



From Pasture to Polis

Athens and Attika

Chronology

- LBA: post palatial
 - LH IIIC: 1200-1125 BC
 - Submycenaean: 1125-1050 BC
- Iron Age: Geometric period
 - PG: 1050-900 BC
 - EG: 900-850 BC
 - MG: 850-760 BC
 - LG: 760-700 BC



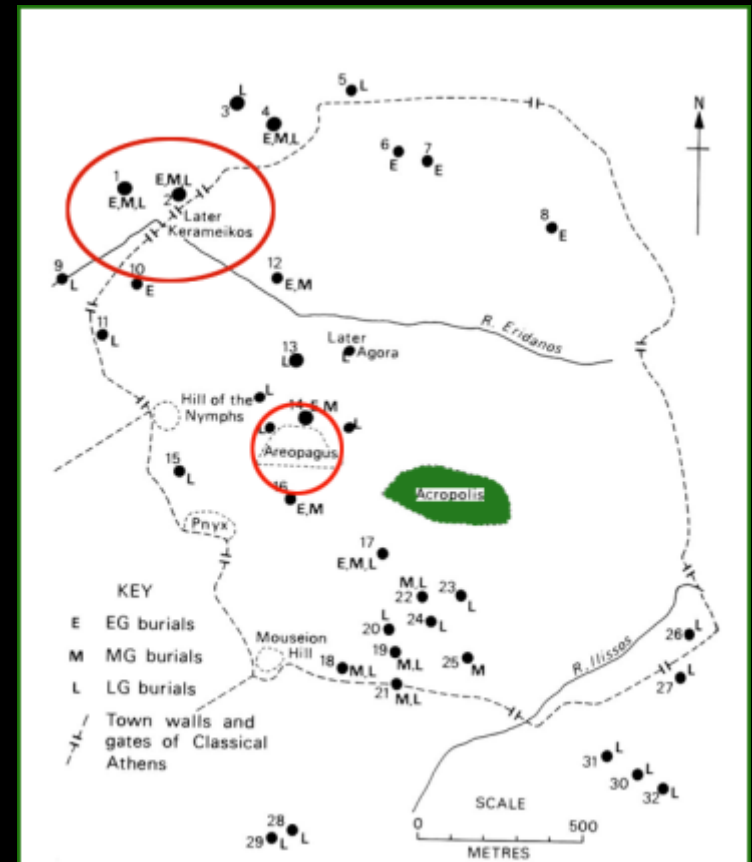
Protogeometric amphora

Greek Dark Ages

- Decline in number of settlements
- *Synoeicism*: villages grouping together, possibly for protection
- Shift in economy: agrarian to pastoral
- Disappearance of palace elite:
 - Disappearance of literacy
 - Disappearance of pictorial representations & fine arts
 - Breakdown of long-distance trade between Greece & the East Mediterranean
 - Decline in deposition of material wealth in the archaeological record

Early Iron Age Athens

- Still patchy: urban archaeology & continuous occupation
- More evidence for occupation of Athens in EIA than in BA
- Primarily **funerary**: Kerameikos & Areopagus
- Only one house identified: on slopes of Areopagus
- Some activity on Acropolis – cult of Athena



Burials around Athens

Acropolis

- Focus of Bronze Age settlement & fortified site of Mycenaean palace (13th century)
- Change in function in EIA: location of primary Athenian cult
- Memory of heroes & ancestry of site?
 - “strong-built house of Erechtheus” (*Odyssey* 7.78-81)
- PG, EG, MG: very sparse, fragmentary remains (eg. sherds from Klepsydra well):
 - it is not clear how the Acropolis was used during this period

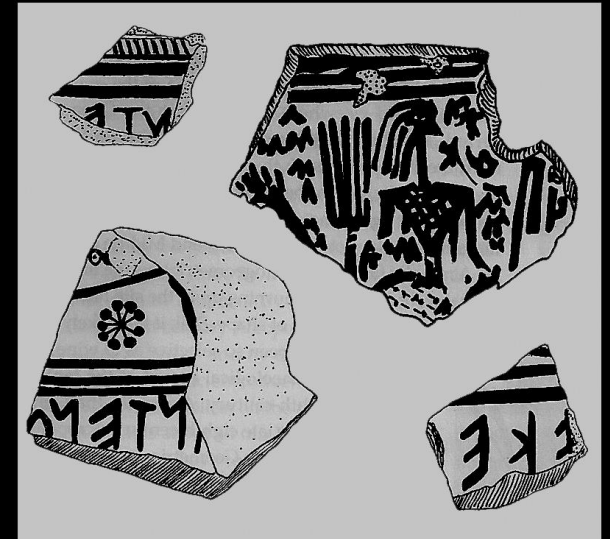


Acropolis

- Large quantities of fragmentary LG pottery
 - Grave markers
 - Dedications to Bronze Age tombs (hero cult?)
 - Prizes in athletic contests (funerary games?)
 - Early cult dedications (established c. 750 BC)



