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‘ PRINCESSES ’

of the Mediterranean in the Dawn of History



Edited by
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with the collaboration of MIMIKA GIANNOPOULOU

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The Lady of Lefkandi

The Toumba Cemetery

A survey conducted by the British School at Athens in Euboea in the 1960s identified a Bronze Age site near the modern village of Lefkandi.¹ This later proved to be a settlement of great importance, continuously inhabited from the middle of the Early Bronze Age to the Geometric period. The settlement, the ancient name of which is unknown, reached its acme from the Late Bronze Age to the beginning of the Iron Age (1200-1050 BC), a period during which most sites diminish in size or are abandoned. Lefkandi, however, probably played a major role in the formation of the 'Euboean *koine*', the communications network developed in the Aegean during the so-called 'Dark Ages'.² Besides Euboea, Thessaly, possibly Pieria, a large part of Chalkidiki, several Cycladic islands, and Cos were part of this *koine*.³ Lefkandi's six well-organized Early Iron Age cemeteries, which lie approximately 500m to the west of the settlement, bare witness to this role.

The Late Protogeometric (950-900 BC) cemetery at Toumba is probably the most important of the six, since the finds demonstrate that this was the burial ground for the settlement's upper class.⁴ Vases imported from Attica, North Aegean handmade pottery, precious objects from the Near East and Egypt, and gold jewellery locally manufactured with gold possibly from the Gallikos River, demonstrate the operation of a network of commercial and cultural contacts and the existence of an upper class, which displayed its power through its grave gifts. All of the burials are located east of a monumental apsidal building, which dates a little earlier, to the Middle Protogeometric period (mid-tenth century BC). Inside the building were two shaft graves, one containing the burial of four horses, the other the cremation of a man and inhumation of a woman.

The rich and unique prestige objects that accompanied the deceased woman leave no doubt as to her social position. Her burial, however, is closely associated with that of the cremated man, probably a local ruler, who was honoured after his death with a series of rituals, including the construction of the monumental apsidal building.

1. Sackett – Hankey – Howell – Jacobsen – Popham 1966, 33-112.

2. From the final decades of the eleventh century BC to the mid-ninth century BC, see Lemos 1998, 45-58. Lemos 2000, 11-21. Lemos 2002.

3. Σταμπολίδης 2003, 51.

4. Lemos 2002, 165.

The hillock of Toumba at Lefkandi was already identified as an archaeological site in the 1960s because of its important Late Protogeometric (950-900 BC) cemetery with its many rich burials. In 1980, a Middle Protogeometric apsidal building (950 BC), part of which had been heavily damaged by illegal digging with a bulldozer, was revealed west of this cemetery. Subsequent excavations by the Eleventh Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and the British School at Athens yielded important evidence for the study of the architecture of the early historical period – architectural elements that determined the later course of Greek architecture appear here for the first time⁵ – and demonstrated the building's association with the adjacent cemetery to its east.

At the building's centre, on either side of the longitudinal axis, excavations revealed two shafts cut into the bedrock. The interior of the south shaft, which contained the cremation of a man and the inhumation of a woman (fig. 1), was lined with bricks covered with brown plaster and may have featured a wooden floor and roof that sealed the shaft. The north shaft contained the skeletal remains of four horses.⁶ Archaeological evidence suggests that the building was barely used. After its abandonment, the building partially collapsed and was gradually covered with backfill forming an artificial tumulus.⁷

