

CHAPTER 4.1

Sparta and Laconia

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Introduction¹

Opinion about the inheritance from Mycenaean to Archaic (AR) Greece has swung from a view that the culture of the 14th–13th centuries deeply influenced what was to follow in the 8th–6th centuries to a view that a deep gulf separated the two. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have been seen by some as a window on the Bronze Age (BA), by others as a reflection of the time when the poems were put together, centuries later. The nature of their creation is hotly contested: are they each the vision of one great poet or constantly reshaped by a fluid oral tradition? Their central theme, the Trojan War, has been reconstructed as a seminal historical clash or alternatively as a powerful myth but not a real event.

In Greek tradition, Sparta, the subject of this chapter, looked both ways. On the one hand, it was the birthplace of Helen and Klytemnestra, the site of Menelaus's palace and the place where Helen's suitors swore the oath that bound them as it happened to avenge Paris's future wrong-doing. On the other hand, the Greeks of the Classical period believed there was also a break in Sparta's history: that the Dorians had moved into the Peloponnese generations after the Trojan War (e.g. Herodotus 1.56.3) and you do not get more Dorian than the Spartans. As early as the 7th century, Tyrtaios says in his poem *Eunomia* ("Good Governance") that the Spartans, the descendants of Herakles, came from Erineos (i.e. "Doris") in central Greece, "For Zeus son of Kronos, husband of fair-crowned Hera, gave this town to the sons of Herakles, to us who having left windy Erineos arrived in the broad Peloponnese" (Tyrtaeus fr. 2 West).

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The question of a Dorian migration divides scholarly opinion – the case for the traditional view that new population groups occupied the Peloponnese during the Early Iron Age (EIA) has been defended (e.g. Eder 1998). But the reading of these traditions as historical has been subject to challenge: from another point of view stories such as the arrival of the Heraklids can be seen as a charter myth rather than a simple account of the past (Hall 1997). The story of their origin gave an identity to the Spartans, but it was constantly rewritten through time and according to historical circumstances. In the AR period, the genealogies of powerful families helped mold the myth. Thus the Spartans arrived in the trail of their kings, who had to invent a pedigree and a mythical history to account for their descent from Herakles. The politics of the time influenced Tyrtaios' story: his poem gave religious sanction to the power of the kings and their followers and their control of the land; indeed, the poem's objective was, we are told, to promote unity after a time of dissent between the rich and the dispossessed (Aristotle *Politics* 5.1306^b36; Hall 1997: p. 61; Luraghi 2008: pp. 51–52). Competing and self-contradictory legends were invented and constantly revised – Nino Luraghi has argued that part of the story was probably tagged onto the core of the legend in Argos during the 5th century – this told how the Argolid, Laconia, and Messenia were awarded by lot to the three groups of invaders under Temenos (for the Argives), Kresphontes (the Messenians), and Eurysthenes and Prokles (the Spartans) (Luraghi 2008: pp. 46–67); just as in earlier myth Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades were allotted the heavens, the sea, and the underworld. So the skeptics say that such myths of origins show how communities shape and reshape their sense of self but they are not history. Hall, at the close of his analysis of the cluster of stories about the Dorians and the Heraklids, suggests there was no massive influx of immigrants from central Greece (Hall 1997: pp. 184–185).

The evidence of dialect is also important, but equally open to different interpretations. “The Greeks, like most peoples, associated dialect very closely with ethnicity, and since they distinguished three main ethnic subdivisions amongst themselves, they divided their language into three dialect groupings accordingly: Ionic, Aeolic, and Doric. A well-known Hesiodic fragment sets out the myth-historical background to this division.... ‘From Hellen the warrior king sprang Doros and Xouthos and Aiolos lover of horses’ (Hesiod 9 M-W). The three offspring of Hellen ‘Greek’ are the ancestors of the Dorians, Ionians, and Aeolians respectively” (Colvin 2010: p. 202).

But we know that this Greek “theory” of dialects is wrong. Dialect and the registers of speech reflect proximity, education, class, community, and not just, perhaps not even, descent. Furthermore, on the basis of the study of the development of Greek from Proto-Indo-European during the

prehistoric period, it is now thought that already by the Mycenaean period, spoken Greek had split into dialects ancestral to the main groups of the AR period: “Achaean,” Attic Ionic, Aeolic and, of particular relevance here, West Greek “which later differentiates into Northwest (Delphian, Elean, etc.) and West Greek proper (Laconian, Argolic, Cretan etc.)” (Rau 2010: p. 173). We do not know over how wide a territory West Greek was spoken in the BA but it is still perfectly possible that West Greek dialects were spoken in the Peloponnese during the Mycenaean period, which would help explain their wide distribution in the area thereafter. Unfortunately, Linear B uses a fossilized, somewhat artificial language which is very unlikely to represent the Greek spoken by the inhabitants of towns as widespread as Knossos, Chania, Mycenae, Tiryns, Thebes, Ayios Vasileios, Pylos, Iolkos and elsewhere at various moments over some 200 years. The language of the tablets is an East Greek dialect, like Attic-Ionic and Arcado-Cypriot, leading to the traditional view that “the Arcadians were the descendants of speakers of a Mycenaean-like dialect who took to the hills when the Dorians invaded the Peloponnese, while the Cypriots were émigré cousins” (Thompson 2010: pp. 198–199; Herodotus 2.171.3). Indeed, it has been argued that a Postpalatial *koine* of the Arcado-Cypriot dialect was spoken in the Argolid, Laconia, Crete, Rhodes, and Cyprus (Janko 2002). But theories other than a Dorian invasion could explain the “flight” and the relationship of Arcadian to the dialect of Linear B.

