

## ACHAEA'S ROLE IN THE MYCENAEAN WORLD

Achaea, in spite of its impressive archaeological material, was until 1960 one of the most neglected areas of Greece. What we knew about it were the preliminary excavation-reports of the local Ephors (Kyparisses, Zapheiropoulos, Yialouris and Mastrokostas).

It was Prof. E. Vermeule, who first published a valuable general article on the Mycenaeans in Achaea in *AJA* 64, 1960, 1ff. Since then further details of the situation in the district during the Mycenaean times have been published by Ålin, Åström, Hope-Simpson and Desborough<sup>1</sup>. But on the whole, Achaea was treated summarily by all these researchers, since there was insufficient evidence available to them.

Fortunately, it was possible for me to study and publish all the Mycenaean material in my doctoral thesis *Mycenaean Achaea* (*SIMA* 1979). My knowledge of the district has been greatly enriched also by my recent systematic excavations of three Mycenaean cemeteries: Aigion (1970), Kallithea (1976–88) and Klauss (1988).

I shall divide my paper into three sections. First, I shall deal with the main aspects and features of the Achaean culture in the Late Bronze Age. I could indeed devote the whole of my paper to this but I must content myself with a fairly brief review. In the second section the main questions and problems concerning the situation in Achaea during Mycenaean times will be discussed with an effort to give an answer to them. The third, concluding section will be devoted to a brief presentation of the most recent finds and to an attempt of reconstruction of the course of events in the district, based mainly on the archaeological evidence, with the aim to assess its role in the Mycenaean world.

Before starting, a note of warning is advisable. Considering Achaea in Mycenaean times there are still many serious gaps in our knowledge, though the picture provided by my study is, I believe, clearer than ever before. It follows that my conclusions must be regarded as tentative and must remain so, until

they can be verified by further systematic research in the district.

So then, to the first section. To begin with, the number of *prehistoric sites*<sup>2</sup> so far known in Achaea is over 70, ranging in date from Neolithic up and including PG times. Most of them (64) belong to the Mycenaean period (Pl. 1a), 5 are solely pre-Mycenaean and only 2 (?) are PG. The evidence comes mostly from cemeteries and surface finds.

Unfortunately the number of known *settlements*<sup>3</sup> is still small (16 from surface finds and 4 from excavations). Nevertheless, it can be suggested on the basis of the four excavated settlements, that the Mycenaean megaron and the common dwelling house in their simple form are represented by the remains at Katarraktis-Ayios Athanasios and Drakotrypa, while the other two sites at Aigeira and Teichos Dymaion and probably a third at Mitopolis belong to the type of Mycenaean acropolis fortified with a Cyclopean wall.

Impressive is the number of *tombs*<sup>4</sup>, amounting to a total of more than 250. It is interesting to note that the commonest type is the chamber tomb (over 219) outnumbering all other four tomb-types in the district (tholoi, tumuli, intramural and pithos burials). Apart from some local features they are comparable with the simple and ordinary chamber tombs known from elsewhere in Greece and the same applies to the burial customs practised by the Mycenaean Achaeans. Close similarities both in construction and burial customs are, however, more clearly visible between the Achaean tombs and those of its adjacent areas (Elis, Messenia and Kephallenia).

The main features of the Mycenaean *pottery*<sup>5</sup> can be summarized as follows:

1. *EMF*, 63ff.; *OpAth* 5 (1965) 89ff.; *GAMS*, 82ff.; *LMTS*, 97ff.
2. See *Mycenaean Achaea* I, 23ff.; II, figs. 1-37.
3. *Op. cit.*, 43ff.
4. *Op. cit.*, 49ff.
5. *Op. cit.*, 62 and especially 127ff.

1. The material amounting to more than 1000 vases comes mostly from cemeteries and has been preserved in fine condition. These pots belonging to 34 different types are kept in the Patras and Aigion museums and their technique is of high standard showing a homogeneity with no sense of dependence on any central area or signs of inferiority when compared with other more prosperous Mycenaean districts. Enough to say that only 11 vases are hand-made.

2. *Local peculiarities* are easily discernible both in shape and decoration. Large storage jars, either two- or four-handled and duck-askoi are the most distinctive shapes, while concentric semicircles and triangles (simple, dotted or fringed) the most popular and characteristic decorative motifs. Another characteristic is the system of covering much of the body of stirrup-jars with equally placed narrow bands or with groups of bands (Pl. 1b-d).

3. The distinct difference between the pottery from western Achaea and that from the region of Aigion both in style and date; this may well indicate a different course of events in the two sectors of Achaea in Mycenaean times.