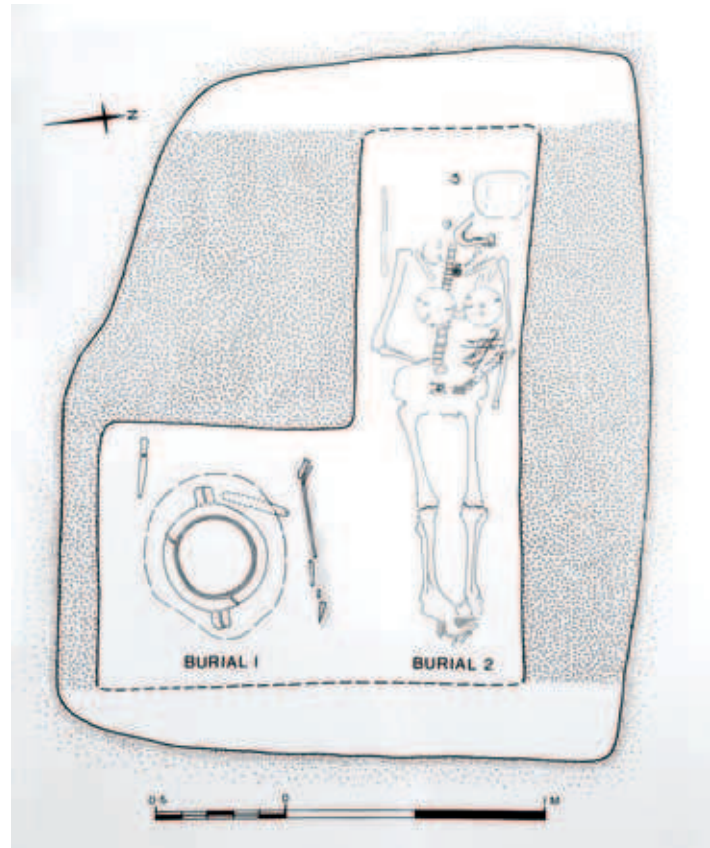


Fig. 1. Ground plan of the south shaft with the two burials. The woman's body occupied the entire north side (Popham – Kalligas – Sackett 1993, pl. 13).

5. Both the building's monumental size (approximately 50m long and 13.8m wide) and the square holes along the perimeter of its apse and long sides, in which the bases for the wooden supports of the peristasis were inserted, appear here for the first time in the history of architecture. The circular holes along the building's longitudinal axis probably were used for supporting the roof.
6. This is not the only horse burial at Lefkandi. A second horse burial was found in Tomb 68 of the Toumba cemetery, see Popham-Lemos 1996, pl. 22, Lemos 2002, 166.
7. In 1980 the tomb was approximately 2m high. In the final publication (Coulton 1993, 55-56), its original height and diameter are approximated at 4m and 25m respectively, surpassing by far the tumuli of other sites.

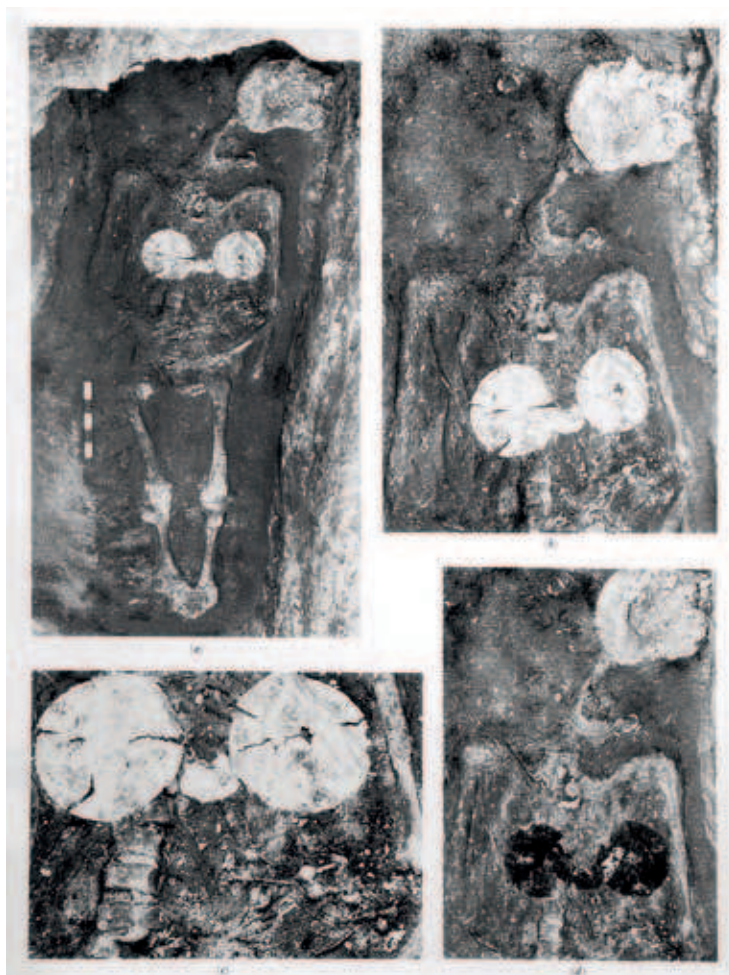


Fig. 2. The woman's body *in situ*. The gold discs that covered her breasts are visible on the photograph, as is the crescent-shaped sheet that was placed between them (after Popham – Kalligas – Sackett 1993, pl. 15).