In summary, therefore, we need to examine the evidence of the archaeology of prehistoric Greece without preconceptions based on later traditions.

Earlier Background

The Late Helladic (LH) IIIA/B period marks a high point in the story of BA Laconia, but the foundations of Mycenaean society were laid in the preceding centuries. Sites which were to become dominant in the high Mycenaean period were already settled in the Middle Bronze Age (MBA), for example Ayios Vasileios, the Menelaion, Vaphio/Palaiopyrgi, and Pellana. Against this general background of continuity, however, different sites suffered varying fortunes. Thus the acropolis at Geraki was abandoned at the start of the Late Bronze Age (LBA), and small farms/hamlets, such as those located in the Laconia Survey, in some cases, were abandoned in the early Mycenaean period, in other cases persisted, whereas others were new foundations established in LH IIIA (Cavanagh et al. 2002: pp. 142–150).

In the earlier Mycenaean period, Epidauros Limera (Gallou 2009), Ayios Stephanos (Taylour and Janko 2008) and Pavlopetri (Gallou and Henderson

2011–2012) on the southern coast of Laconia, and Kastri on Kythera (Coldstream and Huxley 1972; Broodbank and Kiriati 2007) flourish. These gateway communities mediated exchanges with and influences from Minoan Crete, which in turn helped to create Mycenaean culture. By the high Mycenaean period, some of these gateway sites declined, and the settlement-pattern changed, no doubt following the rise or fall of those rival centers of power, which preceded the fully centralized palace-state.

Centers include Ayios Vasileios, later to emerge as the dominant capital: a cemetery of solidly constructed cist graves dates to the Shaft-Grave period, and there are reports of large buildings of early Mycenaean date, and early Mycenaean chamber tombs (Vasilogamvrou: lecture delivered at Cambridge 2/4/2015). Warrior graves have been found in Sparta (with a boar's-tusk helmet: Zavvou and Themis 2009: pp. 110–111) and Kouphovouno (with a spear). The spectacular tomb at Vaphio points to another rival – distinguished by its ambitious structure, one of the “giant” tholos tombs built in LH II (cf. Kakovatos A, Mycenae Tomb of Aigisthos, and Galatas Magoula), and by its contents with very strong Minoan connections (gold cups, seal-stones, stone vases, a Minoan priest's ax and others). Could those buried here have been involved in the Mycenaean take-over of Knossos? The tomb's dynasty survived several generations into LH IIIA.

The Menelaion is our clearest published example of sophisticated architecture from the early Mycenaean period, Mansion I was constructed in LH IIB (Figure 4.1.1), though there were also important buildings at Ayios Vasileios in LH II mentioned in the preliminary accounts. Its innovative design anticipates the Mycenaean palace confirming the important transformation toward the mature palace system. It is thought that the central unit would have formed a megaron, which served a “proto-*wanax*” (Catling 2009: pp. 448–450). The storage magazines indicate a system of centralized storage and the patronage of specialized craftsmen, which surely owe much to the Minoan example, perhaps initially mediated through the gateway ports on the coast and later through direct control of Knossos. Pellana's early Mycenaean prominence is borne out by a massive chamber tomb with palace style amphorae (Spyropoulos 1998). These rival centers partitioned control of Laconia's rich agricultural hinterland.

High Mycenaean Period

It must be stressed that the excavation and analysis of Ayios Vasileios is at an early stage and new finds may undermine this reconstruction, but at some point, perhaps in LH IIIA, its rulers established their sway over a

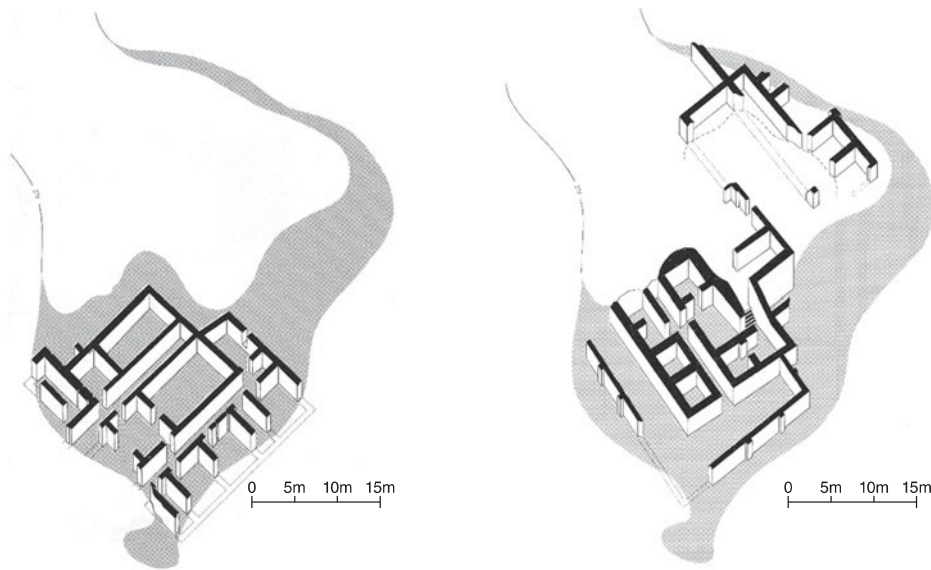


Figure 4.1.1 Axonometric plans of Mansions I and II at the Menelaion (Catling 2009: figs. 16 and 24). Reproduced with permission of the British School at Athens.

