

Gaps in the record: The missing LH I-II and IIIB phases on Euboea

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Περίληψη

Αυτό το άρθρο εξετάζει δύο περιόδους της Ύστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού, για τις οποίες τα στοιχεία από την Εύβοια είναι περιορισμένα: τις πρώιμες φάσεις της Μυκηναϊκής περιόδου (Ύστερη Ελλαδική [ΥΕ] I-II) και την ΥΕ IIIB περίοδο, σύγχρονη με την άνθιση των μυκηναϊκών ανακτόρων στις Μυκήνες, την Πύλο και, πιο κοντά στην Εύβοια, την Θήβα.¹

Χρησιμοποιώ το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο της αρνητικής αρχαιολογίας (*negative archaeology*) καθώς και πτυχές της θεωρίας των δικτύων για να αξιολογήσω αυτά τα κενά και να προτείνω μία εξήγηση σχετικά με την έλλειψη υλικού από αυτές τις περιόδους. Υποστηρίζω ότι το κενό κατά την ΥΕ I-II περίοδο δεν αντανakλά την έλλειψη θέσεων κατοίκησης κατά τον 16^ο-15^ο αιώνα π.Χ., αλλά απλώς την έλλειψη αναγνωρίσιμου Πρώιμου Μυκηναϊκού υλικού. Αυτή η έλλειψη μπορεί να εξηγηθεί εάν υποθέσουμε ότι τα δίκτυα ήταν περιοριστικά. Το κενό κατά την ΥΕ IIIB περίοδο, από την άλλη μεριά, φαίνεται να αντανakλά προσωρινή μείωση ή έλλειψη θέσεων κατοίκησης. Υποστηρίζω ότι το κενό αυτό είναι απόρροια της περιθωριοποίησης της Εύβοιας από τα Μυκηναϊκά ανάκτορα της Θήβας και του Ορχομενού κατά την ΥΕ IIIB περίοδο, η οποία προέκυψε από την προσπάθεια των ανακτόρων να μονοπωλήσουν τις εμπορικές οδούς. Αυτό συμπεριελάμβανε την επανευθυγράμμιση των υπαρχόντων δικτύων που έπληξαν τις παράκτιες θέσεις στην Εύβοια. Το γεγονός ότι οι ελίτ στην Εύβοια αποκατέστησαν το παράκτιο δίκτυο μετά την κατάρρευση των ανακτόρων υποδεικνύεται από ένα εικονογραφικό 'ύφος, το οποίο είναι κοινό και στις δύο πλευρές του κόλπου. Η έμφαση στην απεικόνιση πλοίων υποδεικνύει περαιτέρω ότι τα πλοία ήταν ταυτόχρονα μία ενοποιητική δύναμη για τις ελίτ της Εύβοιας μετά την κατάρρευση των ανακτόρων και μέσο ανάκαμψης.

Introduction

Site-distribution maps of Euboea exhibit a pattern that is shared with other regions on the Greek mainland. For the Middle Helladic (MH) period, no fewer than 37 sites (and one possible site), concentrated in but certainly not limited to the central part of Euboea, suggest dense, widespread settlement. For the Late Helladic (LH) I-IIA period (16th-15th century BC), the numbers drop to six certain and

1. I thank Žarko Tankosić for inviting me to speak at the conference, and the organizing committee for their hospitality and a great conference. Ideas expressed in this paper have benefited from correspondence and conversations with Alex Knodell. I am grateful to Jerry Rutter for reading and commenting upon a draft of this paper and to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out some gaps in my argument. Any errors of fact or interpretation are my responsibility. My research was funded by the Edward A. Schrader Archaeological Endowment Fund of the Program in Classical Archaeology at Indiana University. At the conference I limited my talk to the LH IIIB period. I welcome the opportunity to expand to the LH I-II 'gap' in my printed contribution.

three possible sites, all of which continue from the MH (Fig. 1). Only LH III once again exhibits a healthy settlement distribution, with 28 certain and three possible sites.² Thus, the density of MH sites along the Euboean Gulf is between three and six times higher than that of LH I-IIA sites, and only in LH III do we find a number of sites comparable to that in the Middle Bronze Age (MBA). Even accounting for the shorter duration (about two centuries, rather than four) of LH I-II compared to MH, there are far fewer sites in LH I-II than one might expect. These maps suggest that Euboea was virtually deserted in the Early Mycenaean period.

