nitsche 1987, 35–49; Felsch 1980, 47–54.



6 Selection of PG small closed shapes: trefoil oinochoae and lekythoi (a. b. e), oinochoe (c), lekythos-oinochoe inv. AM/KΓ 294 (d) (photo V. Vlachou)

contrary, small pouring vessels, namely small hydriae, small trefoil oinochoae and lekythoi are common (fig. 6)³⁹. Although all specimens are extremely fragmentary, horizontal bands are characteristic on the necks of small trefoil oinochoae and lekythoi. On the shoulder latticed motifs are preferred, while paneled decoration continues well into the 9th century BC. The earliest mention of a lekythos can be found in the Homeric epics, where a golden lekythos contained olive oil and served for the anointment of the skin after a bath⁴⁰. Oil containers such as lekythoi were commonly buried or burnt with the dead body, and equally used for the anointment of the skin of the living⁴¹. As such, they represent one of the commonest burial offerings in PG tombs, although there are no published pieces from the burial context of Sparta so far. Hydriae served as water containers, and when found in tombs or cultic contexts they have been associated with bathing, before a wedding and as part of the care of the dead body before the funeral. Miniature hydriae are found in numbers in sanctuaries associated with female donors and wedding rituals⁴². Most pieces though date from the late 8th to the 6th century BC, that is, much later than the Amyklaian specimens. All three shapes could be related to libation rituals and have been deposited as gifts at this early cult place along with their contents. Lekythoi-oinochoae with a squat profile continue in

³⁹ Coulson 1985, 60–62.

⁴⁰ Hom. Od. 6, 79. 215.

⁴¹ Kurtz 1984.

⁴² Argos: Waldstein 1902, 100 f.; Amandry – Caskey (1952, 175. 197 f.) reported around 700 miniature hydriae mostly of local production. Eretria: Huber 2003, 48–63. 116–120; Huber 2013. Marathon, Attica: Vlachou 2020.



7 a: Fragmentary four-sided pyxis from the Amyklaion inv. AM/KΓ 1000 photo V. Vlachou); b: Fragmentary pyxis from Athens Kerameikos (from: Bohén 1988, pl. 1)

the 9th and early 8th century BC⁴³, while their function seems replaced only after the middle of the 8th century BC by the aryballos. The earliest Corinthian specimens are very fragmentary, yet they introduce a continuous series, of both fine wheel-made examples and miniature handmade ones down to the Archaic and Classical periods. Such continuities in the use of particular shapes with specific functions must be influenced by the aspects of the rituals performed at the site already from an early period.

A new shape that may be reconstructed from the fragmentary pottery deposits is the tripod pyxis resembling more a four-sided terracotta box with slightly convex profiles (fig. 7 a). The distribution of the type in the Greek mainland during the PG period is limited, with a few examples known from Argos and Tiryns dated to the LPG⁴⁴, and also a fragmentary example from Asine, associated with phase 1 or 4 of the Karmaniola settlement⁴⁵. The Amyklaian specimen seems to follow the Argive examples in its shape and use of cross-hatching for the decoration of the surface. If we consider the pyxis as a container of some kind, then it should be considered as an offering in the early cult place, along with other artefacts equally represented such as small painted whorls, bronze and terracotta figurines, and bronze accessories also dating from the LPG. The connections between Sparta and Messenia in the pottery styles have been described in detail by Coulson. Besides the material from Nichoria, the material published from Kaphirio, close to the modern town of Longa on the eastern part of the Messenian Gulf, is comparable to that from the Amyklaion. The pottery has been dated by Coulson to his DA II and DA II/III phases, largely covering the period from the end of the second quarter of the 10th to the late 9th century BC⁴⁶.