major Mycenaean kingdom. The Linear B tablets are decisive evidence; as with other such Mycenaean states (Pylos, Thebes, Knossos which controlled 100s km²) its power extended at least over the central plain of Sparta, for there must be a lower limit to the territory, which could maintain the specialized workforce and administrative superstructure documented. Indeed, we know the region (and the kingdom?) was called Lakedaimon, as the ethnic Lakedaimnios/Lakedaimonios is found on Linear B tablets from Thebes (del Frio 2010: pp. 59–60). References to textiles, weapons, and vessels confirm an economy of manufacture and supply similar to those known at the other palaces – though the extent and mechanics of palatial control of the economy is still debated. The site's growing prosperity saw the construction of spacious courts, shaded stoas, a labyrinth of buildings, some graced with frescoes on their walls. The large courtyard might look for inspiration to the central courts of Minoan architecture; the whole town covered some 25 ha, similar in extent to Ano Englianos at Pylos (Vasilogamvrou 2013; Davis and Stocker, Chapter 4.2).

It seems the Menelaion became a secondary center. We cannot say whether this happened before or after the construction of Mansion II, but clay sealing and stoppers confirm its participation in an administrative system during LH IIIA2/B (Catling 2009: pp. 289–291), overlapping the date of the tablets from Ayios Vasileios. Mansion II followed the same plan as its predecessor,

but on a larger scale, with a megaron hall, storage, and workrooms. Catling has also drawn attention to the cult finds from the site, indicating some sort of religious role (Catling 2009: pp. 279–280). This combination of social status, administrative control, storage, manufacture and religious prominence fits well with what the archives at Pylos tell of the role of secondary centers. Though on this reconstruction, the main functions of the site, already evident in Mansion I, appear to have preceded its incorporation into the Linear B kingdom. The large settlements in the vicinity of Vaphio and Amyklai also seem to have flourished under the domination of the palace at Ayios Vasileios. The small, LH IIIA/B hamlet of Melathria, whose inhabitants were buried in a cluster of chamber tombs nearby, represents the lower end of the settlement hierarchy, its lifetime roughly coterminous with that of Mansion II (Demakopoulou 1977; Cavanagh and Crouwel 1992). Given the palace's involvement in textiles it may also have exploited the high pasture for sheep farming, and a cemetery of small tholos tombs indicates settlement at Arna, some 800 m up into Mt. Taygetos.

It is less certain whether Ayios Vasileios exercised control over southern Laconia. Stone from the quarries of the Mani reached Mycenae to decorate the façade of the Treasury of Atreus, perhaps a diplomatic gift between rulers and a hint therefore of palatial control in the south, and at the same time no clear candidate for a Mycenaean palace has been identified in southern Laconia. Certainly, the farmland here was densely occupied, with a network of settlements on the coast and on the interior of the Malea peninsula, known in particular from their chamber tombs (Gallou 2008); skeletal analysis from those at Sykia revealed a rural population scarred by hard labor (Papathanasiou 1999). Coastal sites such as Pavlopetri and Neapolis flourished in LH IIIA/B, though Ayios Stephanos and Epidauros Limera seem to have suffered an eclipse just when the palace at Ayios Vasileios was at its height (Gallou 2008; Hope Simpson and Janko 2011).

Final Mycenaean

Laconia passed through a process of decline and depopulation similar to that suffered by the rest of Mycenaean Greece and most of the east Mediterranean world, but the details are still uncertain. It is too soon to chart the fortunes of the palace at Ayios Vasileios. The use of some buildings evidently dates to LH IIIA, whilst the important stoa and buildings Δ and E were destroyed in a major catastrophe at the end of LH IIIA2 (also dating associated tablets). The site was occupied in LH IIIB and early LH IIIC, but it is not clear that it continued to act as a palatial center. The Mansion on the Menelaion Hill,

was destroyed in LH IIIB2 and occupation at the site slowly dwindled, not surviving LH IIIC-middle. Surface survey indicates that other sites in central Laconia barely persisted into LH IIIC. The offering of votives (including textiles), sacrifice, and the provision of food and drink at festivals had been a central concern of the Mycenaean palaces; after their eradication, sanctuaries outside the palaces became more prominent. As the figurines and cult equipment show, the worshippers at Amyklai continued the old traditions and were au fait with cult practice and equipment from the Argolid and the Aegean (Demakopoulou 1982, 2009). Their habitations are hardly known, a reflection of the fact that from now on we will largely be reliant on finds from graves and sanctuaries; the more fugitive remains from EIA and AR settlement-sites have hardly yet been recovered from Laconia. The cemetery at Pellana, to the north, continued in use throughout LH IIIC and into later times.