As the cremation and inhumation were placed in the same shaft, the interpretation of the woman's burial is necessarily closely related to that of the man's, whose cremated remains had been placed inside a bronze krater. Around the krater were a sword, an arrowhead, a razor, and a whetstone, objects that usually accompany burials interpreted as belonging to warriors. The krater has parallels in Cyprus.

A woman's body, perhaps originally placed inside a wooden coffin, occupied the shaft's north side. She was lying on her back with her arms crossed over the stomach and her feet similarly crossed.⁸ A great deal of precious jewellery, indicating her special place in the social hierarchy, accompanied the deceased (fig. 2, n. 1-2). Two gold discs with embossed decoration covered each breast (fig. 3, n. 1); between them was a crescent-shaped sheet. These three sheets formed a composite chest ornament, which was sewn onto the deceased's garment. Some scholars consider these discs a survival of the Mycenaean tradition represented by the gold discs from Grave Circle A at Mycenae.⁹ Others maintain that the difference in manufacturing techniques makes the comparison impossible even if the discs were used for the same purpose.¹⁰ An earlier opinion focuses on the similarities between these objects and Central European tradition.¹¹ Similar but smaller objects were found in Late Protogeometric graves at Lefkandi, Skyros, and Lemnos.

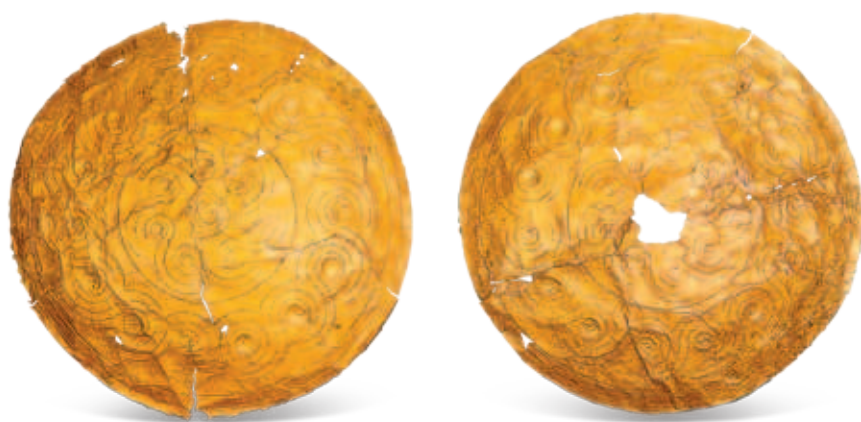


Fig. 3. Two gold discs with embossed false spirals. Approx. 950 BC.

8. See Popham 1993, 20-21, who presents details from the excavation.
9. Desborough 1972, 201-202. Marangou 1985, 144. Laffineur 1998, 9.
10. Lemos 2002, 130 Dickinson 2006, 167.
11. Higgins 1980, 91.

The woman wore a necklace of gold, faience, and rock crystal beads complete with an exquisite pendant with granulated decoration (fig. 4, n. 3). Similar pendants from Ebla in Syria¹² and Dilbat¹³ and Larsa in Mesopotamia date to 1760-1700 BC. This suggests that the pendant was an heirloom, either owned by the deceased's family for several generations or purchased as an 'antique' from a Near Eastern merchant at the beginning of the first millennium BC.¹⁴ This necklace and the bronze krater that held the deceased man's ashes, which is at least 100 older than the cremation, were most probably prestige objects whose purpose was to state the deceased's social status.

A pair of gold-plated spirals were located on either side of the woman's head (fig. 5, n. 4). Spirals such as these do not occur outside of Euboea or the territory of the Euboean koine. They were probably used as earrings, since they are absent from the Lefkandi tombs that contain earrings. The spirals were made of thin gold sheets wrapped over a metal (usually bronze or silver) core, a technique long known in the East and applied at Lefkandi for the manufacture of fibulae, bracelets, and spirals. The Lefkandi craftsmen, however, used lead or bronze cores to economize on rare raw materials while meeting the demands of the local market.¹⁵ The spirals from this particular burial were hollow. One theory is that hollow spirals would have had a core made of bitumen.

A group of nine pins (two gold-plated, five bronze, and two iron with bone heads) were found near the deceased's left thigh (fig. 6, n. 6-9). Two finger rings, one gold (n. 5) and one of electrum, adorned her fingers. Gold rings are common grave gifts at Lefkandi, but scarce in contemporary graves in Athens, the Argolid, and Skyros, a possible indication that local workshops were producing jewellery at Lefkandi since the mid-tenth century BC.



