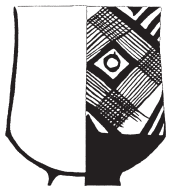
AYIORYITIKA





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The 1928 Excavations of Carl Blegen at a Neolithic to Early Helladic Settlement in Arcadia



General view of the site of Ayioryitika in 1987, looking north.

To my parents, with love and gratitude

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The 1928 Excavations of Carl Blegen at a Neolithic to Early Helladic Settlement in Arcadia

Susan L. Petrakis

PREHISTORY MONOGRAPHS 3

Published by
THE INSTITUTE FOR AEGEAN PREHISTORY ACADEMIC PRESS
2002

Design, editing, layout, production
INSTAP Academic Press

Layout
ZoAnna Carrol

Printing
Sun Printing Co.
Philadelphia, PA

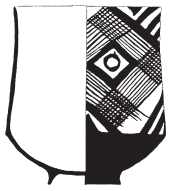
Binding
Hoster Bindery
Philadelphia, PA

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Petrakis, Susan L.
Ayioryitika : the 1928 excavations of Carl Blegen at a Neolithic to Early Helladic settlement in Arcadia / by Susan L. Petrakis.
p. cm. -- (Prehistory monographs ; 3)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 1-931534-02-0
1. Hagiorgitika Site (Greece) 2. Excavations (Archaeology)--Greece--Hagiorgitika Site. 3. Neolithic period--Greece--Hagiorgitika Site. 4. Bronze age--Greece--Hagiorgitika Site. 5. Blegen, Carl William, 1887-1971. I. Title. II. Series.
DF221.H27 P47 2002
938'.8--dc21

2002006592

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INSTAP Academic Press
Philadelphia, PA
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Printed in the United States of America



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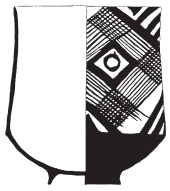
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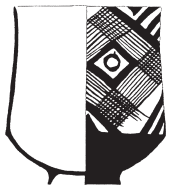
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Acknowledgments

This volume is a revision of my dissertation presented to the University of Pennsylvania as part of the Ph.D. requirements (Petrakis 1999). A preliminary report was also published (Petrakis 1992).

Many people contributed to the completion of this work. Among those whom I would like to thank especially are Fred Cooper, former Mellon Professor at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, whose idea it was for me to study and publish the Ayioryitika material. I owe many thanks to Steven Miller, the late William Coulson, and James Muhly, former Directors of the ASCSA, as well as to Maria Pilali, assistant to the director, all of whom gave me assistance and encouragement throughout this project. Spyros Iakovidis served as my dissertation supervisor, first from Philadelphia and later from Athens. Keith DeVries read and edited early versions of the manuscript.

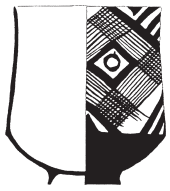
The University of Pennsylvania provided me with a Colburn Fellowship and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens awarded me a Capps Fellowship, support that allowed me to study the Ayioryitika material in the Museum of Tegea, on a permit made possible by Theodore Spiropoulos, Ephor of Antiquities of Arcadia and Laconia. I owe many thanks to Maria and George Dorbetas in Kamari, Panagoula and Nikos Reppas in Alea, and Thanasi Maskaleris and his sister Katina, in the village of Stadio, all of whom offered kind *philoxenia* and good company during my time in Arcadia. Affectionate thanks are due to many Boosalis relatives in the village of Niata (Lakonia) for their kindness , support, and hospitality, and to my uncle, Dr. Nick Boosalis, whose encouragement throughout this project has been unwavering and much valued. At the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Bob Bridges, Maria Pilali, the late William Coulson, and Steve Miller were instrumental in helping me obtain permission to study the material from Ayioryitika and in getting past some of the bureaucratic twists and turns in obtaining permits for various projects related to the dissertation research. Charles Edwards, Elizabeth McGowan, and Guy Hedreen accompanied me on several memorable trips of exploration into deepest Arcadia, and our discussions produced many insights into the history and topography of the region.

Thanks are due to Charles Williams and Nancy Bookidis who gave me permission to study the Ayiorytika material in the Museum of Corinth and John Levezzi who introduced me to the Neolithic collection there, to K.D. Vitelli who showed me the Lerna storerooms in the Argos Museum and offered kind hospitality and more valuable discussion and insights in Bloomington, to Bill Phelps who introduced me to Neolithic pottery in the Sherd Collection at the American School, to Dan Pullen who assisted in the identification of the Final Neolithic and Early Bronze Age pottery in the Museum of Tegea, and to John Coleman who invited me to excavate at Halai as a means of getting acquainted with the Neolithic material from that site.