Another oddity occurs in the 13th century BC. As early as 1966, Sackett and colleagues noted ‘a rather unexpected scarcity of normal IIIB among the sherds collected’;³ this scarcity was in fact so pronounced that they suggested that perhaps some bowls with monochrome interior ought to be dated to LH IIIB, rather than LH IIIC, necessitating the suggestion that this typical IIIC feature started early in Euboea.⁴ Now, almost half a century later, the picture of an LH IIIB hiatus, or at least decline, endures.⁵

I argue in this contribution that, although the reasons for these two absences are very different, both might be explained using aspects of network theory.

The LH I-II gap

We are of course all familiar with the cautious dictum that the ‘absence of evidence does not constitute evidence of absence’.⁶ This ‘denial’ of the value of absence of evidence allowed Sackett and his colleagues to assume continuity of habitation between the MH and LH III periods at most sites, even if there were no sherds to prove this.⁷ I think their assumption is correct, but at the same time, we cannot so easily dismiss the absence of LH I-II sherds.

It is unlikely that a real lack of settlements underlies the scarcity of finds. If that were the case, we should either assume a general regional decline, or a regional change to more nucleated settlement patterns. Although the latter is conceivable to some extent, the sheer scale of the process, in which about three out of four settlements would have transferred their entire population to a single existing settlement, makes this scenario highly unlikely, especially since many of these same sites once again exhibit evidence for habitation in LH IIIA.⁸ A general decline is unlikely as well: if instead of focusing on the number of sites we focus on the nature of finds, we find no evidence for LH I-II decline or contraction. In contrast, whereas there are few if any indications of an elite class among the abundant MH sites, this changes in the LH I-II period. This results in an odd discrepancy between number of sites and evidence for elite culture in the MH and LH I-II period (Fig. 2).

Evidence for emerging elites at the dawn of the Mycenaean era is found at Lefkandi and Chalkis. Remains of a built chamber tomb at Lefkandi suggest precocious development of this region in the

2. Data from Phialon 2011, maps 2, 5 and 7. Including LH IIB, there are nine certain and four possible sites: Phialon 2011, map 4.

3. Sackett et al. 1966, 104.

4. Sackett et al. 1966, 105.

5. See e.g. Evely 2006, 111.

6. Especially for Euboea, with its poor publication record for many sites, this is a valid concern. Standard works for students of Mycenaean Euboea are still the 1966 survey report by Sackett et al., Hankey’s 1952 publication of the material from tombs at Chalkis, and preliminary reports and turn-of-the-century excavation monographs such as Papavasileios 1910. Only Lefkandi has been excavated and published fully according to modern standards (see Evely 2006 for the Mycenaean periods). In addition, Mountjoy’s magisterial *Regional Mycenaean Decorated Pottery* from 1999 forms a welcome synthesis in 34 pages, a whopping 15 of which deal with LH IIIC-Sub-Mycenaean material.

7. Sackett et al. 1966, 99-102.

8. Using the settlement numbers mentioned in the Introduction: at least 37 MH and at most 9 LH I-IIA settlements.

Early Mycenaean period.⁹ Built chamber tombs are characteristic of early Mycenaean civilization in southern Greece, where they often predate tholos tombs and rock-cut chamber tombs.¹⁰ In central Greece, the earliest examples, dating to the MH-LH I transition, are located at Lefkandi and Dramezi, both located on the south Euboean Gulf coast, opposite each other, close to the narrowest point of the strait, suggesting that the new fashion of burial in built chamber tombs spread via the maritime route of the Euboean Gulf. The tomb at Lefkandi is similar to the Mycenaean Tomb IV at Vrana in Attica, and Tomb Rho in Grave Circle B at Mycenae.¹¹

Another indication of precocious development on Euboea is the cemetery at Chalkis-Trypa. The earliest rock-cut chamber tombs at Chalkis-Trypa date to the end of LH I or LH IIA and are thus contemporary with or only slightly later than the earliest known chamber tomb at Thebes.¹² Chamber tombs are typical Mycenaean tomb forms, and the tombs at Chalkis continue into LH III. They are rich: Hankey catalogues beads and other ornaments of gold, amber, agate, amethyst, lead and rock-crystal, as well as bronze tools and weapons.¹³ Although most of the richer finds may belong to LH III (many tombs were looted in antiquity, and they were published almost half a century after excavation, making it impossible in most cases to assign grave goods to specific burials), even the earliest burials contain for example a bronze arrowhead (Tomb I) or an ovoid rhyton (Tomb V).¹⁴ The latter has cultic connotations; as for the former, the deposition of a bronze object—no matter how small—suggests ample access to this material (or one would expect it to be recycled). Therefore, both are suggestive of an early elite presence. In this respect, the tombs are similar to contemporary tombs in Thebes or in the Argolid, which also contain weapons, rhyta and other elite vessels, though on a much grander scale, and it seems reasonable to assume that Chalkis was one of several strong and flourishing centres in Early Mycenaean central Euboea.