The majority of the pottery retained the sharpness of their broken edges, indicating that they were deliberately broken and left behind by the participants to the rituals. Indeed, several joins exist between the fragments in the deposits indicating that these did not suffer multiple re-depositions⁴⁷. The local character of the material and the standardization of the sets destined for consumption could reflect a shared social status and identity of the participants at these early activities. In fact, the

⁴³ For the shape and decoration, see Courbin 1966, pl. 23 inv. C. 2482–2483 (EG II), and C. 832 (MG I).

⁴⁴ Lemos 2002, 79; Argos: Roux 1957, 653–655 fig. 30 (pyxis II 539); Tiryns: Aupert 1975, 615 fig. 56.

⁴⁵ Wells 1983, 105 f. 256 fig. 194, 761.

⁴⁶ Coulson 1986, 37–48.

⁴⁷ See also Isthmia, Morgan 1999, 323 f.

scarcity of imported wares and the rarity of clear external influences in the material remains should proclaim the regional, and possibly also the exclusive, character of the activities on the hill.

THE WIDER PROTOGEOMETRIC CONTEXT: SPARTA AND BEYOND

PG pottery, although in much smaller quantities, has been identified at the most important cult places of the Spartan territory, unfortunately in disturbed contexts: at the acropolis, the Heroon and the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia⁴⁸. The published fragments belong mainly to small open vessels demonstrating once more the importance of communal drinking in the consolidation of ritual activity in early cult places. PG pottery has been also reported from the area of Anthochori, further to the south of Sparta on the west side of the Eurotas Plain; a sanctuary has been identified in this area, later dedicated to the cult of Zeus Messapeus⁴⁹.

Beyond the territory of Sparta, the presence of Lakonian PG pottery at Asine is of particular importance for the dating of its successive phases. B. Wells associated the Lakonian wares with the earliest phase of the settlement at Karmaniola (phase 1)⁵⁰. Among the earliest decorative patterns, assigned by Wells to phases I and II, are open shapes decorated with the distinctive latticed patterns (triangles, lozenges, chains of lozenges), also found in the Amyklaian deposits. These however do not seem to antedate the MPG on stylistic criteria. It is thus possible that the earliest Lakonian material from Asine phases I and II corresponds to the MPG material from the Amyklaion, largely dated to the second quarter of the 10th century BC. The earliest imported sherds to the Amyklaion from the Argolid, presumably from Asine, belong largely to the same period, MPG/LPG. At least two fragmentary large skyphoi with deep profiles are decorated with groups of concentric circles; in shape, decoration and fabric they clearly differ from that of the local vessels⁵¹. It is possible that contacts with Asine were made through the port of Vrasies, where Lakonian PG pottery has also been identified⁵².

PG sherds of the ›Amyklaian style‹ have been identified at Tegea, inside the deposit revealed under the pronaos of the later 4th century BC temple and below the metal workshop of the late 8th century BC in the same area⁵³. According to the dating of the successive depositions in the bothros from the temple, Lakonian pottery was present in the lowest level (B-8b) dated to the second quarter of the 10th century BC (LPG); numerous sherds were contained in levels B-3 to B-7 that covered the 9th and the early 8th centuries BC (EG II–MG II)⁵⁴. The combined evidence from the stratified contexts at Asine and Tegea may provide a framework for the development of the PG Lakonian pottery⁵⁵. An interesting feature is the wide distribution of the Lakonian PG style in Arkadia, namely found in sanctuary deposits. In addition to Tegea, a large number of sherds has been identified by M. Voyatzis at the peak sanctuary of Zeus on Mount Lykaion⁵⁶, and also in the

⁴⁸ Acropolis: Droop 1926/1927, 50–55; Coulson 1985, 30 n. 14. Heroon: Wace 1905/1906, 288–294; Coldstream 1968, pl. 46 b. c. Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia: Droop 1929, 60–63. 65 and fig. 39 a. b. For a discussion, see Coulson 1985, 30–33. Coulson counted 31 sherds and two almost entire vessels in the storerooms of the Sparta Museum that he lists with their inventory numbers and their exact place in the museum.