I am very grateful to Suzanne Griset, Helen McCarthy, and Judy Polanich at the University of

California at Davis for all of their help and useful discussions on the subject of *balanophagy,* and to Eugenia Mitsanis who helped in the inking of some of the more difficult pottery profiles. At the University of Cincinnati, Tucker Blackburn and Carol Hershensen assisted in locating the various Ayioryitika documents and other material in the Blegen archive that were crucial to the understanding of the field notebooks, photographs, and drawings. I thank Jack Davis for permission to include the material in this monograph.

Others who have assisted in more ways than I can count are Patricia Clark, Aldo and Jessica di Vergilio, Michelle Matson, Michele Metz, Christina Salowey, Christina Shriner, Christina Salowey, Jennifer Tobin, Mary Voyatzis, and Carol Zerner. Lastly, to Phil Betancourt, who has over many years served patiently as my teacher, advisor, reader, and editor, and who had the unenviable task of hounding me into completing and submitting my dissertation, are due my particular thanks and gratitude.



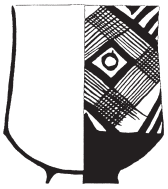
Abbreviations and Conventions

Abbreviations of journals follow the conventions in the *American Journal of Archaeology*. Other abbreviations are as follows:

ASCSA	American School of Classical Studies at Athens
a.s.l.	above sea level
Athens	Study Collection in the American School of Classical Studies at Athens
B plus number	bone, horn, tusk, antler, or shell object
Blegen Notebook	Excavation notebook kept by Carl W. Blegen
B.P.	Before Present
C plus number	ceramic artifact other than a vessel
Cincinnati	Blegen Library, University of Cincinnati
Corinth	Museum of Corinth
Cox Notebook	Excavation notebook kept by Dorothy H. Cox
d.	diameter
Darbyshire Notebook	Excavation notebook kept by Richard S. Darbyshire
EH	Early Helladic
el.	elevation
est.	estimated
ext.	exterior
FN	Final Neolithic
h.	height
HAG P plus number	pottery vessel
int.	interior
LH	Late Helladic
LN	Late Neolithic
MH	Middle Helladic
MN	Middle Neolithic
S plus number	stone artifact
Tegea	Museum of Tegea
th.	thickness
w.	width

Specialized ceramics terms are defined in the following way (other terms are defined in the text)

Bowl	An open vessel whose height (excluding any base) is less than the diameter of the mouth.
Burnished	Rubbed with a smooth tool before firing.
Collared jar	A closed vessel with a convex profile on its body and a constricted, cylindrical neck with no separate mouth.
Fabric	Fired clay used for ceramic objects.
Jar	A closed vessel whose height (excluding any base) is greater than the diameter of the mouth.
Jug	A vessel with a constricted mouth and one vertical handle.
Monochrome	A ceramic surface with only one type of slip, fired either to produce a single hue or a variegated surface.
Pottery class	A selection of pottery sharing characteristics.
Sauceboat	A bowl with a convex profile with an extended, upraised spout that flows smoothly out of the body and has one handle opposite the spout.
Slip	A liquid clay.
Spool Pyxis	A cylindrical vessel fitted with a lid with disks at the base of the vessel and the top of the lid, and with the disks having greater diameters than the body.
Ware	A class of pottery defined by surface treatment and decoration. Examples include Urfirnis Ware and Red-on-Buff Ware.



Introduction

The ancient site near the modern village of Ayioryitika (Fig. 1) has been spelled with several different transliterations in the archaeological literature: Hagiorgitika (Blegen 1928; Coulson 1993: 2); Agiorgitika (Alram-Stern 1996: 131, 256, 263–264); and Ayioryitika (Hope Simpson and Dickinson 1979: 79; Vitelli 1993: 218). The spelling adopted here, Ayioryitika, is the one used by the Greek government for official maps and road signs.

Professor Carl W. Blegen discovered Ayioryitika in November of 1921 during the American School of Classical Studies at Athens' annual "Fall Trip" to the Peloponnese (Blegen 1922). The low mound, located just south of the village from which the site takes its name, would have been bare of crops at that time of year with its contours visible from the road. Blegen reported seeing a dense scatter of sherds on the surface. He collected a range of wares, including a distinctive class of patterned pottery with close parallels to pottery of the "Second Neolithic Period" in Thessaly and to Neolithic pottery from Corinth. In modern classification, "Second Thessalian Period" includes the red and patterned wares and the Urfirnis wares of the Middle Neolithic. The latest pottery Blegen found belonged to the Early Bronze Age (Blegen 1922). The absence of surface pottery with a date later than the Early Bronze Age suggested to him that the entire mound was of prehistoric date.

From June through July of 1928, Blegen directed excavations at the site with the support of the University of Cincinnati, under the auspices of the American School of Classical Studies (Blegen 1928). Assisting him as trench supervisors were Dorothy H. Cox, a student at the American School, and Richard S. Darbyshire of the British School at Athens. Others assisting in the excavations included George E. Mylonas and V. Bertos, and an American undergraduate, Frederick Grace. Blegen hired workmen from the distant village of Mycenae in the Argolid where there were trained excavators, thanks to Wace's excavations there. He also employed local, less experienced workmen. The site was backfilled at the end of the season.