Thus, there is evidence for emerging elites, partaking in typical Mycenaean burial forms and in conspicuous consumption, like their peers in the Argolid and Boeotia. This elite competition and investment in prominent tombs seems unlikely at a time of severe decline. Instead of a society in crisis, it seems to be a flourishing society in which leaders emerge within sites, and some sites gain prominence and thus archaeological visibility. Thus, explanations taking the lack of LH I-II material at face value are unsatisfactory.

More convincing explanations for the scarcity of LH I-II material are rooted in survey mechanics and the limitations of the method. Almost all sites with an apparent habitation gap in LH I-II are sites known only from survey, suggesting that the method of investigation is at least partially to blame.¹⁵ Rutter has pointed out that certain periods—LH I and II among them—tend to be consistently underrepresented in survey material, whether because these sherds do not survive as well as sherds from other periods, or are not so easily recognizable, or because these periods are very short and therefore produced little material to begin with.¹⁶ Bintliff and his colleagues went as far as to suggest, based on their survey data from Boeotia, that entire periods remain ‘hidden’ from us and coined the ‘hidden landscape’ phrase.¹⁷ Their explanation for this was twofold: first, they demonstrated that certain peri-

9. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1995. She dates the construction of the tomb to the MH period based on the Grey, Yellow and Red Minyan pottery. However, the rounded profiles of some of the Grey Minyan sherds seem more similar to LH I than to MH profiles (Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1995, 51, fig. 6, nos. 6-10).

10. Papadimitriou 2001, 166.

11. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1995, 46-47.

12. Ay. Anna T. 2, dated to LH I, very similar in dimensions to Mycenae T. 518: Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 60 and 67; Dickinson 1977, 63-64.

13. Hankey 1952.

14. Hankey 1952, 94 (arrowhead); 61-62, no. 401 (rhyton).

15. A case in point is Aidespos-Koumbi. The survey by Sackett and his colleagues did not find any LH I-II material for this site, whereas recent excavations have recovered LH I and II strata (Whitley 2002-2003, 48).

16. Rutter 1983.

17. Bintliff and Snodgrass 1999.

ods tend to produce sherds that disintegrate easily or, even if they do not disintegrate, are barely recognizable as sherds; secondly, they pointed out that settlement patterns varied in different periods so that periods in which settlement was nucleated tend to be more easily recognizable, producing a clear 'on' or 'off' pattern, whereas periods in which settlement was dispersed are less recognizable in the survey record, producing varying shades of grey on the survey map.

The combination of Rutter's and Bintliff's factors goes a long way toward explaining the ubiquity of MH sites on the maps: MH Grey Minyan ware is hard fired and virtually indestructible; it is also immediately recognizable, and represents the preferred fine ware for about four centuries. In the Early Mycenaean period, on the other hand, most vessels continued to be made in the MH traditions: in excavated assemblages from central Greece, quantities of Grey Minyan, matt-painted and polychrome matt-painted, as well as burnished, pale, unpainted pottery greatly outnumber lustrous painted pottery.¹⁸ In surveys, it is the lustrous pottery that is most easily recognizable as certainly LH I-IIA (as opposed to possibly MH), even in the case of small, featureless sherds; small body sherds, such as one is apt to encounter in surface surveys, of vessels that are rooted in MH traditions, can easily be misattributed to the MH period. In addition, the LH I-II periods together last about half as long as the MH period.

The problem of difficult-to-attribute sherds has been taken up more recently by Schon. Analysing the numbers of ceramics collected in the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey, Schon concludes that if only those sherds that are securely datable are taken into account, LH I-IIA shows a pronounced 'dip' in numbers, consistent with the observed scarcity of this period elsewhere. However, if sherds that *may* date to this period are included, there is, in contrast, a great increase from MH figures, almost equal to the LH III peak:¹⁹ although *certain* evidence for LH I-IIA suggests scarce settlement, the *possible* evidence suggests instead dense settlement. When Schon corrects for, respectively, duration of each period and relative proportions of securely dated finds, the LH I-IIA numbers are not as impressive as when he uses the uncorrected method, but still surpass those for the MH.²⁰