LG sherds from Acropolis



Acropolis

- LG: bronze figurines & bronze tripods
- Focus of offerings:
 - Open air cult
 - A sacred natural place



Bronze figurines from Acropolis

Plato's Academy

- LG: 7-roomed mudbrick structure (non-domestic)
- Cult material:
 - sacrificial ash deposits, animal bones, & pottery
 - a circular ash hearth in one room
- Shrine to **Akademios**, a founder-hero of Athens?
- Earlier religious activity (EG-MG) represented by a cache of some 200 kantharoi



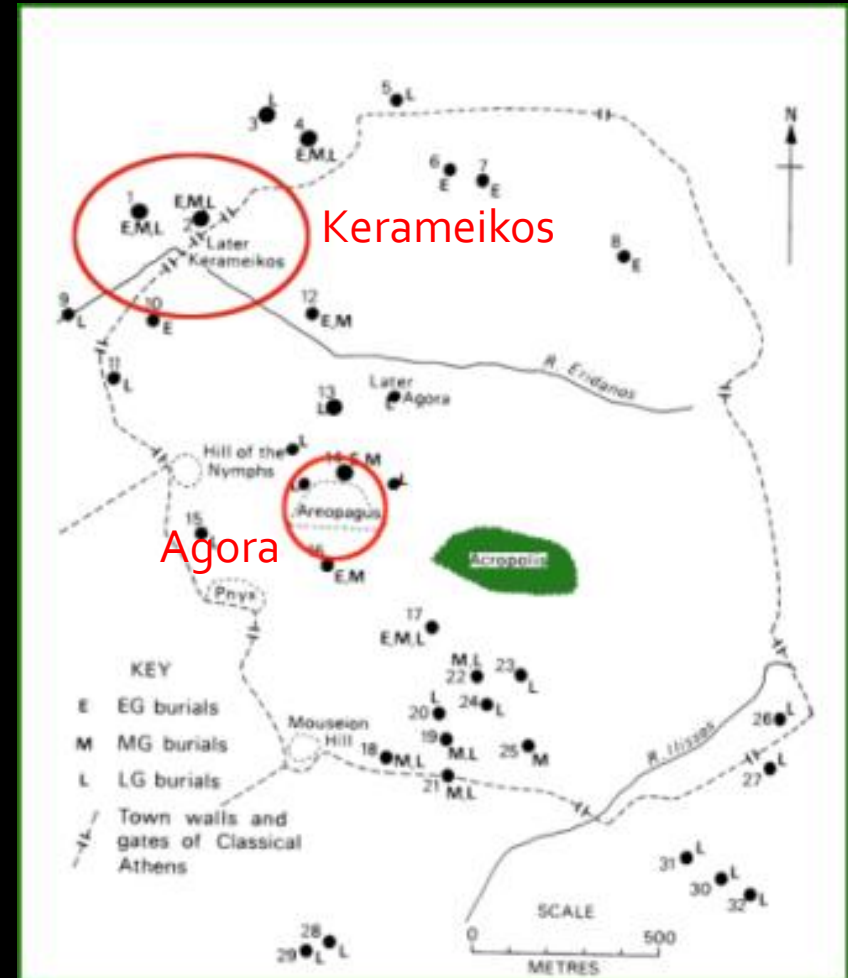
Mount Hymettos

- One of several mountain-top shrines
 - (Iron Age cult enacted in “natural places”)
- Open air altar within square enclosure
- Large cache of Geometric pottery
- Cult practices: sacrifice, feasting & offerings
- 7th / 6th century inscriptions: sanctuary dedicated to Zeus
 - (possibly Zeus Ombrios mentioned in later sources)



Funerary Record

- 2 main burial sites:
 - Kerameikos
 - Agora
- Main focus of communal ritual action