⁴⁹ Zavvou 2009, 29–31 figs. 4. 7.

⁵⁰ Wells 1983, 19. 64. 83; Coldstream 1985; Langdon 1985.

⁵¹ The fragmentary skyphos from the Heroon seems of Argive inspiration and demonstrates early contacts between the two areas: Wells 1983, 122; Desborough 1952, 289.

⁵² Cave Sitzas: Faklaris 1990, 159–169 pl. 72 c. d. For Prusias or Vrasies: Faklaris 1990, 129–137. The published sherds do not seem to antedate the LPG.

⁵³ Voyatzis 1990, 269–273; Voyatzis 2014, 224–258. 571–584.

⁵⁴ Voyatzis 2014, 230 f. 358 f.

⁵⁵ Characteristic types, such as the carinated skyphos with grooves at the belly and decorated with a hatched framed triangle, appear in levels B-7 at Tegea and at phase III at Asine. Cf. Voyatzis 2014, 234. 269 nos. C-LacPG 41 and 44, with Wells 1983, 247 fig. 188 no. 692.

⁵⁶ Voyatzis 2017; Voyatzis 2019.



8 a. b: Selection of EG and MG fragmentary skyphoi from the Amyklaion (photos V. Vlachou)

area of Asea at the Sanctuary of Agios Elias⁵⁷. Both sites have revealed a nearly unbroken chain of ritual activity and cult practice from the LBA to the EIA and onwards. Chemical analysis of the PG Lakonian pottery from Tegea has clearly shown that this differed from local PG and Geometric pottery, and originated from somewhere in Lakonia. As many scholars have noted, the carinations, grooves, ridges and shiny metallic glaze of the Lakonian PG pottery recalls metalware. Could this distribution of the pottery actually be related to the mobility and operation of artisans, producing metal artefacts and pottery containers for the participants in the cult and rituals at the regional sanctuaries in the late 10th and 9th century BC?

POTTERY AND CULT ACTIVITY DURING THE GEOMETRIC PERIOD

New shapes and decorative patterns entered the Amyklaian repertory in the course of the 9th century BC. Skyphoi and cups demonstrate a low vertical or slightly off-set lip, shallow body with accentuated shoulders, and a low ring foot; they seem to draw their shape from the concurrent EG and MG styles of the Argolid, Corinth and Attica. Yet their decoration with superimposed triangles derives from the local PG repertory, thus revealing a continuity in the strong local tradition (fig. 8 a. b)⁵⁸. In addition, horizontal parallel lines or single zigzags, horizontal lozenge chains, meanders with diagonal hatching, and vertical bars all represent common alternatives. Their popularity continues into the LG period. Sets of concentric circles that originate in the LPG repertory continue on in the decoration of open and closed shapes throughout the Geometric period. Likewise, the few fragmentary pyxides follow the PG style for the decoration of the surface; their manufacture and firing, resulting in this shiny almost metallic effect of the black glaze, equally points to the potting tradition of the Protogeometric. Although all specimens from Amykles are much fragmented, they may be dated to the early 9th century BC, following the Argive examples⁵⁹. Lakonian pyxides of largely the same type as the specimens from the Amyklaion have been published for the deposits at Tegea; these seem to cover the 9th century BC⁶⁰.

Around the middle of the 8th century BC, the pottery found at the sanctuary demonstrates a significant shift from the PG tradition, under the growing influence of the Argive and to a lesser degree

⁵⁷ Forsén – Forsén – Østby 1999. Lakonian PG fragments and equally some earlier LH III sherds and small finds have been associated with an early cult place on Agios Elias, centred around an ash altar that according to the excavators remained in use till the Late Archaic period and possibly later still.

⁵⁸ Buschor – von Massow 1927, pl. 3, 19; Margreiter 1988, pl. 9, 99–103; Vlachou 2012, fig. 3.