A real scarcity of sherds thus underlies the virtual absence of sites from the Early Mycenaean period; however, this is not a case of a scarcity of sherds belonging to the time period, but rather a scarcity of sherds of a certain ware that are immediately recognizable as belonging to that time period. If the picture is extended to include a proportion of all those unpainted sherds that *might* be LH I-IIA, the number of LH I-IIA sites is more in accordance with our expectations. This suggests that in the LH I-II period there is a divergence of sites, during which some sites gain prominence and are represented by characteristic Early Mycenaean assemblages, whereas the vast majority of sites retain an essentially MH character and are therefore 'missed' in surface surveys. An example from Euboea is Aidepsos-Koumbi, where an LH I phase was recognized by 'at least one pot that resembles matt painted ware'.²¹ Had but a fragment of this vessel been found in a surface survey, it might easily have been attributed to the MH phase. This site, therefore, on the basis of present evidence (which is, admittedly, preliminary), was inhabited in LH I without producing or importing that marker of Early Mycenaean culture, lustrous ware. In addition, Hankey notes that some pots from the tombs at Chalkis-Trypa 'look and feel like Minyan', and that the fabric of many LH I-II vessels is 'in the Minyan technique': even at sites where lustrous ware is attested, much of the pottery retains its MH character.²² Another example is Attica, where, with the exception of coastal Thorikos, most sites retained a strong MH character well into the LH period.²³ Contrary to what our maps suggest, we should thus not imagine an empty countryside

18. Mountjoy 1993, 33.

19. Schon 2011, 235-236, figs. 2 and 3.

20. Schon 2011, 238, figs. 6 and 7.

21. Whitley 2002-2003, 48.

22. Hankey 1952, 54; see also Mountjoy 1993, 33.

23. The same was argued by Pavúk 2012.

in the Early Mycenaean period, but a densely populated one, where most sites, however, continued to look as they had for centuries.

Why and how did this happen? The competition between emerging Early Mycenaean elites grew organically out of the MH societies when the mainlanders increased contact with Crete. This contact privileged coastal sites: Thorikos, Lefkandi, Dramesi, Chalkis and Mitrou are all coastal sites near the Euboean Gulf where Early Mycenaean elites emerged;²⁴ a maritime network connected these sites to Crete and the southern mainland.

The Cretan ties of Chalkis in LH I-II are visible in the pottery from these tombs. Cretan shapes are represented by a bridge-spouted jug and by an LH IIA squat jug; the latter is equally rare in Boeotia and Euboea, but common in the Peloponnese.²⁵ An LH IIA stirrup jar in palatial style is of a fabric which suggests it may have been imported from Laconia or Kythera; an LH IIA deep cup is decorated with scale pattern and a monochrome interior, in Minoan fashion, suggesting Minoan influence.²⁶ An alabastron seems to be an imitation of an alabaster vase.²⁷ This suggests, as does the earlier built tomb at Lefkandi, that LH I-IIA Chalkis was part of a network with ties to the south, and given the lack of strong parallels with contemporary pottery from Thebes, it seems reasonable to assume that the network's links used the maritime route of the Euboean Gulf.

In the same way as the aforementioned Cretan influences, the lustrous ware—essentially a Minoan-Mycenaean hybrid—too, is limited to a number of important centres. On Euboea, the earliest lustrous ware is dated to LH I-II at Lefkandi, the site of the early built tomb.²⁸ LH IIA lustrous ware is known from Amarynthos, Chalkis, Manika and Aidepsos-Koumbi, where sherds decorated with figure-of-eight shields were recovered.²⁹

I suggest that a possible reason for the sparse distribution of lustrous ware is that it, and the technological know-how of how to create it (since, from the beginning, much of it was locally made), travelled only between peer-polities of emerging elites.³⁰ The peer-polity interaction between the emerging elites created a small world, in which geographically remote sites were in contact with each other directly or via very few intermediaries that functioned as hubs in the network (Fig. 3b). These long-distance contacts ('weak ties' in network jargon) allowed the introduction of new forms of material culture to spread quickly over large distances.³¹ These elite indicators did not spread to neighbouring sites because the elite network was closed and actively exclusionary. The emerging elites had a vested interest in circulating prestige goods, including Minoanizing pottery, only among themselves during this early stage of status creation.³²

Since most sites were completely unaffected by the (elite) exchanges taking place between the

24. Thorikos: Laffineur 2010. Dramesi: Blegen 1949. Mitrou: Van de Moortel and Zahou 2005. Of course not all Early Mycenaean sites were coastal; however, the number of Early Mycenaean sites on the Euboean Gulf coast of Euboea is disproportionate compared to the MH (see Fig. 1).

25. For the bridge-spouted jug, see Hankey 1952, 55, no. 539; for the squat jug, see Hankey 1952, no. 539, pl. 24.

26. For the stirrup jar, see Mountjoy 1999, 695 and 698. For the deep cup, see Hankey 1952, no. 544, pl. 20.

27. Hankey 1952, 54, no. 402A.

28. Evely 2006, 91; Sackett et al. 1966, 100, fig. 25, nos. 2, 5, 6 and 7.

29. Amarynthos: Sackett et al. 1966, 100, fig. 25, no. 4. Chalkis: Hankey 1952. Manika: Sackett et al. 1966, pl. 13d (a shallow cup with hatched loop). Aidepsos-Koumbi: Whitley 2002-2003, 48.