Fig. 4. Necklace with gold, faience, and rock crystal beads, and a gold pendant. 1760-1700 BC.



Fig. 5. Gold spirals. Approx. 950 BC.

12. Weiss 1985, 238, n. 109.

13. Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, 89, pl. 61, 64a-b.

14. Ogden 1998, 16.

15. Lemos 2002, 128, 133. Lemos 2003, 188-189.



Fig. 6. Iron pins covered with gold sheet. Approx. 950 BC.

In fact, with the exception of the pendant-heirloom, all of the deceased's jewellery is attributed to local workshops, since similar objects do not occur outside Lefkandi,¹⁶ except on Skyros.¹⁷ These local workshops operated to meet the demand of the local upper class for luxury objects.

The archaeological evidence suggests that the man's cremation and woman's burial were parallel (not successive) events, although this cannot be proved with absolute certainty. The hypothesis of parallel (simultaneous) burials is further enhanced by the unexpected presence of an iron dagger (n. 10) next to the woman's head. With its bone or ivory handle, the dagger differs from other daggers found at Lefkandi and nearby regions. The position of the woman's arms and legs, and the presence of the dagger next to her head might suggest that the woman was put to death when the man died,¹⁸ although one wonders why she was not cremated with him on the funerary pyre.¹⁹ Her possible killing over the grave of an illustrious man recalls the death of Polyxene over Achilles's grave.²⁰ The hypothesis that the woman might have committed suicide after her husband's death does not stand because of her body's position.²¹

The association of the apsidal building with the burials in the south shaft has obviously stirred much debate. Since it is not clear whether the burials took place before or after the building's construction, its use has not been determined yet. Was it for exclusive funerary use or did it originally serve some other purpose (i.e. the deceased's house)? In the excavation's final publication it is suggested that the graves pre-date the building,²² which adopts the plan of a normal house of that time but had exclusive funerary use.²³ On the other hand, other scholars maintain that the burials post-date the building, which was originally the home of the local ruler and his family.²⁴

16. Lemos 2002, 133-134.

17. Because the similarities are not limited to the reproduction of the same decorative motifs on different objects, such as the gold discs, which would suggest close relations between these two regions in the Protogeometric period, but include technical similarities, they are considered almost certainly the products of a single workshop.

18. See Popham 1993, 21.

19. Hughes 2000², 47.

20. Stampolidis 1996, 137-8, 146, footnote 346, 152.

21. Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 56.

22. Popham – Kalligas – Sackett 1993, 99, and Coulton 1993, 49ff.

23. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995, 116ff) maintains that this was an impressive funerary palace-like monument built to honour an important person and preserve his memory within the community.

24. Καλλυγιάς 1984-1985, 263ff. Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 54-57.

The deceased man in the south shaft was identified as a 'hero',²⁵ although most scholars preclude the building's identification as a heroon because of the lack of evidence for ritual practices like those in hero worship.²⁶

Despite the difficulty in defining the chronological sequence of events, there is no doubt that the large-scale flattening of the natural soil at the top of the Toumba hill preceded the digging of the shafts.²⁷ Some scholars maintain that the area was chosen for this purpose by the deceased while he was still alive, or by his relatives after his death.²⁸ It is also believed that the extent of the funerary rituals was determined before the man's death. According to this theory, the sacrifice of his horses and, possibly, of his spouse were a part of the funerary ritual, as was the dismantling of the building and construction of the tumulus, which would have required the participation of the entire community.

The fact that directly after the creation of the tumulus the area east of the building began to be used as a cemetery, in which the cremations and burials are equally rich as those inside the apsidal building, demonstrates the couple's important role in the community's life and the effort of the deceased man's descendants to both highlight their relation to him and to underline the continuation of their line, which was necessary in order to justify their power as the community's ruling class.

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25. Kalligas 1988, 232.

26. Antonaccio 1995, 14. Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 57. Lemos 2002, 167.

27. The flattened area greatly surpasses the building's footprint at least on its north, south, and east sides, see Popham 1993, 97.