In southern Laconia that resort to the coast recognizable elsewhere (e.g. Tiryns, Asine, Perati and Lefkandi) is also witnessed at Ayios Stephanos, with renewed building in LH IIIC, perhaps even fortification of the site, though the town was soon abandoned (Taylour and Janko 2008: pp. 598–600).² Epidauros Limera engaged with the LH IIIC-middle maritime network with links to the Argolid, Attica, the Cyclades, and Crete (Mountjoy 1999: pp. 287–290; Demakopoulou 2007). Italian links are hinted at by the Handmade Burnished Ware (Menelaion: Lis 2009: pp. 153–155) and fibulae (Ayios Stephanos), and Minoan links have been brought out by Gallou (2009: pp. 91–92). Even into the LH IIIC-late and Submycenaean (SubMyc) periods, continuity is witnessed in the occupation of LBA sites (Epidauros Limera, Amyklai, Pellana, Peristeri, Pavlopetri), the use of chamber tombs, worship at the sanctuary of Amyklai, and a continuing network of connections with the Argolid, Attica, Euboea, and Crete. Recent finds and a better understanding of pottery typology are bridging the perceived interval between LH IIIC and Laconian Protogeometric (PG).

10th–9th Centuries

Many have seen the innovations of this time, such as single burial and new pottery types, as markers of the arrival of Dorians (Eder 1998 for an overview). Thus the shapes and decoration of Laconian PG show some similarities (though see Cartledge 1975) with western Greek types, which had developed out of a prosperous LH IIIC *koine* dominating Elis, Achaia, Aitolia, Acarnania, and adjacent islands. At first blush, then, the ceramics fit, if roughly, myth and dialect geography. Like the pottery, it is argued, Dorians

and Doric came from the northwest. But recent research has shown that the interplay of influences on the pottery styles are more complex: for example, Cretan links are recognizable in the western LH IIIC ceramic *koine*, itself part of a network extending from Cyprus and the Aegean to Italy (Borgna 2013). These networks rather than any notional ethnic identity may be indicated. Note, in this context, the SubMin stirrup jar imported to Pellana (Mountjoy 1999: p. 293, fig. 100.242), showing that Cretan contact penetrated deep into the interior of Laconia and into the EIA. Furthermore, the western *koine* itself is far from uniform “there are many local variations” (Mountjoy 1999: p. 54). Second, side by side with the northwestern influences, Laconian PG shows northeastern parallels. These tie in with new evidence from sites such as Tegea (Voyatzis 1990, 2014) to suggest that rather than monolithic stylistic blocs (western and eastern) the pottery styles of the Peloponnese overlap and merge from region to region; note the rarity in Laconia of the vertical-handled bowl so common in Olympia and the northwest (Eder 2006: p. 157) and the absence from Laconian PG of the fringed style found in the northwest (cf. Snodgrass 1971: p. 85 fig. 42–44; the fringes go back to LH IIIC). In fact “Laconian PG” covers a sequence of styles starting at least in Late Protogeometric (LPG), indeed probably as early as Sub-Myc (cf. the monochrome skyphoi/deep bowls: Coulson 1983: pp. 66–67, 1985: pp. 34–37; with Mountjoy 1999: p. 363 and note 9), and continues through Early Geometric–Middle Geometric (EG–MG).

Sparta has been painted as backward and isolated at this time, but in fact Laconian PG is technically very accomplished, with a hard fabric and fine metallic glaze; this was the product of a single workshop producing pottery for use on ceremonial occasions, and prized through much of the Peloponnese (Fenn, Ponting, and Voyatzis 2014). Less accomplished pottery from other workshops is found in some of the graves (Zavvou and Themis 2009: p. 111). In the 9th earlier 8th centuries Attic/Argive motifs such as the meander and the swastika were consciously avoided, and a preference for concentric circles indicates stylistic developments to cover the later (EG–MG) phases (Margreiter 1988: pp. 27–33; Coldstream 2008: pp. 214–215).

Celebrations at the sanctuaries were an important part of life. Animal sacrifice continued from Mycenaean times as the core ceremonial, witnessed by the layers of “burnt soil and animal bones” noted at the old site of Amyklai (Buschor and von Massow 1927: pp. 32–33) and the new PG sanctuary of Orthia (Dawkins 1929: p. 8). New leaders (“*basileis*”) perhaps had a hand in founding new sanctuaries, though, like cult sites elsewhere in the Peloponnese (Mt. Lykaion, Tegea, Isthmia, Olympia, Epidauros), some had a Mycenaean background and some did not; like the elite of the Mycenaean period, the leaders will have supplied animals for sacrifice. The