Funerary Record

- Changing treatment of the body
- PG-MG = cremation (adults)
 - Children inhumed. Why?
- LG = inhumation
- Grave goods:
 - primarily pottery
 - small trinkets (personal adornment)
 - few luxuries



LG burials from Kerameikos

Gender Roles

- Gender roles firmly established:
 - Male & female burials different symbolism in tombs
- Male elites: warrior status
- Females: portable wealth of families



Grave Gifts



EG male burial goods, Kerameikos
Bronze bowl, iron spear and knife



Agora: clay boots for child burial



Gold trinkets , Rich Lady of the Areopagus

Rich Lady of the Areopagus

- Lavish funerary display
 - 34 decorated vases (all but 9 smashed on funerary pyre)
 - Elaborate cremation urn
 - Access to imported luxuries: ivory seal, gold earrings, faience necklace with bead of variegated glass



Grave goods



Rich Lady of the Areopagus

- Burial: display & conspicuous consumption
- How much control over wealth did she have?
- Contacts with East Mediterranean
- Wealth of the family based on land/agriculture
- First clear signs for emergence of the Athenian Iron Age aristocracy (**aristoi**)
 - Using funerary display to signal position in society



Clay pyxis

Athenian Symbols of Power

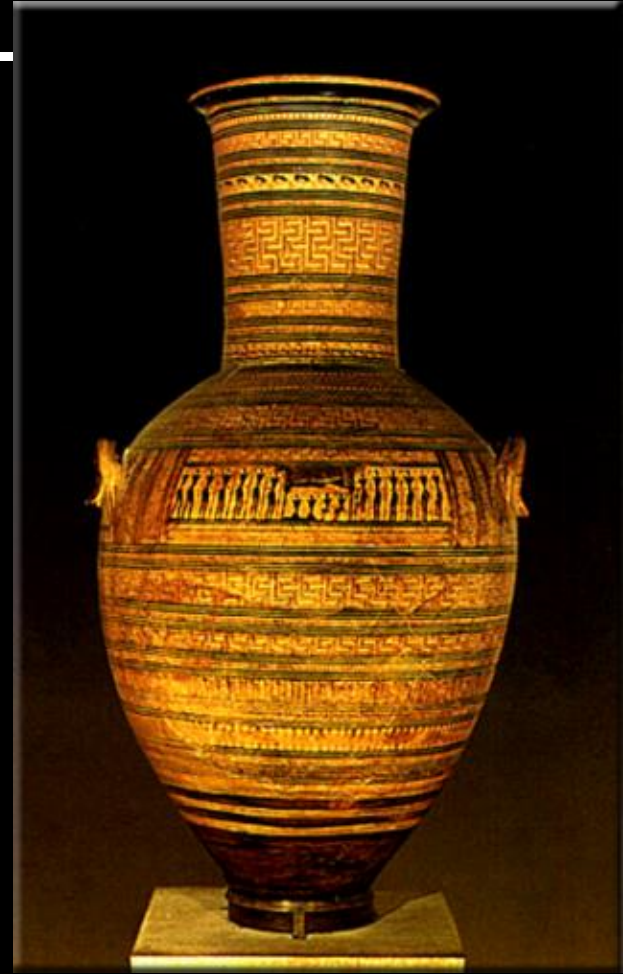
- *Kraters* (grave markers):
 - “the central vessel of the aristocratic convivial gathering, the symposium” (Bohen 1997: 47)
- Warrior paraphernalia:
 - Weapons & feasting equipment
- *Pyxis* (female burials)
 - Model granaries (EG-MG)
 - Horses (MG-LG)
- Symbolise social status of Athenian aristocracy:
 - Ownership of land & horses



Detail of LG funerary krater

Funerary Monuments

- Development of monumental figured vases (MG & LG)
- Elaborate funerary monuments: cremation urns & grave markers
- Also placed along main routes as prominent tributes to their owners
- These vases are of aristocratic status & reflect the prosperity of LG Athens



LG krater

Funerary Monuments

- Scenes illustrating funerary ritual:
 - *Prothesis*: laying out of corpse on bier
 - *Ekphora*: transport of corpse
 - Mourners
 - Chariot races
- Some scenes from Homeric epic tradition
 - shaping of Greek consciousness