30. I think it likely that Minoanizing lustrous pottery had strong elite connotations in the Early Mycenaean period since the shapes are mostly related to drinking (jugs; Vapheio Cups: Kramer-Hajos and O'Neill 2008, 198; Mountjoy 1993, 33-34), which is associated with elites (see e.g. Treherne 1995). Therefore I assume here that Early Mycenaean sites with lustrous ware were locations of emerging elites.

31. For the concept of 'weak ties', see Granovetter 1973. The 'strength of weak ties' is a concept that emphasizes the impact of long-distance ties that are not shared with neighbouring nodes: occasional long-distance contacts facilitate the introduction of new ideas whereas frequent interaction with neighbours rarely leads to something new.

32. Voutsaki 1995; 1997. This is also visible, for example, in the distribution of Early Mycenaean Vapheio cups, as I have argued elsewhere (Kramer-Hajos, Forthcoming). The irregular dispersion of these drinking cups suggests they (or perhaps rather, the knowledge of their form) travelled from hub to hub, bypassing most nodes (sites) in the network.

hubs, they are, as far as the material record is concerned, barely distinguishable from MH sites. These sites were far from isolated: in fact, the similarity of Grey Minyan shapes, for example, suggests that they were connected with each other in a dense mesh, influenced by their nearest neighbours, but did not form part of the elite network. These non-elite networks must have been already in place in the MH and can be visualized as Baran's 'distributed' type (Fig. 3a).³³ They are characterized by many strong ties, providing a relatively stable, consolidated common culture with similar types of pottery, burial customs and architecture in large regions and over a substantial period of time; changes travel slowly in these distributed networks. As there are no large differences between settlements in terms of status, so, too, is there an absence of status differentiation within the settlement.³⁴

This then provides not only an explanation for the virtual discrepancy between the density of MH and LH IIIA sites, on the one hand, and the scarcity of LH I-II sites on the other, but it also explains why traditional MH wares continued to be so common throughout the Early Mycenaean period. Only at a small minority of settlements would we notice the winds of change, with emerging elites engaging in displays of status by using new forms of pottery, 'exotic' goods such as seal stones, and warrior implements, representative of their far-flung contacts with the southern mainland, the Cyclades and Crete. These are the cultural forms that we recognize as Mycenaean: initially, Mycenaean culture was limited to elites,³⁵ who managed to assimilate the new culture by engaging in exchange with their peers. In other words, it was the exploitation of networks that allowed for the creation of Mycenaean culture; as Parkinson and Galaty suggested,³⁶ an increase in trade (in other words, intensification in long-distance relations, or an increase in weak ties) allowed for the emergence of Mycenaean society, rather than the other way around. The active manipulation of networks was absolutely essential in the elite Mycenaean identity-forming process, as it would be much later, in LH IIIB, for the palatial elites at Thebes.

During LH IIIA, Mycenaean cultural markers—especially pottery, but also tombs—were to be found throughout the island. This spread suggests that the early elite centres now functioned as hubs in the local networks as well. The smaller sites realigned their ties to these hubs (via preferential attachment) and characteristic traits of the Mycenaean culture now dispersed quickly throughout the hinterland (Fig. 3c). Thus, in LH IIIA a 'Mycenaean identity' encompassed not just a few elites but most or all inhabitants of most or all sites.

Euboea on the margin: The LH IIIB gap

The second gap that demands our attention occurs in LH IIIB. In this case an explanation based on survey mechanics does not hold water: LH IIIB ceramics are durable, easy to recognize and typically abundantly present since they did not suffer competition from other contemporary wares. An absence of LH IIIB material thus seems to indicate a real decline.

How meaningful is the LH IIIB decline? In order to make the case that this absence of evidence is, indeed, important and needs explanation, I turn to the theoretical framework of 'negative archaeology'. 'Negative archaeology' maintains that the absence of material is as important as the presence, if the absence is contained spatially and temporarily. This model has been successfully applied to the Late Bronze Age (LBA) Cyclades,³⁷ with which Euboea has some commonalities.

33. Baran 1964.

34. cf. Voutsaki 2010, 88-91. Networks tend to repeat themselves, in a fractal-like manner, on different scales (cf. Malkin 2011, 45).