⁵⁹ Courbin 1966, pl. 77; Coldstream 1968, 114. 116 pls. 22 e. f; 23 h; 25 d; Nitsche 1987, 44. 45 fig. 62, 2.

⁶⁰ Voyatzis 2014, 240 f. 255 fig. 24; 265. 266 nos. C-EG 76–81; 376 pl. 15.



9 Selection of fragments from the tall lips of open vessels dated to the LG from the Amyklaion (photo V. Vlachou)

of Corinthian pottery styles⁶¹. New pottery shapes and a variety of decorative motifs mark the beginning of the LG, most of which continue into the Early Archaic period. Pottery manufacturing adopts new techniques, such as the presence of a thick light-coloured slip that is now applied on the surface of most vessels (fig. 9). The characteristic carinated forms of the PG tradition are almost completely absent, while the existence of a substantial number of different fabrics may be taken as an argument for the existence of more pottery workshops active in the immediate area and possibly beyond that. The black shiny glaze is still to be found throughout the LG period.

Unfortunately, the material is extremely fragmentary and individual shapes are not easily discernible. There is a substantial number of tall lips, mostly belonging to skyphoi and kantharoi that could be taken as representing an early stage in the evolution of the Lakonian *lakaina*, one of the most typical shapes of the Archaic period (fig. 9)⁶². A distinctive feature of the LG shapes is a single groove just below the rim. The lower part of the body cannot be safely restored, although it seems that the walls turn inwards, more or less abruptly just below the handles⁶³. The profile seems to develop entirely in the local style, independent from parallel forms in Attica and Boiotia during the LG period. An equally new shape in the LG pottery repertory is the one-handed deep cylindrical cup; the walls are almost vertical, slightly converging towards the low disc base, and a vertical loop handle is attached at the lip and the middle of the body (fig. 10 a)⁶⁴. The type persists into the Early Archaic period, usually with an off-set lip, flat base and a smaller loop handle⁶⁵.

A quite distinctive shape in the LG repertory – with tall vertical walls tapering to a low disc base – has been generally described as a cup or a pyxis. There are two almost entire specimens

⁶¹ Cf. to the Amyklaian series are those from the deposits in the Sanctuary of Athena Alea in Tegea; see Voyatzis 2014, 283–289 nos. C-MG 1–73; 378–380 pls. 17–19.

⁶² Coldstream 1968, 215 f.; Stibbe 1994, 21–24.

⁶³ A similar type from the area of Sparta, see Zavvou 1997, pl. 71 d.

⁶⁴ For a fragmentary example from Sparta, see Zavvou 1997, pl. 71 c. A 7th cent. BC cup of this type from Orthia has been dated by Stibbe (1994, fig. 148 inv. 5165).

⁶⁵ For an intact example from Sparta, see Themis 1996, 109 drawing 4.



10 a: Reconstruction drawing of an LG deep cup from the Amyklaion, inv. AM/KΓ 318 (drawing V. Vlachou); b: Fragmentary LG deep pyxis or kalathiskos from the Amyklaion, inv. AM/KΓ 554 (photo V. Vlachou)



11 a: Fragmentary LG krater from the Amyklaion, inv. AM/KΓ 306; b: Fragmentary LG krater from the Amyklaion, inv. AM/KΓ 308 (photos V. Vlachou)

from Tsountas' excavations, today in the National Archaeological Museum at Athens⁶⁶. One more has been reconstructed out of many fragments from different parts of the deposits; it stands at more than 0.16 m high and shows reversed latticed triangles in superimposed zones (fig. 10 b). The absence of handles or lids for these vessels should be related to their function, but that would make them neither a cup nor a pyxis. Although no entire profile shape survives, there is a considerable number of fragmentary bases typical of the shape. Perhaps these vessels may have served as offering baskets, small kalathiskoi, possibly containing flowers, fruits or any other perishable offerings that would have made an appropriate offering at the early sanctuary. An addition in the

⁶⁶ Tsountas 1892, pl. 4, 1. 2; Coldstream 1968, 215 f. (deep cup); Margreiter 1988, 50 fig. 7, 33 (cup; in the drawing, a strap handle has been added); Kaltsas 2006, 61 f. nos. 12. 13 (pyxis). Some later »cylinder vases« according to Droop (1929, 80 fig. 53, Lakonian II), may represent similar kalathiskoi.