new vase-types, confirm that feasting at the Amyklaion, Orthia, Athena Chalkioikos, and the “Heroön” at Sparta bound the Spartan community together – a first step toward that cycle of festivals which was to be the core of Spartan identity. Dedications include votive miniature vases, but other than pottery they are few – the Mycenaean clay figurine types were abandoned throughout Mainland Greece (perhaps the cult of Potnia, the dominant female deity of the BA, was now eclipsed); new handmade types at Orthia (naked/ithyphallic males, females, animals, notably horses) have been dated from 740 BC (Dawkins 1929: pp. 146, 155–158), though they could go back earlier, as roughly similar types at Olympia can be PG (Kyrieleis 2006: pp. 86–87). A PG pin from Amyklai may have accompanied the offering of a dress, but as elsewhere in Greece, it is not until Late Geometric (LG) that metal offerings become more frequent. A pair of iron pins with bronze globes, the standard PG design, have been found in one of the graves (Zavvou and Themis 2009: p. 111), following on from the SubMyc pins from Peristeri (Demakopoulou 2009: pp. 122, 132 fig. 26; Eder 2009: p. 139 for parallels); these were standard wear.

Pottery³ indicates the wide extent of settlement. Some of the sites have a Mycenaean ancestry, such as Pellana, others, such as Geraki (ancient Geronthrai), not; interestingly, both these sites were later to become perioikic towns. Occupation at Sparta is indicated by a scatter of PG graves, evidently the core of what were later to become the “villages” of Sparta.

Thus, the perceived chronological hiatus between Mycenaean Laconia and early Sparta is as much due to absence of evidence as evidence of absence, and finds are slowly filling the gap identified in the past. It is quite probable that some of the Mycenaean population lived on in Laconia, and that there were small-scale movements of settlers within Laconia and from elsewhere. Of course, the political, economic, and cultural landscape had changed radically, largely as a consequence of the demise of the Mycenaean palaces, political collapse, and unsettled times. All the same, a broad sense of identity brings the Peloponnese together at this time: cult practice at sanctuary sites, broadly related pottery styles, similar metal types, and similarities in burial customs. Inhumation burials in pithoi (storage jars) and single graves are known from Sparta (Zavvou and Themis 2009: p. 112 fig. 11.10) and Amyklai. Offerings are not very common, but some of the graves include drinking vessels: skyphoi and oinochoai (one of each from a child burial in a cist grave), gold beads and pins with bronze globes. Burials are also reported from Laconia more widely: a warrior grave, with an iron weapon, found at Mavrovouni near Gytheion (Hope Simpson and Waterhouse 1961: pp. 115–117). A LG pithos burial has been found at Philisi near Skala in the Helos plain, set in a fill with much Laconian PG pottery and close to a site said to have produced PG and

later pottery (Zavvou 2001–2004), the whole vases from Kardamyle (probably from a grave), and a pithos burial from Pellana (Spyropoulos 2002). Burial in pithoi and pits and cists is not unique to Laconia (note the recent finds from Romanou in Messenia) and has even been proposed as an ethnic identifier of widespread Dorian settlement (Luce 2009). The case is arguable (contrast Morgan’s conclusion “it is hard to see how one could now formulate an intellectually credible strategy to find Dorians in the archaeological record of the Peloponnese” (Morgan 2003: p. 212)). However, if accepted, it still leaves open the question of how these burial rites came to be shared – they have no clearer an ancestry in the “western *koine*” area than in Attica or the Argolid. In spite of the regional differences, therefore, there is a sense of shared culture, which, I suggest, is an important inheritance from Mycenaean times. At the same time, there were plainly long-distance contacts by land as well as by sea. – One can imagine pilgrims from Sparta bringing their fine vases to festivals at sites such as Volimnos (Koursoumis 2014), Tegea, and Geraki. And a more aggressive interest in their neighbors should not be ruled out. Note the shrine at Sela marking the boundary between Laconia and Messenia (Pikoulas 1992).

8th–7th Centuries

As communities grew, their leaders would claim descent from the heroes of myth and poetry as a basis for authority over a land still thinly populated. The context of their claims had a BA reality: the Linear B documents (del Frio 2010: pp. 59–60) confirm the Laconians were identified ethnically as Lakedaimonioi, and the palace at Ayios Vasileios bears witness to a state whose territory would have set a precedent for the ambition of the later Spartans. But the realization of that ambition took place during the EIA: Sparta, no more than a village in the BA, has in Homer usurped the place of Ayios Vasileios and become the site of Menelaion’s palace. Just as the descriptions in the Catalogue of Ships bear no relation to the Mycenaean kingdoms of Pylos, Thebes, and Knossos, as we know them from Linear B, so Homer’s Lakedaimon (he uses the regional name here not the ethnic Lakedaimonioi) is unlikely to represent the Mycenaean kingdom. But the description is geographically coherent and encompasses not only the central Eurotas furrow but also parts of southern Laconia (Pharis, Sparta, Messe, Bryseiai, Augeiai, Helos, Amyklai, Laas and Oitylos) (see Visser 1997: p. 96 note 3 and 479–507). Most of these towns play no other part in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* (Visser 1997: pp. 99–108), nor do the southern ones have a particular mythological resonance; so they might well reflect a stage in the growth of the Spartan

state in, say, the 8th century. New archaeological research is urgently needed to aid our understanding of this vital process. Some of Laconia's population was reduced to serfdom, quite probably through war, perhaps including those in the Helos plain (though even this suggestion owes too much to a false etymology linking the place Helos with helots (*εἰλωται*)). A subject labor-force capable of reproducing itself finds a remote echo in the workforce of females and their children recorded in the Pylos Aa and An series, but the comparison brings out the gulf between the BA economy where the agricultural surplus was mobilized to feed the palace workers, and the Spartan economy where helots mobilized agricultural produce to feed their masters. We do not know what happened to their subject workforce when the palaces were destroyed. No doubt many fled, but could some have been put to work the fields as remote predecessors to the later subject population?