28. Lemos 2002, 166.

LEFKANDI – THE FEMALE BURIAL AT TOUMBA BUILDING

1. Discs

Approximately 950 BC

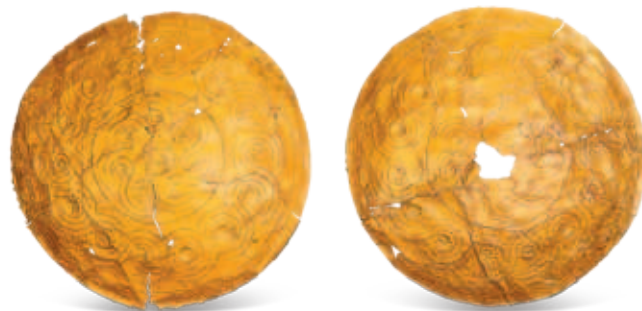
Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial.

Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n. ME 20002a, b.

Gold.

ME 20002a: torn and mended. ME 20002b: Torn in places, chipped at the centre.

D. 14cm.



Two convex discs made of gold sheet with embossed decoration consisting of concentric zones of running triple false spirals with embossed globules at the centre. The fact that their edges are folded suggests that they might have been sewn onto a textile. The discs were placed over the woman's chest. Similar but smaller discs were found in Late Protogeometric graves at Lefkandi. Also smaller are the discs found in graves of the same period at Skyros. Their technical and iconographic similarities suggest that all of these discs were made in the same workshop, possibly at Lefkandi.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Μαργακού 1985, 144-145. Popham – Kalligas – Sackett 1993, 19-21, pl. 13, 15, 18a. Laffineur 1998, 9-13. Lemos 2002, 167. Καλτσάς *et al.* 2010, 98, n. 21 (O. Ogden).

M.K.

2. Crescent-shaped sheet

Approximately 950 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial.

Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n. ME 20003.

Gold.

Torn and mended. Fragments missing from edge.

H. 9.65cm, L. of chord 13.3cm.



Crescent-shaped gold sheet. The ornament was placed on the woman's chest, framed by gold discs with embossed decoration of triple false spirals. The sheet's edges are folded, as on the gold discs. The embossed decoration is organized in two zones: an outer zone of triple spirals with a globule at their centre and an inner zone of ovoid leaves. Two oblique ovoid leaves decorate the tips. This sheet was made using the same technique as the gold discs from the same burial.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Popham – Kalligas – Sackett 1993, 19-21, pl. 13, 15, 18a. Lemos 2002, 167. Καλτσάς *et al.* 2010, 98-99, n. 22 (O. Ogden).

M.K.



3. *Necklace with pendant*

1760-1700 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial. Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n. ME 20161.

Gold, faience, and rock crystal.

Well-preserved, centre of pendant missing.

H. of gold beads: approx. 0.4cm, H. of faience beads: 1.4-1.5cm, H. of rock crystal beads: 1.4cm, D. of pendant: 2.8cm.

Necklace consisting of forty-one gold beads, two faience beads, one rock crystal bead, and a circular gold pendant. The pendant bears granulated decoration. Despite the damage of the pendant's centre, it is possible to reconstitute the decorative motif using parallels from Syria. The central motif is a six-spoked star, each spoke consisting of three granulated lines and alternating with semi-circular bosses of granulation. The gold beads have a squat spherical shape and longitudinal incisions. The two faience beads have different shapes: ovoid and biconical. The rock crystal bead is spherical.

The pendant's decoration recalls gold jewellery from Ebla (Tell Mardikh) in Syria and points to a 1760-1700 BC date. It also resembles examples from Dilbat

and Larsa in Mesopotamia. The time lapse between the necklace's manufacture and its use in the burial, as well as the presence of another 'heirloom' in the same burial pit (the bronze krater containing the man's cremated remains) suggest that the object was acquired much earlier and accompanied the deceased woman to her grave as an object of prestige.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Maxwell – Hyslop 1971, 89, fig. 61, 64a-b. Popham – Touloupa – Sackett 1982, 169-174, pl. 23b. Weiss 1985, 238, n. 109. Lemos 2002, 131-132. Ogden 1998, 14-17.

M.K.



4. *Spirals*

Approximately 950 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial. Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n. ME 20237a, b.

Gold. ME 20237b poorly preserved.

H. 3.5 (ME 20237a) and 2cm (ME 20237b).

Pair of spirals made of gold sheet. The sheet was folded over a core, which is not preserved. The slightly thicker ends are decorated with three incised lines. Because these objects are never found in

burials that also contain earrings, they may have served as earrings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Unpublished. See bibliography in Lemos 2002, 127-128.

M.K.



