

PELLANA

*Χελιδόνια πετούν εκεί που βρίσκεται η κούφια Λακεδαιμονίας –
Όμηρος**



Image 1 Mycenaean warriors

A RESOURCE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

[PETER ADAMIS](#)

** SWALLOWS FLY WHERE HOLLOW LACEDAEMON LIES -
HOMER*

DEDICATION

THIS LIVING DOCUMENT IS DEDICATED TO MY WIFE YOVANNA, MY FOUR SONS, DAVID WILLIAM, PAUL ARTHUR PHILLIP, MATTHEW ALLEN NORMAN, MARK DANIEL ADAMIS AND TO MY BROTHERS PHILLIP AND KOSTANTINOS ADAMIS

YOU HAVE AND ALWAYS WILL BE ON MY MIND

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Image 2 The Vrisi

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ABSTRACT

PELLANA: A Resource Historical perspective which explores past and present knowledge to make a case whether Pellana was a major administrative centre or merely a norther frontier town of ancient Lacedaemon. This resource of knowledge, presents a comprehensive exploration of Pellana, a historically significant site in the context of ancient Lacedaemon (Laconia), Greece. The document is dedicated to my family and aims to synthesize various strands of historical, archaeological, and cultural narratives surrounding Pellana, with a particular focus on its role during the Mycenaean period and subsequent historical eras.

The document is structured into several parts, beginning with an introduction that sets the tone for an ongoing debate about Pellana's potential identification as the palace of Menelaus and Helen, as mentioned in Homeric texts. It emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, integrating mythological sources, archaeological evidence, and historical accounts, while acknowledging the limitations of existing scholarly interpretations.

1. Part One discusses Pellana's administrative significance in ancient Lacedaemon, presenting arguments for its role as a possible administrative center during the Mycenaean period. The strategic location of Pellana along the Eurotas River and its archaeological findings, including tholos tombs and Cyclopean walls, suggest its prominence in regional governance and trade.
2. Part Two delves into archaeological discoveries at Pellana, showcasing evidence of Mycenaean habitation and cultural richness. Key findings, such as monumental tombs and artifacts, support the hypothesis of Pellana as a significant settlement during the Bronze Age.
3. Part Three examines the mythological connections of Pellana to figures like Menelaus and Helen, exploring how these associations enhance the site's historical narrative. The document engages with the ongoing discourse regarding the identification of Homeric Lacedaemon and the implications of Pellana's archaeological evidence for understanding Greek mythology.
4. Part Four highlights the archaeological and historical insights derived from the findings at Pellana, emphasizing its role in the broader context of Mycenaean civilization and its contributions to Greek culture.
5. Part Five explores the geographical and historical significance of Pellana, detailing how its strategic location and agricultural potential shaped its development as a crucial settlement in ancient Greece.
6. Part Six addresses contributing factors to the collapse of Mycenaean society, examining how natural disasters, warfare, and societal struggles played a role in the decline of Pellana and other Mycenaean centres.
7. Part Seven reflects on the decline of Pellana as an administrative hub, linking it to the broader collapse of the Mycenaean civilization and the rise of Sparta.
8. Part Eight draws connections between archaeological findings and mythological narratives, arguing for Pellana's importance in understanding the interplay between history and legend in Greek culture.
9. Part Nine discusses Pellana's post-classical period, assessing its historical trajectory from a significant Mycenaean center to a lesser-known village under various ruling powers, including the Romans and Ottomans.
10. Part Ten focuses on the accounts of ancient travellers who documented Pellana, reinforcing its historical significance through their observations.

It calls for further research and preservation efforts to uncover the rich history of Pellana, recognizing its potential as a vital site for understanding the complexities of ancient Greek civilization. Through a synthesis of various sources, my aim is to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding Pellana's historical identity while celebrating its cultural legacy. The document serves as a living resource for scholars, educators, and enthusiasts of Greek history, underscoring the importance of community engagement in preserving and promoting local heritage.

CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. [Cover](#)
2. [Dedication](#)
3. [Published](#)
4. [Abstract](#)
5. [Contents](#)
6. [Illustrations](#)
7. [Maps](#)
8. [Acknowledgements](#)
9. [Foreword](#)
10. [Self-Appraisal](#)
11. [Preface](#)
12. [Introduction](#)
13. [Part One - The Debate Continues](#)
14. [Part Two - Archaeological Finds at Pellana](#)
15. [Part Three - Mythological Significance and Connections to Menelaus and Helen](#)
16. [Part Four - Archaeological & Historical Insights](#)
17. [Part Five - Geographical & Historical Significance of Ancient Pellana](#)
18. [Part Six - Contributing Factors to the Collapse of Mycenaean Society](#)
19. [Part Seven - The Decline of Ancient Pellana](#)
20. [Part Eight - Archaeological Sites](#)
21. [Part Nine - Pellana post classical period](#)
22. [Part Ten - Bridging Ancient History & Contemporary Life](#)
23. [Part Eleven - Scholarly scepticism and support](#)
24. [Part Twelve - Academic Consensus](#)
25. [Part Thirteen - Bridging ancient history & contemporary life](#)
26. [Appendix 1 - Theodore Spyropoulos](#)
27. [Appendix 2 - Thanasis Smirnios](#)
28. [Appendix 3 - M Varvitsiotis](#)
29. [Appendix 4 - Nicholas Bakis](#)
30. [Appendix 5 - Peter Adamis](#)
31. [Appendix 6 - John Ezard](#)
32. [Appendix 7 - Mogens Herman Hansen](#)
33. [Appendix 8 - Paul Christensen](#)
34. [Appendix 9 – Ancient references to Pellana](#)
35. [Appendix 10 – Post Greek War of Independence](#)
36. [Appendix 11 – Observations and Oral stories](#)
37. [Appendix 12 – Pellana fields diagram](#)
38. [Appendix 13 - Greek government blocked discovery of Pellana](#)
39. [Reflections – A case study for the future](#)
40. [References and Links](#)
41. [Index](#)
42. [Author](#)
43. [Back cover – Mycenaean warriors and farmers](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

Image	Page
1. Image 1 Mycenean warriors	Front cover
2. Image 2 The Vrisi	3
3. Image 3. Theodore Spyropoulos at the Palaeokastro	8
4. Image 4 Taygetos Mountain Range	10
5. Image 5 Palaeokastro & Parnona Mountains	10
6. Image 6. Royal Tomb	17
7. Image 7 Tholos tomb	17
8. Image 8 Euvrotas Valley	20
9. Image 9 Ancient foundations	20
10. Image 10 Tyndareus	21
11. Image 11 Remnants of ancient road from Belemina to Sparta	24
12. Image 12 Thera Erupting - A reconstruction	29
13. Image 13 Hoplite warrior	32
14. Image 14 Lone Pillar of Asclepius temple	33
15. Image 15 Menelaus and Helen reunion at Troy	35
16. Image 16 Gauls, Slavs, Albanians, Franks & Venetian Influence	40
17. Image 17 Ottoman Influence	40
18. Image 18 The struggle for Independence	42
19. Image 19 War of Independence	42
20. Image 20 Lacedaemon warrior	42
21. Image 21 Digging the pump station & artefacts	69
22. Image 22 Ancient Pellana - Reconstructed	71
23. Image 23 HANZAC Memorial	73
24. Image 24 Civil war veterans	74
25. Image 25 Early Greeks	103
26. Image 26 King Tyndareus	105
27. Image 27 Mycenean Warriors	107
28. Image 28 Achaean Warriors	108
29. Image 29 Pellana via satellite	110
30. Image 30 Overhead view of Pellana	115
31. Image 31 Klephte	115
32. Image 32 Pellana Fields today	1119
33. Image 33 Pellaniotes Archaeological support	125
34. Image 34 Pellaniotes of a bygone era	126
35. Image 35 Mycenean warriors and farmers	127

MAPS

Map	Page
Major Mycenean centres	11
Mycenaeen Collapse	32
Rigas 1796 Pre-War of Independence map	39
German map 1890	39
Hellenistic Expansion	109
Greece 1832 – 1947	114
Migration routes of Pellaniotes	116

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NOTE: * Denotes, known to be deceased with effect final publishing.

FORWARD

This document offers a reflective introduction to a work discussing the historical significance of Pellana, a key site in the [Mycenaean world](#). As the author I would prefer to think that I have set the tone by acknowledging the ongoing debate about Pellana's potential role as the palace of [Menelaus](#) and [Helen](#), while at the same time, clarifying that the purpose of this document isn't to resolve that specific question. It is of relevance to note that I am not an academic for I do not have the capacity, skills and knowledge. While the document is free to be downloaded, it was not designed to be sold or to make any profit from it. The document's value is in the information and used as a resource to enable those whose interests lie in Pellana and its environs.