The militarized ethos in 8th-century Greece is confirmed by the continuing tradition of warrior burial (in Sparta a pithos burial similar to, if poorer than, that at Nichoria, Raftopoulou 1998), by the iconography of warriors such as the proud figurine of a warrior from Amyklai wearing a crested conical helmet (Figure 4.1.2), and by the offerings of armor and weapons (another iron sword from Amyklai) in the sanctuaries of the time. The accompanying female from Amyklai (Figure 4.1.2) is unexpected at the sanctuary of Apollo and Hyakinthos; reminiscent of Mycenaean models, perhaps the image harks back to a BA Potnia.

The bronze smiths of Sparta were quite as skilled as those elsewhere in Greece – note fragments of cast and hammered cauldrons from Amyklai, and



Figure 4.1.2 Clay figurine of a warrior and a female from the Amyklaion, late 8th century (Athens NM 4381-4382). Source: National Archaeological Museum, Athens, photographer: Kostas Xenikakis. Reproduced with permission of © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Archaeological Receipts Fund.

the locally produced horse figurines found not only in Sparta, but throughout Greece (very frequent in Olympia and as far afield as Athens, Samos, Epirus, Delphi, and Taranto: Zimmermann 1989: pp. 123–175). The dedication of jewelry has been associated with females; particularly noteworthy are those from the Orthia sanctuary: pins and fibulae (Dawkins 1929: p. 197, pl. 75) would have accompanied textiles, like Hecuba's offering to Athena of her finest *peplos*, brought by Paris from Sidon (*Iliad* 6.289–296; cf. *Odyssey* 18.292–294); spectacle fibulae evidently spread south from Macedonia and the Balkans, while other types derive from Italian prototypes. Some fibulae had ivory plates attached, including one of the late 8th-century examples showing the winged goddess Orthia; the remarkable carved bone and ivory dedications from the sanctuary were of Near Eastern inspiration but possibly mediated through Crete (Kopanias 2009).

This network of international archaeological links corresponds with hints of international contacts in the early “history” of Sparta, such as the settlement of Taras traditionally in 706 BC and the visits of early poets: notably Terpander of Antissa (“676 BC”), but other names include Olympos of Phrygia, Polymnestos of Kolophon, and Thaletas of Gortyn (West 1992: pp. 327–336). According to tradition, they were involved in music competitions at the major Spartan festivals, notably the rituals at the sanctuary of Orthia (and at Therapnai), the Hyakinthia, Gymnopaïdai, and Karneia. The main sanctuaries were founded at different times over some 500–600 years, but came to be melded into a coherent calendar of festivals. Ritual, procession, and *mousikē* (performances of singing poetry, playing the lyre and the flute, and dancing) lie at the heart of the socialization of the young and what was to form the core of Spartan education (Ducat 2006: pp. 249–279).

The 7th century is a critical time of further military expansion into Messenia. In this connection, Tyrtaios illustrates that other Spartan civil virtue, grim courage in war. What counts is not athletic prowess, powerful build, wealth, kingly pretention, or eloquence, but the man who stands steadfast in the face of blood and death (Fr. 12 West). In this virtual caricature of Spartan society (the similes are from mythical monsters like the Cyclopes or the proverbially wealthy Midas), he contrasts the athletic stars of track and ring, rich aristocrats and glib politicians, with the rank and file soldiery – the backbone of the Spartan army. And the consequence of cowardice is not loss of face alone, but penury, beggary, and exile for the coward and all his family (Fr. 10 West). This seems exaggerated. The occupation of Messenia promised rather the Greek ideal of a “good life” prosperity without the need to labor in the fields.

This ordered society is located in an ordered sacred landscape. In the late 8th and early 7th centuries new cult sites join the earlier foundations: Helen

and Menelaos worshipped at Therapnai (Catling 1976–1977), Agamemnon and Cassandra near Amyklai (Salapata 2014), Zeus at Tsakona (Catling 1990), and perhaps Apollo Thornax (Eleftheriou and Skangos 2013) to set Sparta in a landscape overseen by gods and heroes. More distant foundations are some of the earliest clear expressions we have of a perioikic sense of community: the sanctuary of Apollo Hypoteleatas at Phoiniki, and the shrines at Aigies (Bonias 1998) and Kastraki (de la Genière 2005). Harder to place chronologically is the Spartan engagement in the ritual world of wider Laconia: rituals such as the procession of Spartan girls from Karyai, or participation in games, including the Pohodaia in Messenia, (Hodkinson 1999), or consulting the oracle at the sanctuary of Ino Pasiphae at Thalamai, which were all at some time integrated into Spartan sphere.