4. The marked disparity between the pottery of LH IIIB and C periods and that of the earlier Mycenaean times, which, however, is not to such an extent as most of the previous researchers have concluded.

5. A limited fusion of Argive and Aegean elements which indicates contacts with other areas of the Mycenaean world.

Besides the pottery and some terracotta figurines, there are some artefacts<sup>6</sup> belonging to six main categories: 1) objects of personal use or decoration, 2) sealstones, 3) stone and metal vases, 4) tools, 5) equipment and 6) armour and weapons.

Worthy of special mention, either because they are almost unique and, therefore, of great interest, or because their presence shows connexions with other regions, are the following: one alabaster pyxis from Klauss with relief decoration of argonauts (Pl. 1e); one silver embossed cup and one tangless bronze dagger with inlaid decoration of three dolphins in gold, silver and niello from Katarraktis (Pl. 1f) and the famous pair of bronze greaves (Pl. 2a) and fragments of a bronze corslet from Kallithea. The last two confirmed the Homeric epithets *χαλκοκνήμιδες*, *εὐκνήμιδες* και *χαλκοχίτωνες* used for the Achaean warriors. The inlaid bronze dagger is an object of great value, since it is generally agreed that such

daggers belonged to royal or at least very grand persons, so it probably indicates the existence somewhere in Achaea of a palatial dwelling, which has not yet been discovered.

On the other hand, fibulae of violin-bow type, one bronze pin, some amber beads, two iron knives, one lanceolate and three with undivided sockets spear-heads, four Naue II type swords, one bronze flat axe and one trunnion axe and one Peschiera dagger (Pl. 2b) from several Achaean sites reflect links with the Near East, Italy, Balkans, Central Europe and the Baltic (Pl. 2c). This is not surprising, since Achaea stood on the trading route for Aegean and Neareastern objects travelling to the west and, for Central European and Italian travelling to the Mycenaean and Neareastern countries via the Adriatic with stopping-points along it and the west coast of the Peloponnese.

These are the main aspects and features of the Achaean culture during the Mycenaean times. There remain, however, some questions and problems arising from the gaps in our knowledge of the district, for as was stated above, the material evidence is mostly incomplete.

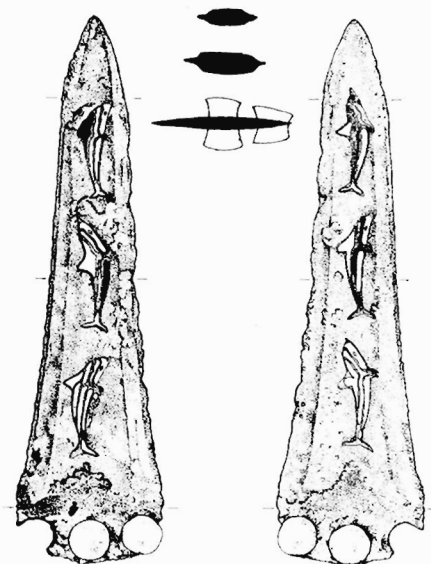
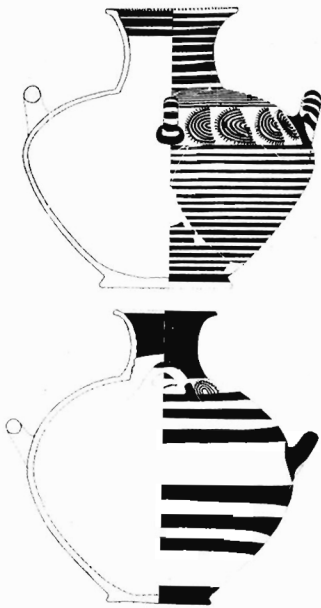
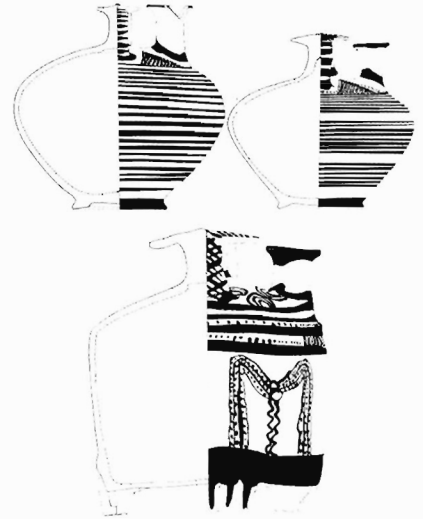
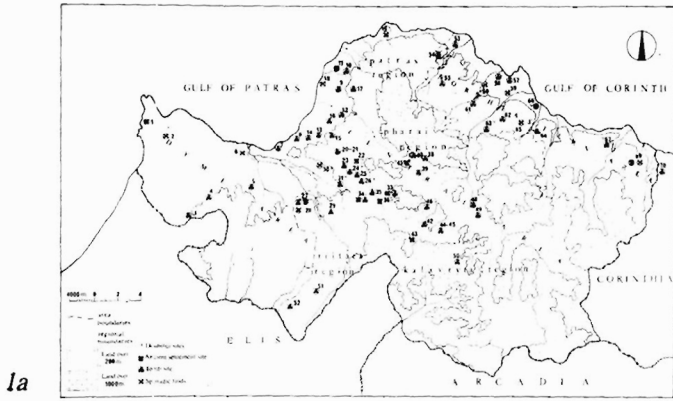
These and the tentative answers, I will now endeavour to give to them, based on my study of Achaea, are as follows:

1. As regards habitation of the district in Mycenaean times, a first problem is whether or not the view about a sparse settlement in NE Achaea and little or none in its western part during LH I-III A is still valid.

I think that the new evidence does not support this view. For, as I have shown elsewhere, the total number of known Mycenaean sites is almost equally divided between LH I-III A (=27) and LH IIIB-C-SM (=37). My answer is in accordance with the opinions of Åström, Hope Simpson and H. Waterhouse who were never convinced of a habitation of Achaea restricted to LH IIIC and tends to confirm Wace's supposition made long before a systematic study of the Achaean material had been undertaken "where so much of the Third Late Helladic period has been found, it would seem obvious that remains of earlier periods must exist. Achaea is famous for its fertility and therefore must have been well populated by man in early days" (*BCH* 1946, 631).

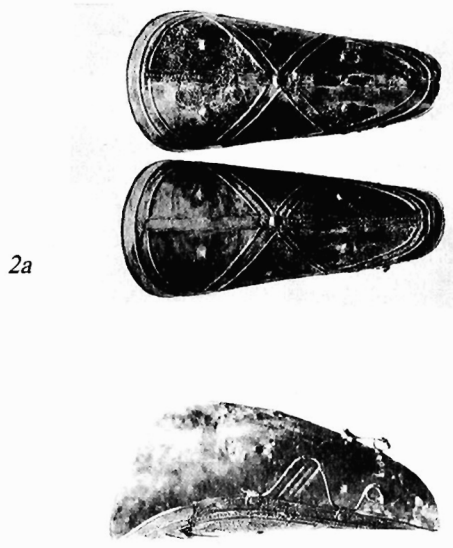
2. A second problem is the increase of the popula-

6. *Op. cit.*, 138ff.



1c

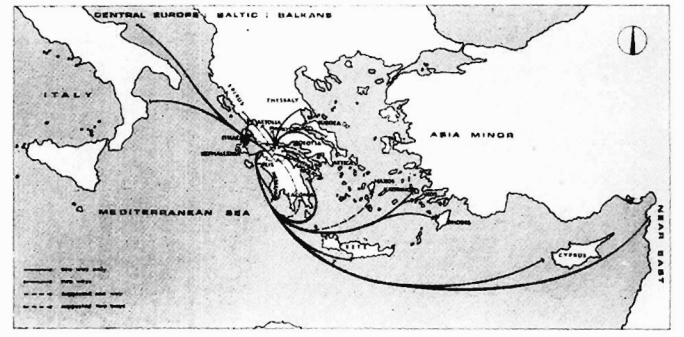
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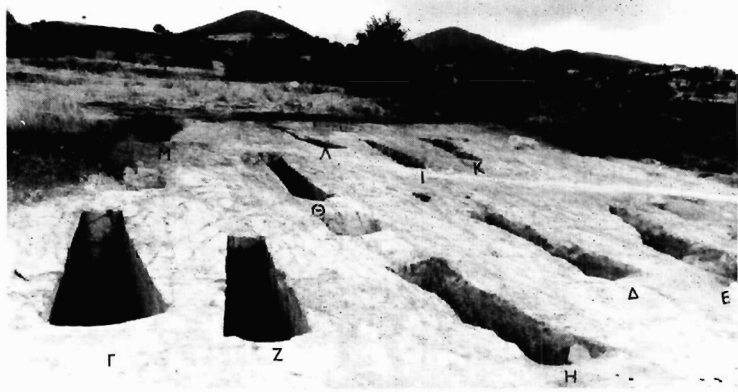
2a



2b



2c



2d



2e



2f

tion in the latter half of the LH III period. This may be explained either as the result of a sudden and overwhelming immigration of refugees from the Argolid or elsewhere following the catastrophs of the metropolitan centres at the end of the 13th cent. B.C. (E. Vermeule, Desborough, Snodgrass and Deshayes), or most probably the result of a gradual and peaceful infiltration of newcomers over a longer period of time (my suggestion, based on the distribution of habitation of the Mycenaean sites).

