

WORKING TOOLS, TOILET IMPLEMENTS, AND PERSONAL ADORNMENTS IN WEAPON BURIALS AT EARLY IRON AGE ATHENS AND LEFKANDI

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Summary

In this article, an attempt is made to enrich the conventional archaeological picture of the much-discussed Early Iron Age (EIA) weapon burials at Athens and Lefkandi, largely reverting to a comparative approach. The presence in some of these burials of working tools that can be connected with carpentry, raises the question of the relationship of the Greek evidence with that of the European koine of the period, where the hybridization of the system of symbols referring to war and to carpentry spread in the cemeteries according to differentiated geographic models, and culminated in the course of the 8th century BC, in parallel with the emerging of a new social order determined by the urban phenomenon. On the other hand, the occurrences of toilet implements, and personal adornments of various kinds point to the weapon bearers beautifying themselves, following an earlier Bronze Age tradition. In the mortuary contexts examined here, there is some evidence for sub-adult individuals receiving the honour of the weapon ritual: an uncommon legged vessel from Lefkandi as well as a unique bronze pin ending with a booted foot from Athens are discussed, to uncover the significance of this symbolism in connection with the male sphere and with adolescence. The analysis of the evidence, and the valorisation of objects rather neglected until now, led to the tracing of multiple male identities, and shows the complexity of the social background behind what was once called 'warrior graves'.

TOWARDS A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Gift Exchange between Athens and Lefkandi from MPG onwards

Thanks to the investigations conducted by the British School at Athens from the 1960s onwards, the Euboean site of Lefkandi has become a cornerstone for the study of Aegean prehistory in the period ranging between the 11th and the 8th centuries BC. Knowledge of the site turns out to be fundamental for the re-examination of the Athenian cemeteries of this period, particularly those of the Kerameikos and Agora, but also of the numerous burial grounds brought to light by rescue excavations carried out by the Athenian Ephorate of Antiquities, a mass of evidence known from preliminary reports (cf. Lemos 2006). The publication of the excavations in the ancient settlement of Lefkandi, along with that of its cemeteries, highlighted the close relationship that the site – whose ancient name is unknown (Lefkandi I, 423-427) – had with Athens. Irene Lemos has come to hypothesize "that part of the population which resettled Lefkandi in the SM period may have actually come from Attica..." (Lemos 1998, 48). A relevant number of Athenian imported vases dating from LPG onwards was found in the graves, in association with local pottery and an important series of orientalia (Kourou 2008; cf. Marini 2009). It is worth noting that some high-quality Athenian products of even earlier date come from the monumental PG building at Toumba. I refer to the MPG belly-handled amphora 898 (Lefkandi II.1, 88 [135]; pls. 44 and 80) which is "by far the largest of all known Attic belly amphoras (83 cm high, 63 cm broad)" (for the stratigraphy, see Antonaccio 2002, 21). A systematic survey of the Attic imports in the Toumba cemetery is offered by Marini (Marini 2009, 78-81, pl. 1), but the great amount of Athenian imports at Lefkandi calls for an explanation. Considering that pottery production at the site is stylistically independent from that of Athens, the phenomenon cannot be interpreted as a dependency on function of imitation. Mervin Popham (*et al.* 1982a, 170) stressed the close relationship between the Athenians and the 'royal clan' of Toumba, while Hector Catling recognised the basis of a lasting network of relationships, attested by the archaeological evidence, in the gift exchange and in the prestige sphere. The case of the large amphora mentioned above appears emblematic (Lefkandi II.1, 86). Nicholas Coldstream in turn proposed that Athenian immigrants should be identified as the occupants of some of the burials of Lefkandi, on the basis