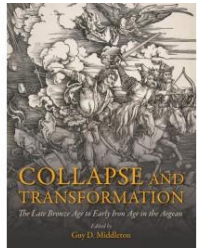


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Collapse at the end of the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean

Introduction

In the Aegean, Mycenaean cultural influence spread progressively from the LH I period onwards. The nature of the relationship between the Greek mainland palatial centres and the Aegean islands have been variously discussed. The conditions during the LH IIIB period, the fall of the mainland palaces and the character of the culture in the LH IIIC phase will provide a picture of the form this interaction had. The collapse witnessed at the mainland centres (Middleton 2017) will allow an assessment of the cultural influence they had on the Aegean islands. The analysis of this area will focus on the development of local culture and the participation of the islands in the long and short distance maritime exchange networks.

The Mycenaean centres in mainland Greece established regular contacts with the Eastern Mediterranean from the LH I period onwards. The exchanges were gradually increased during the course of the LBA and permanent long-distance sea routes were set. The interaction between the mainland and Cretan Mycenaean palaces with the ones of the Eastern Mediterranean was frequent. This entailed both political and diplomatic contacts as well as participation in the gift-exchanges between palaces. The reference to the Aegean in texts and international decrees, like the Amuru treaty, and the Uluburun shipwreck are considered to support this hypothesis.

During the 13th century BC the Mycenaean palaces and the broader exchange network that had been established across the Mediterranean reached its acme. More materials, exotic objects, people, techniques and ideas were circulated across the seas. However, apart from the increased wealth in the LH IIIB period, the erection of sophisticated fortifications in the mainland suggests that already some security concerns existed. At the end of the 13th century BC a series of destructions occurred across the mainland Greek palaces in a short period. The collapse of the politico-administrative system came almost simultaneously with the fall of the Hittite empire, and some important centres in Cyprus and Syria-Palestine, while Egypt also witnessed upheavals.

These events affected the exchange networks that had been formed during the previous period. The circulation networks changed with a few older ones remaining and more new production, exportation and consumption nexuses appearing in the Aegean and the

Eastern Mediterranean. This reshuffling benefitted ports that were of secondary significance before, which became centres of primary order during the LH IIIC phase. Thus, the collapse for many sites and states witnessed at the end of the 13th century BC in the Mediterranean was an opportunity for others to supersede them in the exchanges that continued to be practiced over short and long distances.

The LH IIIB period in the Aegean

The LH IIIB period covers chronologically the entire 13th century BC. The subdivision of this period into two subphases LH IIIB1-2 of roughly 50 years each has been established since the 1960s, based on the ceramic sequence identified at Mycenae (French 1967; 1969). This typology has been validated in other Mycenaean sites of Greek mainland, especially in palatial centres. However, this sequence does not apply in the local ceramic production of the Aegean islands, which did not follow this trend. Thus, when the LH IIIB1 or 2 phase distinction is locally available it is due to imported wares from the Greek mainland like the Group B deep bowls (Mountjoy 1999, 983). It is unfortunate that the imported wares to most Aegean islands were reduced in quantities during the LH IIIB period in comparison to the previous phases (Barber 1987, 226; Cosmopoulos 2004, 93). Hence, an assessment of the entire LH IIIB will be provided for the Aegean islands and more precise dating will be presented only when it is available.

In the LH IIIB period there is limited evidence of occupation at Ayia Irini on Keos which appears to have decreased in size (Caskey 1981, 323). It appears that the site was abandoned as a habitation area and acted mainly as a cultic centre for this part of the island (Gorogianni 2016, 148). The settlement pattern of this period on Keos consisted of a few small and dispersed settlements as systematic survey has demonstrated (Cherry *et al.* 1991, 165, 172; Sutton *et al.* 1991, 81; Schallin 1993, 15-16). The same settlement pattern has been identified in northern Andros (Koutsoukou 1993, 103), but two intact LH IIIB vases come possibly come from tombs in the western and southern parts of the island (Mountjoy 1999, 928-929). Ayios Andreas on Siphnos was fortified in the LH IIIB period (Barber 1999, 134; Televantou 2001, 194-195; Cosmopoulos 2004, 89). This site was located on an inland hill as was the case of To Froudi tou Kalamitsou on the same island and Koukounaries on Paros, which was occupied for the first time during the LH IIIB1 phase (Barber 1987, 226; 1999, 134; Schilardi 1992; Cosmopoulos 2004, 89). A tholos tomb recovered at Ayia Thekla on