3. A third problem is that arising from the conclusions of the previous researchers that external relations of Achaea during the Late Bronze Age did not exist and the district was isolated.

The combined evidence of tombs, pottery and artefacts suggests, however, (a) that longlasting and strong ties existed with its adjacent areas and the Ionian islands to the west — probably forming a Western Mycenaean koine, especially during the 13–12 cent. B.C. and (b) that it is probably safe to claim that there was communication over a wider sphere, i.e. with the rest of the Aegean world, Cyprus, Italy, Central Europe and the Baltic.

4. Finally, there is the problem of survival and continuity into the PG times. Very little unfortunately can be said on it. The new evidence does not increase our knowledge of Achaea at that time. I think, however, that the possibility of continuous habitation from the last Mycenaean and SM to the Dark Ages and the PG times cannot be excluded.

As regards the *new finds* from Achaea, the recent excavations (1970–89) revealed important settlements at Aigeira (fortified), Aigion, Chalandritsa and Patras-Pagona and cemeteries at Kallithea, Monodendri, Ayiovlasitika, Krini, Klauss and Voudeni<sup>7</sup>. Many more, will, I am sure, be discovered in the near future.

A few words can be permitted for the results of my excavations at Aigion, Kallithea and Klauss, while for all other sites and cemeteries we must wait the publication of the excavators.

The *Aigion cemetery* has been already published in detail, so there is no need to discuss it again here. Enough to say that its use extended from LH IIB up to and including early LH IIIC, with great prosperity during LH IIIA and B periods and that the pottery showed links with the Aegean, especially with Rhodes<sup>8</sup>.

At *Kallithea* two cemeteries have been investigated at the localities *Rambandania* or *Spenzes*

(1976–81) and *Laganidia* (1986–88). The results may be summarized as follows.

For the first cemetery<sup>9</sup> (Pl. 2d), the architecture of the 13 excavated chamber tombs does not differ from that known from other sites elsewhere in Achaea and comes to confirm my observations first expressed in my thesis *Mycenaean Achaea*. In other words, the tombs were constructed in successive rows in the gentle slope of the hill. They have short and strongly sloping dromoi with low doorways and rectangular chambers with eagle-shaped roofs. Three tombs (H, I, O) had one pit each cut into the floor of the chamber, another (Γ) a low dividing wall, but no tomb markers were found. With the exception of two tombs (Ξ, Ζ) which had no burials, all the rest were used more than once, the number of burials ranging from 5 to 22. About 110 persons in total were buried, of which 36 were recognized as primary burials, while secondary burials were swept aside in heaps in the corners or alongside of the sides of the chamber. Inhumation was the general practice, the only important exception being one cremation in tomb O.

The pottery predominates among the finds, comprising 222 whole vases and a large number of sherds belonging to 17 basic shapes. By far the commonest shape is the stirrup-jar, while other characteristic Achaeian shapes, such as large two- and four-handled storage jars, 1 bird-askos and some new and peculiar shapes (1 tripod cup (Pl. 2e) and 1 cylindrical pyxis) are present. Most of the decorative motifs are typical Achaeian, especially the covering much of the body of stirrup-jars with successive bands, concentric arcs, plain, dotted or fringed and triangles.

Apart from the pottery many small finds were found, among which the most interesting are 1 gold ring, two others of bronze with spiral ends, 1 lanceolate spearhead, 1 large bronze fibula and some sealstones. The cemetery is tentatively dated LH III A–SM.

7. With the exception of the final publication of the Aigion cemetery (A. J. Papadopoulos, *Excavations at Aigion — 1970*, *SIMA* 46, Göteborg 1976), no other publication is available for the other sites.

8. See *Aigion*, *op. cit.* and Th. J. Papadopoulos – R. E. Jones, Rhodiaka in Achaea, *OpAth* XIII: 15 (1980) 225ff.; Th. J. Papadopoulos, *The Dodecanese and the Western Peloponnese in the Late Bronze Age: Some thoughts on the problem of their relations*, *Archaeology in the Dodecanese* (ed. S. Dietz – I. Papachristodoulou, Copenhagen 1988) 73.