12 Fragmentary Argive krater from the Amyklaion, inv. AM/KΓ 2640.2 (photo V. Vlachou)

distinctive grooving just below the rim, an element that particularly links the shape to the strong local tradition. In addition, LG Argive kraters, both imported and local adaptations of the Argive type, were quite popular. Among the most characteristic pieces of the old excavations is the krater depicting a horse attached to a manger, with a bird added below the belly of the animal, assigned by Coldstream to the style of the Argive Fence Workshop (fig. 12)⁶⁹. Most pieces reproduce the characteristic angular zigzags of the Argive LG in combination with some simpler meander hooks of probably local inspiration.

IMAGES OF YOUTHS AND MAIDENS: THE BIRTH OF A CIVIC IDEOLOGY?

Figured iconography that is applied on the surface of both closed and open vessels in the late 8th century BC mainly consists of repetitive dances formed by naked males, and females dressed in long skirts of mainly Argive inspiration. Male dancers are by far the commonest at Amykles. A much-fragmented amphora demands a special mention. Action is deployed in two successive figured zones. A processional dance is depicted, formed by naked male figures, three of whom are preserved. Between the first and second figure there are three oval pendent objects, attached to a linear component (fig. 13). Their destination is unclear, though their origin may be found in certain Argive dancing scenes, where they are held by the female dancers⁷⁰. P. Courbin has suggested that these objects are rattles or branches facing downwards, or even a thyrsus. The Amyklaian fragment, however, gives the impression that these should be taken as weaponry, namely spears, if compared to the definite examples of such presented in the lower zone of the amphora. This is

late 8th century BC to the repertory is the broad shallow dish, usually with two horizontal handles attached at the rim and a low ring base. The large size of certain of these vessels may be taken as an indication of their votive character; smaller plates and bowls with a deeper profile seem more suitable for the consumption and/or offering of food.

Large open vessels are extremely fragmentary: thus, any reconstruction of the entire profile remains tentative. Yet one may distinguish a shape with almost vertical walls, also attested at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia⁶⁷. The type continues well into the 7th century BC as is manifested by some fragmentary pieces from Amykles and the Meneiaion⁶⁸. A few kraters of this type, although burnt and thus badly preserved, seem to have been coated with a thick slip, typical of the local production; decoration varies from panelled geometric motifs to figured decoration (fig. 11 a. b). The fact that some were heavily burnt could be taken as an indication that they were thrown in the fire at some time during the rituals. All surviving examples have a

⁶⁷ Droop 1929, 57 fig. 31 b.

⁶⁸ Stibbe 1994, 22. 23 fig. A.

⁶⁹ Coldstream 1968, 217 pl. 46 o.

⁷⁰ Waldstein 1902, pl. 57, 17. 19; Courbin 1966, 430 f. and n. 14; pl. 147, both dated to LG IIb.



13 Fragments of possibly an amphora with figured decoration in two successive zones (inv. AM/KΓ 315) (photo V. Vlachou)

clearly a scene of battle, a rare theme in the Lakonian and equally the Argive figured repertory. From the characteristic hand-postures of the figures, shown with their fingers clearly separated one from the other, at least two figures are shown as already wounded, while others are still fighting.