Detail of prothesis



Detail of ekphora
and chariot race

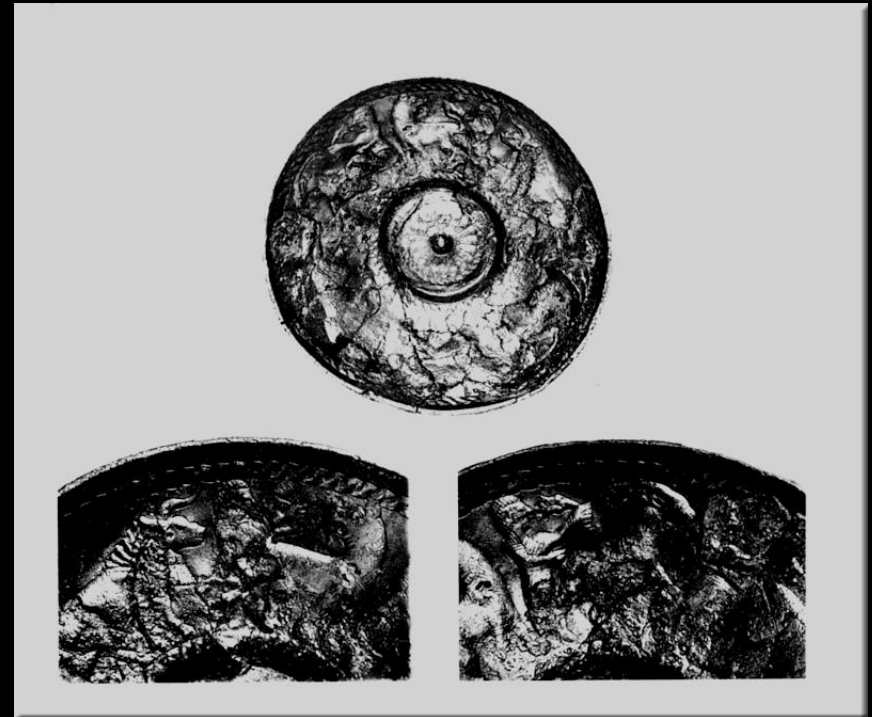
Athens and the Orient

- PG- EG: very little evidence for contacts with Near East
 - iron knives,
 - bronze bowl
 - occasional trinkets



Athens and the Orient

- MG: increased maritime contact within & beyond Aegean
 - Greater material wealth
 - Occasional imports: eg. Phoenician embossed bowl (Kerameikos)
- LG: ivories (figurines & seals) & Phoenician faience scarabs, mainly associated with female burials



Phoenician bowl

EG-MG Wealth

- Pyxis in form of granary model
- Areopagus: special version representing the agrarian wealth of the *pentakosiomedimnoi*



LG Wealth

- Increasing differential in burial wealth:
 - Smaller percentage of wealthy burials
- Langdon (2003): correlation between female burials & luxury goods (ivory & gold)
 - Rich girls & young women buried with horse pyxis, gold jewellery & large quantities of pottery
- Failed marriage potential of girls?
- Renegotiation of institution of marriage, definition of the household & control of property



Kerameikos, pyxis

LG Attica

- Increasing exploitation of Athenian landscape
- Larger number of burials in hinterland
- Large number of wealthy female burials
- Hero cult:
 - reverence for heroic ancestors enacted through dedications at Bronze Age tombs



Rise of the Polis

- Morris (1987): EG-MG surviving burials represent only a portion of the Athenian population – the *aristoi*
- Greater number of LG burials reflects changing social & burial practices rather than apparent increase in population
- c.740 BC fewer *kraters* & *pyxides*: LG social revolution & decline of Athenian aristocracy
- Corinth supersedes Athens in the developing overseas trade of 7th century BC



Pyxis, Rich Lady of the Areopagus burial

Rise of the Polis

- Increase in number of known sites & number of visible burials throughout Attica
- Appearance of sanctuaries/temples & increasing deposition of bronzes in religious rather than burial contexts
- Development of figurative art & adoption of Near Eastern artistic conventions
- Interest in heroic period: epic & hero cults

Summary

- Rich archaeological record, but still no evidence as to the daily life of the Athenians
- Main source is funerary record; some evidence for development of cult practices especially during LG period
- PG-MG: Athens still insular; gradual shift from pastoral to agricultural economy & control of resources on part of an emergent aristocracy
- LG: evidence for external contacts