Laconia may not have lagged behind Tegea and other sites in Greece in the construction of early cult buildings, to judge from the report of an early apsidal temple at Pellana (Spyropoulos 2002). The Orthia sanctuary was formalized in the 8th century with an altar, cobbled pavement and *temenos* wall, and probably an early temple too. As the 7th century advanced, a specifically Laconian style of temple decoration developed, marked in particular by the style of terracotta roof decoration: Laconian U-shaped roof-tiles, antefixes with arc decoration over the eaves, and at either end of the roof monumental clay disc *akroteria* (finials). The early AR temple of Orthia was decorated in this way, as were those at Amyklai, the shrine of Agamemnon and Alexandra, Athena Chalkioikos on the acropolis, the “Heroön,” Zeus Messapeus at Tsakona, the Menelaion, and buildings in the countryside such as at Aigiai and Kastraki. Disc akroteria were adopted widely in the Peloponnese (Asea, Bassai, Halieis, Lousoi, Mantinea, Olympia, Poros, Tegea) and even further afield. Laconian stone from the quarry at Gynaika on Mt. Taygetos, was also sculpted into ritual basins (*perirrhanteria*).

The 8th and 7th centuries see the development of LG and SubG into the classic Laconian I and II pottery styles, the latter persisting into the early 6th century. The repertory of shapes includes plates, the characteristic lakainai, cups and skyphoi. The gigantic LG oinochoai were no doubt used in feasting at the sanctuaries. But kraters indicate the long ancestry of this tradition of feasting,⁴ confirming that drinking and dining were built into religious celebrations from Mycenaean times. These types begin to be recognized in domestic sites (Cavanagh et al. 1996: p. 38; Cavanagh, Mee, and James 2005: pp. 110–126): kraters, oinochoai, skyphoi are characteristic of the symposium and can be linked with the evidence of Alkman (Page fr. 19 and 17) and Tyrtaios (Figueira 2002: p. 166, note 65) for the spread of the symposium in Laconia, as elsewhere in Greece. It appears that the earliest bronze kraters appeared in the later 7th century (though the metallic boss on

the LG krater – Coldstream 2008: p. 216, pls 46 o, hints at earlier bronze prototypes). These developed into the prize Laconian volute kraters widely distributed in “Barbarian Europe” in the following century. Could their development be linked with the symposium or with communal dining in the famous Spartan messes?

Another example of pottery reflecting habitus is the aryballos, which held perfumed oil for anointing the body after exercise; its widespread adoption illustrates a consumable that came with the cult of athletics in early Greece. A bronze example, dating to around 625 BC, was dedicated by Deinis to Helen and/wife of Menelaos at Therapne (Catling and Cavanagh 1976: the inscription is damaged and it is not quite clear if Menelaos is in the dative or the genitive). A few more inscriptions from Laconia can be dated to the second half of the 7th century (Jeffery 1990) and none earlier; but Sparta probably did not lag behind the rest of Greece in adopting literacy: the “red” alphabet, shared with Messenia, Elis, Arcadia, and the East Argolid is related to alphabets used in Phokis, Lokris, and Thessaly, and the link between Sparta and Delphi (in Phokis) may explain the similarity of graphic style between these areas (Jeffery 1990: p. 185). The Spartan kings kept an archive of Delphic oracles, while the poems of the great Archaic poets were recorded, so writing was used for more than dedications.

From the middle of the 7th century onwards, Laconian fine pottery has been found through much of the Mediterranean; areas such as Samos (Cartledge 1982), Taras, and Cyrenaica had traditional links with Sparta and perhaps family ties and friendships eased the transactions. Oil and wine (and other commodities) were shipped using transport amphorae; Laconian amphorae, which go back to the 7th century have been found widely in Italy from Etruria in the north to Sicily in the south, as well as in Greece from Crete, Olympia, and Athens (Johnston 2005: p. 364 with references).

Concluding Remarks

Studying the archaeology of early Laconia brings home the continual revision of our understanding and knowledge: old certainties such as the Trojan War, the Dorian invasion (Hall 1997), the date of the Great Rhetra, and the nature of the Messenian Wars (Luraghi 2008), have been brought into question. The absolute dating of the LBA and EIA might need revision, and details of the dating of the AR period have been criticized. At the same time, new archaeological research and discoveries (such as the excavations at Ayios Vasileios, or research on pottery chronology Eder 2009) demand new interpretations – as the facts change, so must our theories.

In considering some 800 years of history (call it 1400–600 BC) I have given greater emphasis to elements of continuity in the story of Laconia than has been common in the past. One such element is the perception of a territory; the sense of larger worlds in the EIA beyond that of the *polis* has been explored, for example, by Morgan (2003). What was understood by Lakedaïmon/Lakedaimonioi certainly changed over time, but a core sense of geographical unity persists. Contrast, however, the state conquered by the Herakleidai: what Zeus gave them was the *town* (*ἄστυ*) (Tyrtaios fr. 2), and their kings had care of the *polis* of Sparta (fr. 4); they were *Spartiatai*. How the two identities, Spartan and Lacedaemonian, were reconciled and how the accommodation of the Spartan and the Perioikic poleis was achieved is still a key question to which we have no clear answer, but I would suggest that the BA background plays an important part.