Military prowess and honour were largely emphasized as expressions of status and authority in both sanctuaries and burials⁷¹. Iconographic evidence from the Amyklaion is complemented by the surviving bronze and terracotta figurines from the sanctuary. A male figure holding a spear was originally attached to the large handles of a hammered-up bronze tripod⁷²; a second male figurine is equipped with a conical helmet, close to the helmet of the male terracotta head from the sanctuary⁷³. It is probable that the helmeted figurines from Amykles were shown as holding a spear and a shield, thus following the posture of a largely contemporary figurine, that of Apollo Mantiklos⁷⁴. The reference to the iconography of Apollo is thus rather straightforward. The dedication of weapons, pieces of armour and bronze tripods at the Amyklaian Sanctuary further emphasizes the role of the sanctuaries as the arena for competitive display among the early elites⁷⁵. Tradition places a series of events in the course of the 8th century BC that involve the settlement

⁷¹ For an LG pithos burial accompanied by a sword and daggers from Sparta, see Raftopoulou 1998, 133 f. fig. 12, 15. For an LG tomb from Nichoria, see McDonald 1972, 228 (pithos burial containing an iron sword). For a discussion of the LG »warrior burials«, see van Wees 1998; Whitley 2000, 188.

⁷² Vlizos 2017, 78–80 and pl. 1 a–d.

⁷³ Vlizos 2017, 83–86 and pl. 29 a–d. For the terracotta head of a male warrior today in the National Museum at Athens, see Tsountas 1892, 14 pl. 4, 4. 5; Sweeny – Curry – Tzedakis 1987, 86–89 nos. 16. 17. The head of a female wearing a short polos accompanied the male head, see Langdon 1998; Kaltsas 2006, 59 f. nos. 10. 11.

⁷⁴ Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 03.997: Vermeule – Comstock 1988, 118 no. 15; Rolley 1994, 129 fig. 109 (with further bibliography). On the performative aspect of the inscription, see Day 1994. N. Papalexandrou (2005, 84–86; Papalexandrou 2011, 256 f.) has suggested that the statuette was originally an attachment to a tripod that was dedicated at the sanctuary.

⁷⁵ Nafissi 2009, 117–124; Kennell – Luraghi 2009, 249–251.

of Lakonians on Thera (ca. 800 BC), the annexation of Amykles into the Spartan polis (ca. 760–740 BC), the foundation of Taras (ca. 700 BC), all reflections of contemporary social and political upheavals⁷⁶.

Images of females are much fewer and limited to dancing maidens, resembling the Argive treatment of the scene. In Euripides' »Helen« (1465–1477), we learn from the chorus members that on the event of her return to Sparta, Helen shall join the choral dances performed in front of the Temple of Athena (that is the Spartan Chalkioikos), and the choral processions marking the festival of Hyakinthia, the great ritual celebration dedicated to Apollo of Amykles and his *erómenos*, the young athlete Hyakinthos⁷⁷. The dedication of arms and the display of artefacts such as bronze tripods have been largely related to the male expression, while the female traces at the sanctuary are less marked. The dedication of hydriae and terracotta spindle whorls have been mainly associated with female donors at the Greek sanctuaries. Yet, regional variations have demonstrated that there are no fixed patterns by which one may to link the gender of the donor to the type or value of the offering, at least for the EIA.

A specific class of pottery that could serve in this discussion are the small-sized and miniature handmade vessels that may be associated with both the PG and Geometric phases of the cult and rituals. The stylistic development and change of the shapes, fabrication techniques and firing of these vessels largely follow the features observed for the larger pots from the sanctuary. At least two different classes of miniatures may be distinguished; the first consists of coarse and unpainted shapes, mainly bowls with no handles or with two horizontal ones, tripod pots and cooking jugs (fig. 14 a–e)⁷⁸. A small group of fragmentary pieces stands apart; these are made in a much lighter clay and decorated with incised decoration. They are close to certain Argive specimens, especially those from Asine dated in the LPG (Asine phase III)⁷⁹. Differences in the fabric, finishing and firing of certain pieces seem related to different pottery workshops, and presumably some of these vessels could be Argive in



14 a–l: Selection of small-sized and miniature vessels of the PG and Geometric periods from the Amyklaion (photos V. Vlachou)

⁷⁶ Pelagatti 1956, 7–44; Nafissi 1999. For interpretations of the events that led to the annexation of Amykles, see Pettersson 1992, 106–112; Cartledge 2002, 92–106.