9. See *Prakt* 1976–81 for preliminary reports.

Excavation is still in progress at the locality Lagania, where a second cemetery was accidentally discovered in 1986. During the first season (1987) scanty traces of some stone walls and a Mycenaean tholos tomb<sup>10</sup>, similar to those known from Kataraktis were discovered. The tomb, which was found ruined and plundered from the Mycenaean times, contained 40 burials of adults in successive layers.

But the most important and unexpected find was the remains of a horse sacrifice in the lowest level of the tholos, which is a very rare burial habit in the Aegean. On the pottery evidence, the duration of the tomb use covers all the Mycenaean period and possibly extends up to PG times.

Last year (1988) four chamber tombs (I–IV) were found round the tholos tomb<sup>11</sup> (Pl. 2f). They are similar to those found at Rambandania and were used from LH II to the end of the Mycenaean times. The finds include more than 30 vases and a considerable number of bronzes, jewellery and small objects.

One might suppose that the tholos tomb at Lagania, built in a conspicuous site overlooking the plain and gulf of Patras, was used for the burial of the local leader and his family and later was used as an ossuary. Whether or not the arrangement of the four chamber tombs round it indicates dependence or respect to that family by those buried in the chamber tombs, I cannot say.

Finally, after many years, excavation was resumed at the Mycenaean cemetery of Klaus last year. A small, but rich LH IIIB–C chamber tomb was found and I hope for more finds this year.

Together with the recent finds from the other Achaean sites, the finds from Kallithea and Klaus should open the way to a new and clearer appraisal of the Mycenaean Achaia.

Having thus presented the main characteristics, some of the main problems and the recent finds from Kallithea and Klaus, I now come to a reconstruction of events in the district and assess its role in the Mycenaean world.

To start with, the present evidence suggests that during the early Mycenaean times (LH I–IIIA) peaceful conditions seem to have prevailed in the district and communications had been maintained with other areas of the Aegean. In the succeeding LH IIIB and especially during the transitional period of LH IIIB–C the situation changes, and there is some disturbance in the district, which seems to be the result of the gradual arrival of refugees, which, however,

did not disrupt much conditions in Achaia. During the whole LH IIIC, life goes on tranquilly enough, to judge from the position of the settlements; so at least there was no cause for fear. The inhabitants of Achaia, living far from the route of invasion and protected by the eastern mountains of Erymanthos and Chelmos, continued their way of life in security and relative prosperity; closely united with their neighbours to the South and the Ionian islands they probably constituted a small “Mycenaean koine”. It is very probable that the local Mycenaean ruler had his administrative centre at the fortified acropolis of Teichos Dymaion and was responsible for the security and prosperity of his subjects and the persistence of the homogeneity of the Achaean culture.

I have already spoken of a different style and probable course of events between Western Achaia and the Aigion area. It appears that the latter although an integral unit of Achaia, remained throughout the Mycenaean period an Argolid-dominated province. It is reasonable to suppose that its ruler lived in the acropolis of Aigeira and the Mycenaean civilization persisted there as long as it did in the Argolid. This is supported by the literary evidence, from which it becomes clear that this part of Achaia belonged to the kingdom of Agamemnon (Iliad 2.573–5; 8.203).

There is no clue as to the cause of the final destruction of the major centres of Achaia, especially the acropolises of Teichos Dymaion and Aigeira at the very end of the Late Bronze Age. In spite of it, Mycenaean elements persisted more strongly here than elsewhere in Greece, and it would not be incorrect to say that Achaia was one of the last strongholds of Mycenaean culture and civilization.

Such then, is the picture of the district based on the archaeological evidence at present available. It is perhaps unnecessary to stress that Achaia's role in the Mycenaean world was an important one.

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10. See *Ergon* 1987, 89–91, fig. 103.

11. See *Ergon* 1988, 24–26, figs. 25–26.

## SUMMARY

### ACHAEA'S ROLE IN THE MYCENAEAN WORLD

The purpose of this paper is to show Achaea's role in the Mycenaean World. The combined evidence of settlements, tombs, pottery and artefacts strongly suggests that the district played an important role, as the Mycenaean Achaeans were, contrary to previous opinions, not only farmers, shepherds and good potters, but fishermen, bronze-workers and ad-

venturous traders as well. Although retaining their local traditions and customs, a remarkable variety of influences from other areas is also to be observed. Thus, it would not be incorrect to say that Achaea was one of the last strongholds of Mycenaean culture and civilization.