Against this must be set the picture of discontinuity: sites of every type were abandoned at the end of the LBA, many of them not to be occupied again in Classical antiquity, including the palace site at Ayios Vasileios, secondary centers such as Ayios Stephanos, and small hamlets.⁵ Our evidence is very sketchy, however, and over-reliant on collections of surface sherds; a case for continuity of occupation can be made for some sites, such as Amyklai and Pellana, even though there are gaps in our evidence, and there are a good many more which merit a much closer look.⁶ The fugitive nature of the remains of EIA settlement makes them hard to recognize (hence our reliance on sanctuaries and cemeteries); it is also possible that we have been blinded by the distinctive appearance of “Laconian PG” pottery to overlook sherds of the more ordinary class of pottery. There is also the common-sense observation that the later population of Laconia cannot have grown in, say, 20 generations from a tiny number of people. Furthermore we are reliant on very incomplete data. On these grounds, therefore, the argument against some continuity of population from the LBA has less force.

The traditional picture of early Sparta has been very reliant on later myth and legend, which are unreliable. There was, in fact, a process of continuously redrawing history whereby it gave a picture neither of the present nor of the past: thus, for example, the geography of Menelaos’s kingdom given in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, is a blend of the past and Homer’s own time. The sanctuary of Helen and Menelaos was located at Therapnai because a memory of the great mansions, in ruins for 500 years, was still alive in 700 BC; but, to judge from the roughly contemporary establishment of the cult of Agamemnon and Cassandra, there was felt a wider need at this time to acknowledge Sparta’s heroic past. Emblematic of the political transformations over this long span is the vocabulary of power; key terms such as *polis* (stronghold/[city-] state), *basileus* (“chief”/king), *gerousia*

(council of elders), *damos* (“village”:/the people), can be traced back to the Mycenaean period, but changed radically in value and significance over the centuries. The constant invention and re-invention of the past, under the exigencies of political rivalry, warfare, and changing ideologies, were powerful forces in the transformation over the BA and EIA which prefigured the rise of the Classical state.

NOTES

1. Special thanks are due to Paul Cartledge, Chrysanthi Gallou, Mary Voyatzis, and the editors who have helped me greatly with suggestions, references, and contributions and saved the text from error. The mistakes which remain are the author's.
2. Though note the LH IIIC-late, looking amphoriskos (Taylour and Janko 2008: pp. 378, fig. 6. 39, 3695) associated with earlier vases. Note also LH IIIC-early finds in southern Laconia from Asopos: Bozas, Zarax: Armakas cave, and Daimonia: Kastelli. Also at inland sites such as Skala: Xeronisi, Asteri: Karaousi, Apidia: Profitis Elias, Sykea, Ayioi Apostoloi: Trypalia cave (Vatika). My thanks to Chrysanthi Gallou for information on this.
3. Sparta, Amyklai, Anthochori, Sela, Volimnos, Kardamyle, Pellana, Geraki, Apidia, Asteri, Peristeri, Mavrovouni, Skala, Boza, Daimonia, Pavlopetri and Kythera.
4. LH IIIC at Amyklai (Demakopoulou 1982: p. 69; Margreiter 1988: p. 144, fig. 2.3), PG at Amyklai, Orthia, Chalkioikos, “Heroön,” Apidia, Asteri Karaousi (Coulson 1985: pp. 78–80; Margreiter 1988: pp. 145–146; Hope Simpson and Waterhouse 1960: pp. 87, pls 18b.10, 92), in late MG Athena Chalkioikos (Coldstream 2008: pls 46f) and Orthia (Margreiter 1988: p. 147), LG Amyklai, Chalkioikos, and Orthia also more generally on the acropolis and by the Eurotas (Margreiter 1988: pp. 43, 149–150, pls 18–20; Coldstream 2008: pls 46 o and p), SubG Tsakona Zeus Messapeus, Amyklai/Ayia Paraskevi, Orthia, Sparta acropolis, “Heroön,” Eurotas, votive pit Sparta, Menelaion (Margreiter 1988: pp. 60–62, 155–156, pls 34–36; Cavanagh et al. 1996: p. 38, fig. 14.1, 1); early AR Orthia, Acropolis, Eurotas, Samian Heraion, Apollo Tyriras (Margreiter 1988: pp. 88–90, 163, pls 54; Stibbe 1989: pp. 22–23, 126).
5. Of the LBA sites found in the Laconia Survey only H45 (Thornax), Q360 (Menelaion) U490 (Panagia Chrysaphiotissa) had AR pottery too – perhaps add N413 found 200 m from the site of Zeus Messapeus (N415); interestingly most of these LH sites were later revived as cult sites.
6. E.g. (for brevity listed by their LS reference numbers): AA6, AA14(?), AA13, AA16, AA22, BB31, BB32, BB33, BB34, CC41, DD45, DD47, GG69, GG78, GG88/GG92, GG108, GG109, HH116(?), JJ120, JJ125, KK132, KK142, LL188, MM216, MM228, NN235, NN239, see Shipley in Cavanagh et al. (1996: pp. 263–313).

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