35. See also Feuer 2011, 515.

36. Parkinson and Galaty 2007, 123.

37. Earle 2012.

Chronologically, Euboea flourished during both the Prepalatial and the Postpalatial periods: the early built chamber tomb at Lefkandi and rich LH I-III A tombs at Chalkis suggest that this region was potentially of great importance, and the flourishing of Lefkandi and Amarynthos in LH IIIC suggest that the LH IIIB period is an anomaly in the island's prehistory. Both the Prepalatial and the Postpalatial finds suggest, moreover, that the Euboean coasts functioned in a network of coastal sites following the orientation of the Euboean Gulf and owed their prominence to their location on this major maritime route.

Spatially, too, Euboea is in a special position. It lacks the sort of finds that typify high Mycenaean culture on the mainland: figural frescoes, monumental architecture, Linear B tablets, exotic imports or sealings. Some of these can again be explained by the simple fact that without palatial administration, there is no need for these. Yet, Euboean elites, so up-to-date in the Early Mycenaean period, seem to have lost all contact with the elite cultural norms and values by the LH IIIA2-B period. Earle has observed that something similar (though more pronounced) happened in the Cyclades, and he ascribes it in part to a Mycenaean marginalization of the role of the Cycladic islanders.³⁸ I will argue along similar lines here.

Returning to the tombs at Chalkis-Trypa, we may start approximating the processes that led to a marginalization of Euboea. We have seen how in LH IIA pottery exhibited strong influences from the south, suggesting that Chalkis was part of a network with ties to the southern Aegean in the Early Mycenaean period. Given the lack of strong parallels with contemporary pottery from Thebes,³⁹ it seems reasonable to assume that the network's links used the maritime route of the Euboean Gulf. LH I-II pottery from Mitrou suggests it was part of the same network;⁴⁰ given the location of Chalkis on the Euripos it is likely that Chalkis was a node with ties both to the south-east and the north-west.

As early as LH IIB we find, however, more similarities with pottery from Boeotia: most notably a tall version of the straight-sided alabastron. The foliate bands in zones correspond to a similar LH IIB alabastron from Thebes.⁴¹ This connection with Boeotia becomes more clearly visible in LH IIIA2, when giant alabastra appear in Chalkis. They are at least 20 cm high, with a maximum diameter of about 28 cm, in contrast to the usual average height of 6-9 cm.⁴² They are found elsewhere in Boeotia, Achaia and Elis; they have not been found in Attica, the eastern Peloponnese or Thessaly (Fig. 4).⁴³ Their local production attests to the spread of a fashion in pottery making rather than to the movement of actual pots. Their distribution suggests a major east-west overland network, cutting through the maritime network of the Euboean Gulf. Coinciding with this increasing mainland influence is a diminishing quantity of material from Chalkis, suggesting that the reorientation of the network was not limited to a pottery network, but rather that the observed reorientation of the pottery network is a symptom of a broader, social-political reorientation.⁴⁴ This culminates in the LH IIIB decline of Chalkis and other coastal sites along the Euboean Gulf.

At the same time that Chalkis seems to decline, Thebes experienced a meteoric rise in prominence. What seems to be happening in network terms is that the increasingly important hub of Thebes co-opted existing links, growing exponentially. In the process, this led to a reorientation of pre-existing networks, from a roughly north-west to south-east coastal network to one with an east-west orientation which was essentially land based, like the palace itself. This new network cut through and largely replaced the old coastal network, as is visible in the Chalkidian pottery, which now exhibits strong par-

38. Earle 2012.

39. Sackett et al. 1966, 104.

40. Kramer-Hajos and O'Neill 2008, 198-202.

41. Mountjoy 1999, 653, no. 28.

42. Mountjoy 1990, 257.

43. Mountjoy 1990, 257.

44. Linear B tablets (referring to the economic-political realm) as well as the distribution of LH IIIB fortifications (part of the social-political landscape) likewise suggest an east-west overland network with Thebes at its centre (Kramer-Hajos 2016, 110-112).

allels with Thebes rather than with the Argolid or the Euboean Gulf sites. Simply put, one may imagine that Chalkis declined since it found itself increasingly on the margin of the Theban network, rather than a central node in the coastal network: its connectivity was decreased since it no longer functioned as a conduit between north and south but became the terminal station to the east for Thebes (Fig. 3d).

The 'hoards' of high-status exotic prestige goods found at the Theban workshops or in storage, versus the virtually complete absence of any such goods elsewhere in LH IIIB Boeotia, suggest that the Theban *wanax* attempted to monopolize imports for elite consumption in his polity.⁴⁵ A monopoly on exotic imports (in network terms: a monopoly on weak ties) obviously required control over the maritime traffic coming through the Euboean Gulf, and it seems highly likely that by LH IIIB Theban economic or even political control would have extended to Chalkis in order to make this possible.