⁷⁷ Calame 2018, 179.

⁷⁸ Comparable are the miniatures from the earlier phase I at Tegea, Hammond 2014, 401–406 figs. 2. 3.

⁷⁹ Wells 1983, 254 figs. 192. 193 no. 734.

origin. The second category includes mainly decorated open shapes that can be dated from the LPG to the Archaic period. The earliest specimens are decorated in the distinctive Lakonian PG style (fig. 14 f. g). By the late 8th century BC, the small shallow bowls with painted decoration, frequently two crossing lines on the interior, increase in numbers and continue to the 7th and 6th century BC (fig. 14 h–l)⁸⁰. During the same period, miniature coarse aryballoï represent by far the commonest ›cheap‹ offering at the sanctuary; miniature kraters and lakainai among other shapes were equally dedicated throughout the Archaic and Classical periods⁸¹.

Although miniature pots have been largely treated as a single category of offerings, their function should have been varied. The miniature aryballoï that typically lack any interior shaping and thus could not have been used as containers of any kind seem to have had a merely symbolic use. As has already been suggested by the excavator, S. Vlizos, they may have served as commemorative items of a modest sort that would have marked the participation in the ritual and festival⁸². The earliest small-sized coarse pots largely imitate domestic coarse pottery that could be compared to the image of the oikos at a reduced scale. These vessels have nicely shaped interiors and could have been offered with their specific content. Shape and occasionally decoration leave no doubt as to their presence at the sanctuary already by the late 10th century BC. In a similar way, the shallow decorated bowls that appear in much larger numbers from the late 8th century BC onwards could equally have been offered along with their content or not.

The large quantity of miniatures from the Amyklaion and from most Peloponnesian sanctuaries, as well as the continuity of certain types over time, ensure these small offerings a place in the cult and rituals. They seem to have had a specific meaning for those that deposited them and should have been assigned specific connotations and symbolisms throughout this long period of time. Yet, their function is far from clear⁸³; their frequent placement in child burials has been related to their being offerings suitable for children. Their imitation of larger shapes, such as dinoi and tripod cauldrons, could make them cheap replicas of these offerings, and thus relate them to the lower social strata⁸⁴. If we consider the small size of the pots to mark the presence of children and their modest participation in the rituals due to their young age, then is it possible to consider at least a part of the small-sized and miniature vessels as material markers for the introduction of the youngest members to the official cults of the community and later to those of the polis? The miniaturization of shapes in relation to children and rituals is not uncommon in other areas, although from a much later period⁸⁵. In connecting the deposition of these small, ›cheap‹ and commonly neglected finds to specific social groups, such as very young children, what is revealed is the participation of a wide range of social groups in the cult and rituals.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Trying to pull the evidence together, it is obvious that pottery remains the largest corpus of evidence for attempting any reconstructions of the ritual activity at the site. The predominance of drinking shapes throughout the early phases manifest that feasting formed a central part of the ritual expression at Amykles, following the examples of an ever-increasing list of the early Greek sanctuaries. On the other hand, cooking ware is largely missing from the pottery deposits, as well as other types of ceramics such as stands, braziers and the like, of supplementary use after the preparation of food. Large closed forms that would have contained the necessary provisions for preparing the feasts are equally absent. It would seem that what was left behind by the participants

⁸⁰ Shallow bowls with comparable decoration are popular in many Peloponnesian sanctuaries, see Ekroth 2003; Hammond 2005; Hammond 2014; Barfoed 2015.

⁸¹ For the presence of comparable type at the Spartan heroa (the Menelaion, the Achillion) see Stibbe 2000, 91.