Tinos has been dated in the LH IIIB period as well (Mountjoy 1999, 929-930), while similar examples from the Cyclades had been constructed in the LH IIIA2 period and used until the end of the LH IIIB phase (Barber 1999, 136). Monolithos on Thera was established most probably in the LH IIIB2 period rather than earlier (Vlachopoulos and Georgiadis 2015, 346). At Kythera, Kastri had been re-occupied during the LH IIIA2-B1 phase, but after this it was abandoned and no further evidence exists from this island (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 304).

At Phylakopi on Melos the sanctuary was enlarged during this period and a new fortification was raised to protect the settlement (Renfrew 1982, 42; 1985, 441; Barber 1999, 134; Earle 2016, 107-108). The local administration in the form of a central megaron building was established in the LH IIIA phase and continued to function in this phase (Renfrew 1985, 441). There is scarce evidence of settlements belonging to this phase on Melos, like at Andros, only that a substantial site must have existed at Ayios Spyridon in the western part of the island (Renfrew 1982, 42). Two chamber tombs on Melos dated to the LH IIIB period are found in inland locations (Schallin 1993, 1190-120; Mountjoy 1999, 889; Earle 2016, 108). There is a strong tradition of local production of Mycenaean pottery, while imported vessels have been noted from the Greek mainland and Crete as well (Mountjoy 1999, 891; 2009, 74-79). The figurines from the local sanctuary appear to have mainly a local provenance, but imported ones from the Greek mainland are common (Earle 2016, 108-109, fig.6.11). A close relationship between Phylakopi and the Argolid is proposed for the LH IIIB-C period based on imported wares (Barber 1999, 138).

Grotta on Naxos appears to have been the main centre of the island during the LH III period. However, there appeared to be a decline in its occupation during the LH IIIB1 phase and it was almost abandoned in the LH IIIB2 period perhaps due to natural causes (Vlachopoulos 2003, 494; Cosmopoulos 2004, 93-94). Other contemporary sites across Naxos belonging to this phase are limited in number and situated in inland locations (Cosmopoulos 2004, 92-93). The same applies for the tholos tomb at Chousti, which may have continued to be in use during this period (Vlachopoulos 2016, 127).

At Amorgos, Astypalaia and Karpathos the Mycenaean burial tradition of chamber tombs continued from the LH IIIA2 without change into the LH IIIB period (Melas 1985; Mountjoy 1999, 961-962; Georgiadis 2003). A similar picture comes during the LH IIIB phase from the chamber tomb cemeteries following Mycenaean burial practices in western coastal Anatolia, such as Müskebi and Miletos (Özgünel 1996; Georgiadis 2003). Nonetheless, in the case of Kalymnos Mycenaean tombs appeared for the first time during the

LH IIIB period (Georgiadis 2003), and habitation evidence appeared at Poli of Kasos from the later part of the 13th century BC (Melas 1985, 49).

Ialysos continued to act as the central settlement on Rhodes, but it witnessed a dramatic change. There was a significant decrease of chamber tombs and offerings deposited in the ones used during the LH IIIB period (Mee 1982; Benzi 1992; Georgiadis 2003). In the rest of the cemeteries across Rhodes a similar decrease of tombs and offerings is observed, suggesting a similar trend across the entire island (Georgiadis 2003). The pottery used as funerary goods was mainly imported wares from different areas of the Greek mainland, mainly from the Argolid, both at Ialysos and in the rest of the Rhodian cemeteries (Jones and Mee 1978; Pointing and Karantzali 2001). Still, limited pottery assignable to the LH IIIB2 phase has been identified (Mountjoy 1999). Nevertheless, the pottery consumed at Trianda, the settlement to which Ialysos cemetery belonged, were locally produced in the LH IIIB phase, following a LH IIIA trend (Mee 1988; Karantzali 2005; 2009). This ceramic assemblage had a localised typology and a taste for simple forms of decoration, which belong to the broader Mycenaean pottery tradition (Karantzali 2005; 2009).