5. Ring

Approximately 950 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial.

Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n. ME 20239.

Gold.

Chipped, mended.

D. 2cm, W. 0.8cm.

Ring made of a single gold sheet. Surface concave, hollow on the inside. This ring belongs to Type 1 of the Geometric rings of Lefkandi, according to Lemos' typology. This type is the most common. The large number of rings found of Lefkandi suggests that these were produced in a local workshop, the activity of which began as early as the mid-tenth century BC.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Popham – Lemos 1996, pl. 56.5-6. Lemos 2002, 128.

M.K.



6. Pins

Approximately 950 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial.

Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n. ME 20238a, b.

Iron and gold.

Tip of shaft missing on both pins, gold sheet torn and mended.

L. of shaft: 11 (ME 20238a) and 8.6cm (ME 20238b).

Pair of gold-plated iron pins with flat, circular head and globe, approximately two centimetres from the head. The uniformly thick shaft ends in a rivet for attaching the head. Gold sheet covers the head, globe, and part of the shaft. Incised decoration consisting of zigzags and dots covers the gold sheet on the globe. The absence of similar objects outside of Lefkandi suggests that these were produced in a local workshop.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Popham – Touloupa – Sackett 1982, 169-174, fig. 6. Popham – Kalligas – Sackett 1993, pl. 18c. Lemos 2002, 128-129, fig. 6,3.

M.K.



7. Pins

Approximately 950 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial.

Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n. ME 20243 and ME 20244a, b.

Bronze.

Partially preserved, partially mended, highly corroded.

L. 7.2 (ME 20243), 3.1 (ME 20244a), and 3.9cm (ME 20244b).

Bronze pins with a circular head and circular-sectioned shaft. A globe decorates the upper part of the shaft. These are two of the five bronze pins from the female burial in the Toumba building at Lefkandi. They belong to Type 2.1 according to Lemos' typology.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Pins mentioned in Lemos 2002, 104-106. Kilian-Dirlmeier (forthcoming).

M.K.



8. Pin

Approximately 950 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial.

Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n. ME 20240.

Bronze.

Preserved in two pieces, highly corroded.

L. 17.5cm.

The shaft has a circular section and pointed tip. The head consists of a globe and disc; a little lower is another globe between two discs. A further disc decorates the section of the shaft between the two globes. This type of pin corresponds to Kilian-Dirlmeier's Types B1 and B2 and to Lemos' Type 2.1 (according to the typology established by Lemos for the Lefkandi finds). They belong to the group of pins with a discoid head and a globe on the upper part of the shaft.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Pin mentioned in Lemos 2002, 106. For Type B1-B2 pins see Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984, 70-71. Kilian-Dirlmeier (forthcoming).

M.K.



9. Bone pinheads

Approximately 950 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial.
Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n.
ME 20241a, b.

Bone

Complete but cracked because of the iron
shafts' corrosion.

L. 3 (ME 20241a) and 2.9cm (ME
20241b).

Two bone pinheads, their shape
resembling skittles. Directly below the
head were three discoid faience beads.
Both these and the iron shafts were too
poorly preserved for display. Similar iron

pins with ivory heads, contemporary or
slightly later, were found in Grave 49 from
Toumba at Lefkandi.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Popham – Kalligas –
Sackett, 20. Popham – Lemos 1996, pl. 158d,
159d. Lemos 2002, 107. For parallels see
Popham – Lemos 1996, pl. 158d, 159d. Also,
Kilian-Dirlmeier (forthcoming).

M.K.



10. Iron dagger

Approximately 950 BC

Lefkandi, Toumba Building, female burial.
Archaeological Museum of Eretria, inv. n.
ME 20242.

Iron, bronze, and ivory.

Poorly preserved in four fragments. Iron,
highly corroded, causing the ivory to
crack.

A: L. 2.4cm. B: L. 19.8cm, W. 2.9cm.

C: L. 4.8cm, W. 3.2cm. D: L. 7.5cm,
W. 3.8cm

Iron dagger with long blade. Four
small bronze rivets secure the ivory
handle. According to the suggested
reconstruction, the handle had a biconical,
pointed tip. The blade has an ovoid
section, and a straight back and cutting

edge. This dagger is unparalleled so far.
Most daggers of this period are 21-31cm
long and are considered purely decorative.
BIBLIOGRAPHY: Popham 1994, 15, fig.
2.3a. Lemos 2002, 120. Dickinson 2006, 148.

M.K.