⁸² Vlizos 2019, 31. For the semiotics of the dedication of miniature cauldrons see Pilz 2011.

⁸³ Cf. the contribution of S. Barfoed in this volume.

⁸⁴ For a discussion, see Hammond 2009; Gimatzidis 2011; Ekroth 2013; Barfoed 2018.

⁸⁵ For the Athenian Choes, see van Hoorn 1951; Hamilton 1992.

was only a part of the pottery used and which was deliberately broken *in situ*. Pottery not related to consumption practices – such as lekythoi, small-sized hydriae and ring vases – seem to have held some kind of liquid offerings, possibly for the performance of libations. In addition, other shapes and classes of items such as pyxides, kalathiskoi, tripod cauldrons, spindle-whorls, and miniature handmade vessels were equally deposited at the Amyklaion by the participants in the early cultic activities.

Taking into account the changes observed in the material used and deposited at the Amyklaion, the second half of the 10th century BC represents the earliest important phase in the early history of the sanctuary. The large quantities of repeating material groups, namely those related to feasting activities, and the diversity of the artefacts dedicated may be associated with the number of the participants and the consistency of the rituals through time, possibly in the form of a festival. Material evidence from other cult sites in the wider region manifests the homogeneity of the quite distinctive local pottery style. The presence of Lakonian pottery in the Arkadian sanctuaries around this time is important in identifying active networks connecting all the earliest cult places in central and southeast Peloponnese. Pottery assemblages reveal that Lakonian pottery continued in these areas throughout the 9th and 8th century BC. The finding of moulds for the casting of tripods at Amyklaion and the evidence for metal-working at the Sanctuary at Tegea provide additional evidence for the presence of smiths and other craftspeople at the early sanctuaries.

Asine provides the earliest evidence for contacts between Amykles and the Argolid Gulf. Already since the late 10th century BC, imported Argive pottery at the Amyklaion provides evidence for at least the circulation of ceramics, and possibly also craftspeople between these two areas, something that becomes more visible throughout the Geometric period. Indeed, the Argive style of the 8th century BC is the more influential. In addition, the early connections between Lakonia and Messenia have been described on the basis of style in the ceramics. The Sanctuary of Apollo Hyakinthos at Amykles therefore occupies a central place in the early history of Sparta and of the southern Peloponnese. By the 9th and 8th century BC, the dedication of bronze tripods at the sanctuary, among other valuable offerings, displays its important role in negotiating power and elite status in a period marked by internal struggles and long-distance activities. The large-scale constructions undertaken at the end of this period, with the erection of the earliest peribolos wall around the hill, highlight the importance of the site in the religious life of early Sparta. Such construction should have been motivated by collective decisions in maintaining and reinforcing aspects of the cult and festival.

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The northwestern Peloponnese played an important role in Greece during the Geometric and Archaic periods. This has only become clear with the research of the last three decades. The sanctuaries of Achaia and northern Arkadia made significant contributions to early temple architecture. Their range of finds attests to both supra-regional connections and regional specificities. The 17 papers in this symposium provide an overview of the state of research on Early Greek sanctuaries in the northwestern Peloponnese and neighbouring areas. Well-studied sanctuaries are discussed alongside lesser-known ones in order to provide as complete a picture as possible. Sanctuaries of supra-regional importance such as Nikoleika and Lousoi are discussed, as well as local cult sites in caves that are difficult to access (Tria Goupta, Drakaina). The focus is on the interpretation of ceramic assemblages. The functional analysis of the pottery allows conclusions to be drawn about ritual and profane activities in the temene. Together with the votive offerings, it also provides information about the composition of the cult communities and their concerns for the worshipped deity. The origin of the pottery provides information on the connectivity of the sanctuary. Special emphasis is placed on archaeometric analyses of pottery and the function of miniature vessels. Other papers deal with early sacred architecture and the layout of sacred precincts.

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