The LH IIIB on Kos appears to differ from other Aegean islands. The cemeteries and tombs of this period were greater in quantity than in the previous phase (Georgiadis 2003). Serrayia, the main settlement of the island, was destroyed and rebuilt in this period with a slight difference in the orientation of the buildings (Morricone 1972-3, 227-229). The erection of a fortification wall at Serrayia is dated in the LH IIIB period as well (Skerlou 2001-2004a). A dispersed settlement pattern inland and less commonly at the coastal parts of the island can be seen from the chamber tombs and the settlement evidence from the Halasarna area (Georgiadis 2008). A hierarchy of settlements and the presence of small, short-lived sites in the form of farmsteads appears to have continued since the beginning of the LBA (Georgiadis in press). The pottery consumed in the settlements and tombs was primarily produced by Koan workshops (Jones 1986). The local ceramic tradition was influenced by mainland prototypes as well as some Cretan elements (Mountjoy 1999, 1087). Cultic activity could have been performed in this period at the Aspri Petra cave in the western part of the island (Levi 1925-6).

At Tigani on Samos a habitation area of this period continuing from the previous period has been identified (Mountjoy 1999, 1146).

On Skyros the Mycenaean occupation was concentrated around the modern town of the island (Davis *et al.* 2001, 83). More burial areas and chamber tombs belonged to this

period, while from the funerary offerings there seems to be an increase, especially in shapes dated in the latter part of the LH IIIB phase (Parlama 1984).

On Psara the local preference for cist graves, a few built-chamber tombs and a tholos tomb at the coastal cemetery of Archontiki continued with no hiatus from the previous period. However, the burial offerings were still mainly Mycenaean in character either of local production or imported from the Greek mainland during the LH IIIB period (Georgiadis 2003; Girella and Pavuk 2016, 31). At Emporio on Chios the earliest local cist graves belong to this period and contained LH IIIB pots (Hood 1981-2, 583). A few small sites of the same period appear to have been concentrated in the southern part of the island (Beaumont *et al.* 1999).

There are a few sites across Lesbos that belong to the 13th century BC. The limited evidence from Makara argue for a local burial tradition of large cist graves (Charitonidis 1961/2, 265). These practices were compatible with the tradition in the north-eastern Aegean and north-western coastal Anatolia. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether the pottery consumed during the LH IIIB was Mycenaean or Anatolian in character. The reports so far mention primarily unstratified Mycenaean, which appear to be more numerous in the LH IIIB phase (Guzowska and Landau 2003, 474; Girella and Pavuk 2016, 29). At Yenibademli Hoyuk on Imvros a few sherds appear to belong to the LH IIIB phase (Guzowska and Yasur-Landau 2003, 474-475).

On Limnos the picture from the available finds is more complicated. At Koukonisi in the southern part of the island LH IIIB sherds and fragments of Mycenaean type figurines have been found unstratified on the surface of the site (Boulotis 1997, 275, fig.28). However at Hephaestia, on the northern part of Limnos, LH IIIB stratified pottery from habitation contexts have been recovered on top of a LH IIIA2 stratum (Girella and Pavuk 2016, 29). At Limnos the Mycenaean cultural influence seems to predominate during this period.

In the southern Aegean islands there is a general picture of continuity of habitation and burial traditions, which were already under mainland Greek cultural influence. However, there is a general decrease of sites and quantities of materials across the islands, which became more evident as the 13th century BC progressed. Despite the decline of Knossos as a palatial centre in the Aegean, the rest of the islands did not benefit from this in long-distance exchanges or with more direct contacts with mainland Greece. The interaction with the Mycenaean palatial centres became more limited as discussed earlier. Important island sites such as Phylakopi on Melos and Trianda on Rhodes became less conspicuous during the LH IIIB, while others like

Ayia Irini on Keos and Grotta on Naxos were almost abandoned. Nonetheless, security concerns and the erection of fortifications were trends that affected, after the Greek mainland centres, the contemporary island ones such as Phylakopi on Melos, Ayios Andreas on Siphnos and Serrayia on Kos. In the case of the first, an administrative centre had been known at this site and other similar ones are suspected in the latter two, arguing in favour of complex politico-administrative conditions in these two islands during the LH IIIB phase. Siphnos and Kos, possibly with the addition of Kasos and Kalymnos were the only exceptions among the southern Aegean islands, where an increase of cultural elements, sites, tombs and material culture, can be detected.