Cox and Darbyshire each kept an excavation field notebook in which they recorded, in a relatively systematic manner, the stratigraphy of their respective trenches and, less systematically, plans of structures and features and sketches of some of the pottery and small finds. Blegen maintained a more general field notebook in which he briefly summarized each week's work and expenses and kept a list of the inventoried small finds. These three field notebooks survive in the archives of the American School of Classical Studies.

According to a brief report published in 1928 (Blegen 1928), the excavation produced great quantities of Neolithic pottery, remains of stone foundations, mud-brick and wattle-and-daub superstructures, numerous floor levels and fixed hearths, stone and bone tools, terracotta figurines, "extraordinary quantities" of animal bones, and a human burial. Also mentioned in this report was a small amount of Early Helladic material, said to be con-

fined to pits or *bothroi* cut into the Neolithic levels (Blegen 1928).

Entries in Blegen's field notebook show that all of the finds were placed in labeled cloth bags in wooden trays, carefully organized according to trench and level, and stored in the small Museum of Tegea in the village of Alea (then called Piali), a few kilometers from the site. In June of 1931, Blegen, accompanied by W.A. Heurtley, the Assistant Director of the British School at Athens, transported "the most important stratigraphic pottery," all of the small finds (i.e., stone, bone, and terra-cotta objects), and the human and animal bones to Athens for study.

During this period, a study season must have taken place in Athens. Several extant watercolors of Ayioryitika pottery and small finds by Piet de Jong as well as inked plans by D.H. Cox were made. Blegen's 1930 article on the site of Gonia contained several watercolor illustrations of sherds from Ayioryitika and references to a forthcoming publication of the site (Blegen 1930: 55–56). C.M. Fürst published an article on a human skull from Ayioryitika that Blegen had sent to him in Sweden (Fürst 1932: 55–56). All of this activity suggests that work on a publication was underway in the early 1930s.

At this point, Blegen evidently set aside work on the Ayioryitika publication in order to attend to other projects. The German and Italian occupation of Greece and the ensuing Civil War prevented him from visiting Greece for a number of years. It was not until 1951, at the Institute of Archaeology in London, that Blegen presented a preliminary report on the excavations, in a lecture entitled "The Pre-Classical Inhabitants of Greece." This lecture survives in a typescript in the archives of the Blegen Library at the University of Cincinnati. Six pages of it are devoted to a summary of the architecture, pottery, and small finds from the site (Blegen 1951b).

During the war years (1941–1948), the Museum of Tegea was ransacked, and the bags of Ayioryitika sherds were dumped in the museum's courtyard. They lay abandoned until 1965 when agents of the American School at Athens brought them to the Museum of Corinth to be organized and studied. Nineteen small cloth bags of context pottery from Ayioryitika survived intact, but most of the sherds from the Tegea Museum had spilled out of their bags, and had become separated from any context information. There is no record of whether the material that Blegen took to Athens in 1931 was included in the study, or whether it remained in Athens.

At Corinth, under the supervision of Henry Robinson, students of the American School sorted through approximately fifty boxes of pottery, selecting sherds that could be joined and a sample of representative wares. Three crates of sherds were returned to the Museum of Tegea. Two small boxes of sherds were retained for the Corinth study collection. Another, larger box became part of the Study Collection in the Archives of the American School. Most of the sherds were buried in an empty chamber tomb in the Anaploga cemetery at Corinth (Robinson 1965).

The fate of Blegen's "more important context pottery" and the small finds and animal bones that he took to Athens in 1931 is not known. Although 213 small finds, including forty figurines and figurine fragments, are inventoried in Blegen's notebooks, only three figurine fragments and a handful of stone tools were found among the abandoned mass of material from the museum courtyard. It seems clear that the small finds that Blegen took to Athens in 1931 had never been returned to Tegea. There is nothing in Blegen's existing papers to indicate the whereabouts of this material; one can only hope that it survives intact (perhaps stored during the War in a museum with finds from another prehistoric site) where it may one day be discovered.

The excavated materials from Ayioryitika are now housed in four locations: the Museum of Tegea at Alea in Arcadia; the study collection of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens; the Museum of Corinth; and the archives of the Blegen Library at the University of Cincinnati (small study collection of surface finds). A few sherds said to have been collected from the site in the 1930s by Hazel Hansen are in the sherd collection of the Museum of Stanford University (information courtesy of Mark Munn), and a few others are in the sherd collection of the University of Missouri at Columbia (information courtesy of Guy Sanders).

The field notebooks and unpublished reports detailing the disposal of the pottery at Corinth are in the American School at Athens; the watercolors, extant plans, and a typescript of Blegen's 1951 lecture are in the Archives of the University of Cincinnati. Several rolls of negatives taken of the excavations at Ayioryitika reportedly were destroyed in Cincinnati