It is likely that the absence of elite culture was keenly felt in an area where elites competed before the rise of Thebes brought an end to the competition. This is suggested by the revival of the LH IIIC period. Finds at Lefkandi, especially, but also at, for example, nearby Amarynthos, suggest the existence of healthy settlements partaking in a regional *koine* but also in international trade and exchange. An emphasis on ships, hunting, and warrior activities in the repertoire of pictorial kraters suggests that the LH IIIC elites promoted a self-image of a warrior aristocracy, a feature they shared with mainland sites along the north Euboean Gulf such as Kynos. These images also suggest that the Euboean elites restored the coastal interaction network after the collapse of the palaces. Ships, which are so prominent on some of these kraters, suggest moreover that ships were both a unifying force for Euboean elites after the collapse of the palaces and a means of recovery.

Conclusions

I have argued here that the general absence of LH I-II material is caused by the limited spread of recognizable Mycenaean material culture, which in turn reflects the closed, exclusionary character of the Early Mycenaean elite peer-polity networks. This has several ramifications: for one, rather than imagining a deserted landscape in LH I-II, we should imagine dense settlement. Moreover, this reconstruction suggests that Early Mycenaean culture is essentially an elite culture, which was not shared with the vast majority of people even within a settlement. This strengthens the idea of Mycenaean culture basically overlying an MH substratum as a rather thin veneer, at least in the Early Mycenaean period.

I have explained the LH IIIB anomaly as the result of a reorientation of maritime networks with a centre of gravity in the southern Aegean to land-based networks with Thebes at the centre. If Euboean sites such as Chalkis were on a pathway to become more than merely regional centres, that development was cut short by the reorientation of the networks in which Chalkis participated, effectively aborting a process of increasing stratification and complexity. The absence of a significant body of LH IIIB material is not coincidental: it is highly significant, as it was shared with other 'marginal' parts of the LBA Aegean and sheds light on the politics of Mycenaean palatial elites.

45. Burns 2010, 136; Cline 1994.

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Figures



Figure 1. Map of Euboea and central Greece. Circles indicate MH sites, squares LH I-IIA sites. Possible sites in outline. For central Greece, only major sites that are mentioned in the text are indicated.

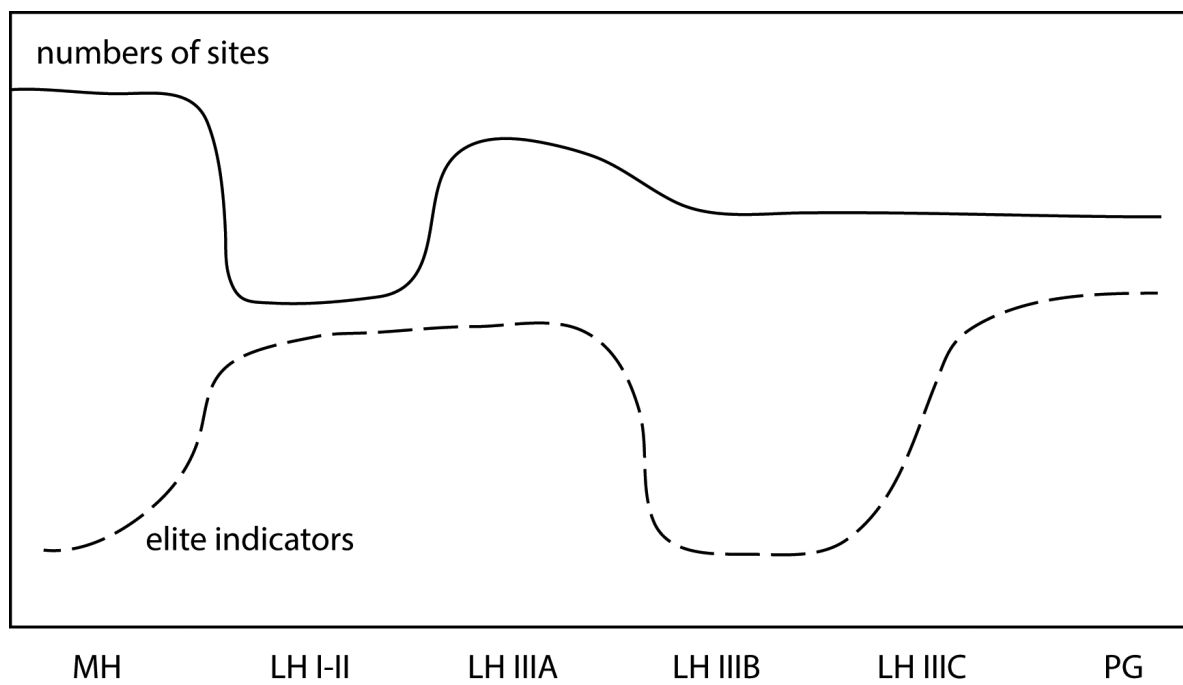


Figure 2. Schematic representation of patterns of site density and presence of elite indicators.