In contrast to the situation described for the southern Aegean islands, in the northern ones there was an increase of contacts. More cultural and material exchanges with the mainland Greek centres appeared to have existed than ever before. Thus, islands like Skyros and Psara were under Mycenaean cultural influence and the same seems to have been the case with Limnos. The increased contacts with Chios and Lesbos may reveal the same trend or one that would follow in the LH IIIC period. Perhaps new more frequent exchange routes were established in the Aegean, extending more actively towards the northern part of the basin, including the islands, the coastal Anatolian sites and possibly ranging as far as the Black Sea.

The eastern Aegean islands and western Anatolia could be seen as a cultural and, to some extent, political buffer zone between the Hittites and the Mycenaeans. The role of the first becomes more evident through texts rather than material remains. Miletos/Millawanda came under the Hittite control in the beginning of the 13th century BC, a few decades later it broke away and then, in the later part of the century, it returned to the hands of the Hittites (Georgiadis 2009). The final records from the palace of Pylos mention women from Karpathos, Knidos, Miletos and probably Halicarnassos, working possibly as slaves in the palatial context. Unrest and military activities appear to have taken place in this part of the Aegean with various economic, social, political and cultural consequences.

The LH IIIC period in the Aegean

In a timespan of one or two decades around 1200 BC there was a general collapse of the politico-administrative system that existed in the palatial centres of mainland Greece and Chania on Crete. After these events only Tiryns appears so far to have managed to retain

some of the LH IIIB politico-administrative functions in the course of the LH IIIC period. However, the collapse of the Hittite rule appears to have been complete around the same date with no evidence of any revival so far. Destructions and continuity are also evident across the broader Eastern Mediterranean, but interaction and exchange routes continued uninterrupted. The Cape Gelidonya shipwreck supports the degree of contacts between the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean (Bass 1967). At the same time the shipwrecks at Iria and Modi around the Argolid reveals that inter-Aegean exchanges were also active. All three shipwrecks have been dated c. 1200 BC, demonstrating that despite the political upheavals exchanges continued unobscured.

The shrine continued to be in use at Ayia Irini on Keos during the LH IIIC period, but not the rest of the settlement (Caskey 1981, 323-324; 1984, 241, 243-244). Two sites continued to be occupied in the LH IIIC period, following the settlement pattern of the previous phase (Koutsoukou 1993, 103). Monolithos on Thera appears to continue in use during this period as well (Vlachopoulos and Georgiadis 2015, 346).

A second outer wall was erected at Ayios Andreas on Siphnos, while the habitation area appears to have extended outside the fortifications during this period (Televantou 2001, 202, 204-208). However, it remains unclear if there was continuity in the occupation of the site from the LH IIIB until the end of the LH IIIC period (Mountjoy 1999, 887). Tis Baronas to Froudi is another site located on a naturally fortified hill close to Vathy Bay in the south-western part of the island (Vlachopoulos and Georgiadis 2015, 345). Here walls from buildings and a possible defensive wall have been observed.

The hilly site of Koukounaries close to Naoussa bay on Paros was fortified in a cyclopean manner during the LH IIIC early phase (Schilardi 1992, 627-631, pl.3). The site was destroyed violently by fire in the beginning of the LH IIIC middle period. A few dead people along with animals have been recovered in the debris as the result of this event, while another body was deposited in a natural cave on top of the hill. The presence of valuable objects suggests that the destruction did not occur due to hostile activities (Vlachopoulos and Georgiadis 2015, 343). Occupation continued until the end of the LH IIIC and Submycenaean period in a limited way (Mountjoy 1999, 932). Three small built chamber tombs found close to Koukounaries were possibly contemporary.

On Melos the only site active during this period was Phylakopi, where the sanctuary was still in use (Renfrew 1982a, 41-43). The pottery recovered at this settlement had been locally produced with no similarities to contemporary stylistic developments at Mycenae. But similarities with Lefkandi, Koukounaries, Rhodes and Kos have been noted (Renfrew 1982b,

227; 1985, 403; Mountjoy 1984; 1999, 889, 891-893). At Kimolos chamber tombs and sherds belonging mainly to this period have been recovered from the southern part of the island close to north-eastern Melos (Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1994-5).

On Tinos two sites were possibly established during this LH IIIC, located in the inland hilly part of the island, Xombourgo and perhaps Vryokastro (Barber 1999, 134). In both cases a wall was erected protecting these sites from potential threats, following the example of LH IIIB Siphnos (Kourou 2001, 177-187, figs 5-10).

On Naxos LH IIIC remains have been identified at Yria, Eggares, Zas cave Ligaridia and Karvounolakkoi (Mountjoy 1999, 938; Vlachopoulos and Georgiadis 2015, 344-345; Vlachopoulos 2016, 127, fig. 7.4). Grotta was re-occupied in the beginning of this phase with a different orientation of the buildings in comparison to the LH IIIA-B settlement. A fortification wall was also erected with a stone foundation and a mudbrick superstructure, unlike the cyclopean technique of mainland Greece and the rest of the Aegean islands, and closer to the earlier examples from a few sites from mainland Greece, Miletos and Troy. The site appears to have been large in size and central for the island, while a nucleation process has been proposed to have taken place on the island during the LH IIIC early period (Vlachopoulos 2003, 494, 499; 2016, 127). Two contemporary burial clusters with chamber tombs have been located close to Grotta, Kamini and Aplomata, which contained numerous funerary offerings among which there were many gold and silver objects as well as exotica (Kardara 1977; Vlachopoulos 1999; 2006; 2012). The pottery consumed in the tombs is primarily local, but imported pots have been recognised from the west Peloponnese, Attica, Crete, Kos and Rhodes (Vlachopoulos and Georgiadis 2015, 344; Vlachopoulos 2016, 128).

At Amorgos the Xyloktaridi chamber tomb cemetery continued to be in use, while LH IIIC habitation remains have been noted at Katapola (Vlachopoulos and Georgiadis 2015, 347). The Perakastro cemetery on Kalymnos provided more finds during this period in comparison to the LH IIIB phase. The pottery from Kalymnos has close stylistic affinities with the workshops that were active at contemporary Kos. At Astypalaia one of the two cemeteries of the island, located in an inland part, continued to be active during the LH IIIC phase. On Kasos occupation in inland locations continued as in the previous period (Melas 1985: 49). At Múskebi and Miletos the cemeteries remained in use; in the former there were limited interments and burial offerings, while in the latter the picture remains unclear (Özgünel 1996; Georgiadis 2003).

On Rhodes there is a varied picture across the island during the LH IIIC period (Georgiadis 2003). At Ialysos there is a very significant increase of tombs used at the

cemetery with an almost fivefold increase of ceramic vessels deposited in the chamber tombs (Georgiadis 2003). The wealth is emphasised by the large number of silver and gold objects placed as funerary offerings. In this respect the Ialysos cemetery is closer to the picture from the contemporary burial clusters of Aplomata and Kamini on Naxos. Unfortunately, no remains of the LH IIIC settlement at Trianda are available. The pottery placed as funerary gifts were predominately of local manufacture unlike the previous phases (Jones and Mee 1978). The style owes much to the Cretan tradition as well as to local developments, with the octopus-style stirrup jar being one of them, while some imports from the Argolid and Attica have been observed (Mountjoy 1999, 985-989, fig. 400). Outside Ialysos there is a decrease of active cemeteries in the north-western part of the island and an increase of tombs at Ialysos, suggesting a nucleation process like the one observed at Naxos (Georgiadis 2003; 2009). In this context the re-use of abandoned LH IIIA2 tombs can be explained (Cavanagh and Mee 1978). The rest of the cemeteries on Rhodes reveal stability and continuity with the same number of tombs and offerings as in the LH IIIB period. The pottery consumed in these cemeteries were local as at Ialysos (Pointing and Karantzali 2001; Karantzali and Pointing 2000), but the wealthy objects observed at the large cemetery were not recovered in the rest. It seems that they were restricted to the main centre of the island with rather limited circulation beyond it. The interments of children at the Apsropilia chamber tombs appear to be a new phenomenon in the LH IIIC period, arguing for social uncertainties in this phase (McKay 2001).