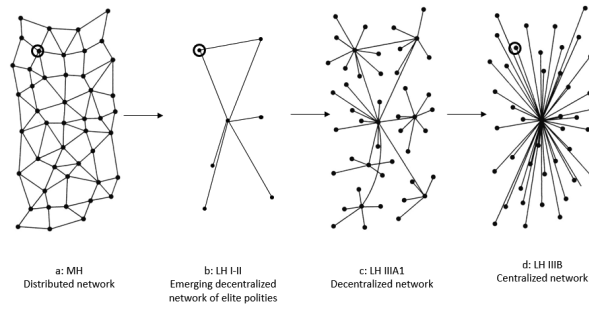


Figure 3. Schematic representations of socio-political network dynamics along the Euboean Gulf; Chalkis depicted as the circled node, Thebes as the centrally placed node. (Depictions of network types adapted from Baran 1964, 2, fig.1).

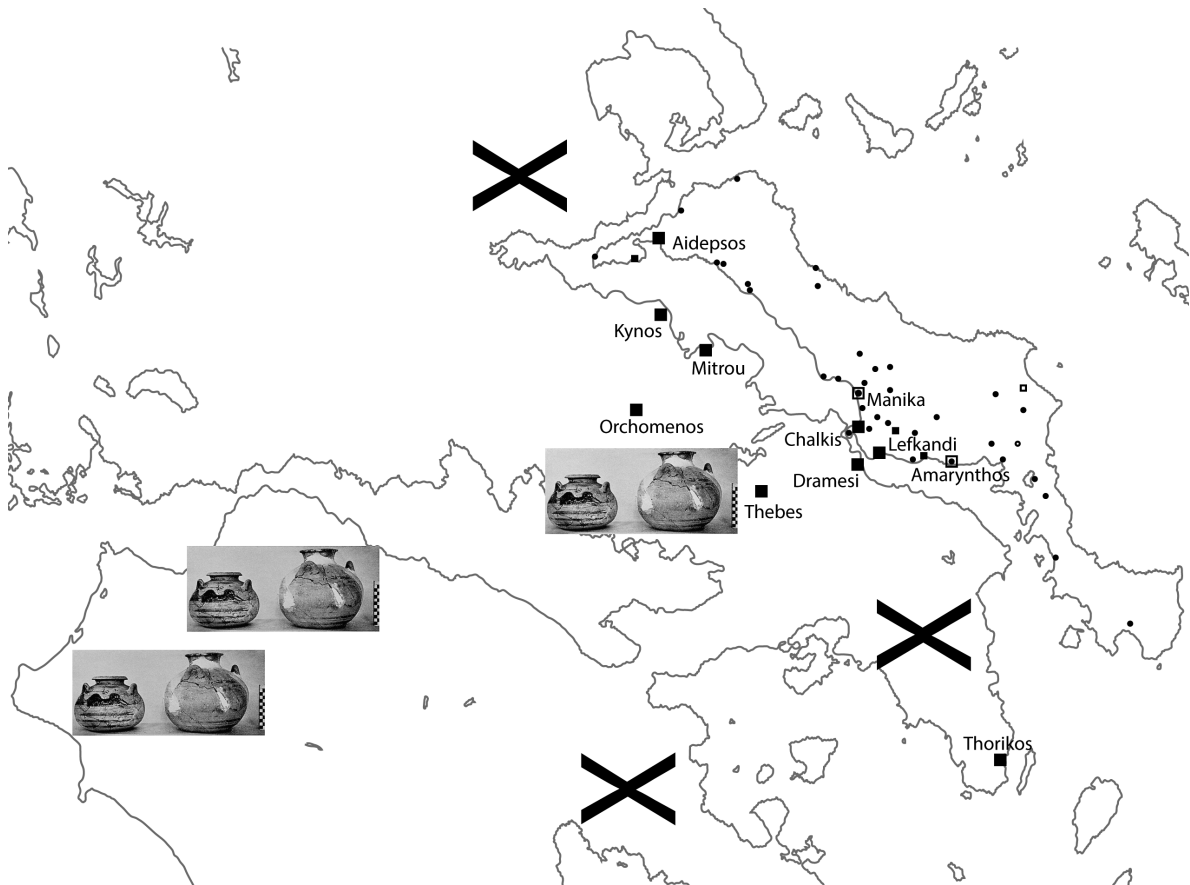


Figure 4. Distribution of large and giant alabastra in LH IIIA2. (Photo of large and giant alabastra from Hankey 1952, nos. 486 and 541, pl. 19).