On Kos there was also an important increase of tombs and ceramic offerings at the burial clusters of Eleona and Langada (Georgiadis 2003). More wealth in the form of silver and gold objects offered as funerary offerings has also been observed. At the same time there was a decrease of cemeteries in the chora of the island suggesting that a nucleation in favour of Serrayia was taking place (Georgiadis 2003; 2009). The re-use of LH IIIA2 tombs has also been observed on Kos, as on Rhodes (Cavanagh and Mee 1978; Georgiadis 2003). The establishment of two new sanctuaries at Iraklis and at the town of Kos under the later Athena sanctuary, both close to Serrayia, belongs to the LH IIIC period (Skerlou 1999; 2001-2004b). The cyclopean wall at the inland mountain site of Kastro Palaiopyli has not been studied and it could be tentatively dated within the broader LH IIIB-C phase (Hope-Simpson and Lazenby 1970). It is situated in a naturally fortified position with strategic view over the lowland part of Kos and the sea. It must have served the dispersed settlements that existed at the central part of the island from exogenous threats. The systematic survey at the Halasarna region has shown that small sites in the size of possibly farmsteads still existed across the

landscape in the LH IIIC period (Georgiadis in press). In this part of the island the coastal site of ancient Halasarna must have acted as a regional centre. The local pottery production continues to be the main one used on Kos, sharing many elements with Rhodes, while a pictorial tradition was developed during the LH IIIC phase (Mountjoy 1999, 1078-1080). Imported wares from this period come from Perati, Asine and Crete.

At Ikaria two intact vessels belonging to tombs have been dated in the LH IIIC period (Mountjoy 1999, 1146). At Skyros the majority of the tombs around Chora and the offerings deposited in them belong to the LH IIIC phase as well (Parlama 1984). At Archontiki cemetery of Psara only a few funerary gifts can be dated to this late period.

At Chios both Kato Phana and Emporio in the southern fertile part of the island were used. At the latter, the pottery remains come from a habitation area with affinities to the pottery tradition of the Eastern Aegean, encompassing Kalymnos, Kos, Rhodes and Miletos (Hood 1981-2; Mountjoy 1999, 1148). The LH IIIC remains from Lesbos come from Chalatses and Methymna and are of limited character (Guzowska and Yasur-Landau 2003, 474). At Yenibademli Hoyuk on Imvros some sherds are also dated to the LH IIIC period (Guzowska and Yasur-Landau 2003, 474-475). At Hephastia on Limnos the LH IIIC pottery sherds are associated with contemporary architectural remains (Girella and Pavuk 2016, 27), while the ones from Koukonisi are unstratified (Guzowska and Yasur-Landau 2003, 475).

During the LH IIIC phase the southern Aegean islands witnessed an important change. The general picture is of an increase of sites in relation to the LH IIIB phase (Vlachopoulos and Georgiadis). In the case of the western islands like Andros, Keos and Melos there was a decline in comparison to the previous period. Nevertheless, Siphnos and Kimolos are exceptions in this area, where there was continuity and new sites that appeared in this period. Perhaps this was associated with the fall of the mainland palatial centres and their role in the sea routes of this phase. At the same time there was an increase of sites and material cultural remains across the central and the eastern Aegean. This is more evident in medium and large sized islands such as Paros, Naxos, Kos and Rhodes. In the last three islands important coastal settlements were either developed or re-established. The pottery production had in general less relation to the mainland Greek changes. An increased regionalism across the Aegean can be proposed for this period, but at the same time similar trends in shapes and decorations can be seen. Local ceramic characteristics and Cretan elements are attested in many workshops.

In the northern islands there is a more mixed picture mainly due to the lack of thorough research. From the contexts available and better studied it seems that the LH IIIB trend continued and the Mycenaean culture was locally adopted. This appears to be the case at Hephaistia Limnos and Emporio at Chios, while at Archontiki on Psara the LH IIIC remains were less than in the previous phase. The pottery from this region has not been studied systematically with the exception of Emporio. In this case the habitation material finds bear close affinities to other Eastern Aegean contemporary sites, suggesting close contacts with the area south of Chios rather than the Greek mainland.

Discussion

The collapse of the palatial economic, social, administrative and political systems affected primarily mainland Greece and Chania on Crete. This series of events had a defining effect in the Aegean for the next century, but not as dramatic as on the Greek mainland.

Some elements of settlement patterns in the islands were identified in the LH IIIB period, which either continued in the next phase or new ones appeared in the LH IIIC phase. Security remained a very important concern for the island communities which was expressed in a variety of forms. There were inland sites located in naturally fortified places like Tis Baronas to Froudi on Siphnos. Other inland hilly sites were fortified with a wall which either continued from the LH IIIB period like Ayios Andreas on Siphnos, or new ones were erected in the LH IIIC phase like Koukounaries on Paros and Xombourgo on Tinos, and possibly Kastro Palaiopyli on Kos and Vryokastro on Tinos. Coastal settlements were also protected with a wall in LH IIIC; Serrayia continued to be protected with a fortification from the previous period, whilst at Grotta the wall was newly constructed. Another interesting settlement phenomenon is the nucleation of sites and cemeteries between the LH IIIB and LH IIIC period, which can be seen at Naxos, north-west Rhodes and Kos. In the latter two examples the re-use of earlier LH IIIA2 tombs during the LH IIIC phase appears to be part of the nucleation process. At the same time, at the southern part of Rhodes and at central-south Kos (the Halasarna area) the earlier settlement pattern remain intact, suggesting that diverse processes could coexist on the same island. One of the factors related to this trend may also be the size of these islands.

The collapse of the mainland palatial centres as much as those that declined in the Eastern Mediterranean dramatically decreased the palatially-controlled exchanges and the gift

giving between rulers. Nevertheless, all the other forms of exchanges, connections and circulation networks between the Aegean with the Central and Eastern Mediterranean remained active during the LH IIIC phase. The re-shuffling of the routes that took place soon after 1200 BC allowed secondary coastal sites to become central for this period. In that context, the wealth identified in some sites, especially expressed within the local tombs, can be explained. Older sites like Serrayia on Kos and Trianda on Rhodes as well as new ones like Grotta on Naxos participated as nexus in long and short distance circulations. This allowed them to import materials of all kinds, including valuable ones, finished goods and exotic objects. The use of these items as offerings in the tombs emphasised the economic, social and/or political status of the deceased and his/her family or kin group in their local or regional context, following earlier practices and expressions.

Another interesting development during the LH IIIC period was the significance attributed to symbolism. First of all there was a clear continuity from the previous period as far as burial practices and beliefs were concerned as the tombs from the South-Eastern Aegean highlight (Georgiadis 2003; 2009). Perhaps the social uncertainties of the 12th century BC can be seen more clearly in the children burials recovered at the cemetery of Aspropilia. At the same time, there was continuation in the use of older sanctuaries such as Ayia Irini on Keos, where the rest of the settlement was abandoned, Phylakopi on Melos, and possibly Aspri Petra cave on Kos and Zas cave on Naxos. Furthermore, new ones were established during the LH IIIC period at Kos town and Iraklis on Kos, demonstrating an increase of sanctuaries and their symbolic significance across the Aegean islands.

The socio-political collapse can be identified in the Aegean islands at the end of the LH IIIC period (c. 1100-1075 BC). The political systems fragmented and economic conditions degraded with reduced exchanges between islands and especially with the Eastern Mediterranean. The clearest indication of this collapse was the change of the social fabric reflected with the abandonment of settlements and the communal burials. No more chamber and tholos tombs were constructed, instead single graves were opted. The single graves needed less labour to make and their emphasis was on the individuals rather than on the family or the kin group. At the Submycenaean cemetery of Ayia Agathi on Rhodes pit caves were constructed and contained single interments signifying the period of change (Zervaki 2011, 771), when new economic, social and political conditions prevailed. In the 11th century BC the fragmented Mycenaean culture was giving way to the beginning of the Early Iron Age across the Aegean basin.

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Caption

Figure 1. Main sites discussed in the text. 1: Ayia Irini; 2: Xombourgo; 3: Phylakopi; 4: Ayios Andreas; 5: Koukounaries; 6: Grotta; 7: Monolithos; 8: Katapola-Xylokeratidi; 9: Trianda-Ialysos; 10: Serrayia-Eleona and Langada; 11: Múskebi; 12: Miletos; 13: Emporio; 14: Archontiki; 15: Skyros; 16: Makara; 17: Koukonisi; 18: Hephaistia; 19: Yenibademli Hoyuk.