Instead, the work focuses on the decades of research, synthesizing various forms of evidence - including historical records, oral histories, archaeological findings, and academic perspectives; while drawing from the author's own observations and that of others whose interests lie with Pellana. I have attempted, poorly perhaps, to make it as informative as possible, with links to the internet enabling readers with access to further knowledge to provide a greater understanding of the subject. These links are in PDF format and in electronic format. I also draw heavily on internet sources, identifying learned scholars whose intellect and knowledge of Pellana are far greater than mine. If I have erred in not acknowledging all the academic members whose work I have extracted, I apologise.

I make mention of figures like [Theodore Spyropoulos](#), the renowned Greek archaeologist, and [Thanasis Smirnios](#), a past mayor of Pellana, to highlight the involvement of notable experts in the area, lending further credibility to the research. Much of the local knowledge was created as a result of a myriad of volunteers from the village of Pellana, those associated with the Northern villages and individuals living abroad. Additionally, my translation efforts will appear to emphasize the importance of maintaining the original meanings of Greek texts while making them accessible to an English-speaking audience. Any errors in the translations and/or meanings are mine and mine alone and as such, I humbly acknowledge my limitations in the translations. I have drawn upon the resources of my old friend of many years, Leon Tsongas to assist with the translation into Greek. Therefore, any errors in the translations and/or meanings are mine and mine alone and I humbly apologise and acknowledge my limitations in the translations.

This introduction provides a valuable context for the study of Pellana, setting up an exploration that incorporates multiple perspectives and research over a span of fifty years. It promises a comprehensive review of the site's importance in the broader history of [Mycenaean Greece](#), even if the question of whether it was Menelaus's palace remains unresolved and it is speculative academic whether this is the case.



Image3. Theodore Spyropoulos at the Palaeokastro

SELF APPRAISAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AS A HISTORICAL RESOURCE

While this living document, "PELLANA: being a Resource Historical Perspective", I would like to think that it presents a rich and multifaceted exploration of Pellana, it is essential to approach the document with a critical lens, considering both its strengths in interdisciplinary scholarship and its weaknesses related to bias and methodological rigor. As stated above, given that this is a living document, I welcome all constructive criticism with the aim of enhancing it.

STRENGTHS:

1. **Comprehensive Scope:** The document provides a thorough exploration of Pellana, encompassing its historical, archaeological, and cultural significance. It addresses various aspects of the site, from its Mycenaean roots to its role in the classical era, making it a valuable resource for understanding the complexities of ancient Laconia.
2. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** The emphasises on the importance of integrating different fields of study, such as archaeology, mythology, and history. This approach enriches the analysis and allows for a more nuanced understanding of Pellana's significance.
3. **Rich Archaeological Insights:** The document details numerous archaeological findings, including tholos tombs and other artifacts, which support the argument for Pellana's status as a major settlement during the Mycenaean period. This evidence is essential for validating the site's historical claims.
4. **Mythological Connections:** The exploration of Pellana's ties to figures like Menelaus and Helen adds depth to the narrative. By linking archaeological evidence to mythological accounts, I would to believe that this living document illustrates how history and legend intertwine in the understanding of ancient Greek culture.
5. **Call for Preservation:** The document emphasizes the need for further research and preservation efforts, highlighting the importance of protecting and promoting local heritage. This advocacy can inspire future scholarship and community engagement with the historical site.

WEAKNESSES:

1. **Subjectivity and Personal Bias:** I confess that this perspective of mine is subject to strong personal connection to Pellana, it may introduce bias in the interpretation of evidence. While passion for the subject matter is commendable, it could lead to overemphasis on certain narratives while downplaying opposing views.
2. **Limited Scholarly Consensus:** The document acknowledges ongoing debates among scholars regarding Pellana's identification as the palace of Menelaus and the complexities of its historical significance. However, it may not sufficiently address the counterarguments or scepticism from the academic community, which could provide a more balanced perspective.



Image 4: Taygetos Mountain Range

3. **Methodological Limitations:** While the document presents numerous archaeological findings, it may lack rigorous methodological frameworks that define the data collection and analysis processes. This could affect the credibility of some claims, especially regarding the dating and significance of certain artifacts.
4. **Overreliance on Mythology:** The integration of mythological narratives alongside historical evidence is valuable, but the document risks conflating myth with history. Care should be taken to delineate between poetic embellishments and empirical data to avoid misinterpretations.
5. **Need for Further Research:** The call for continued archaeological exploration underscores the current gaps in knowledge about Pellana. While this is a strength in advocating for further study, it also highlights that the existing evidence may not yet be sufficient to draw definitive conclusions about the site's historical status.



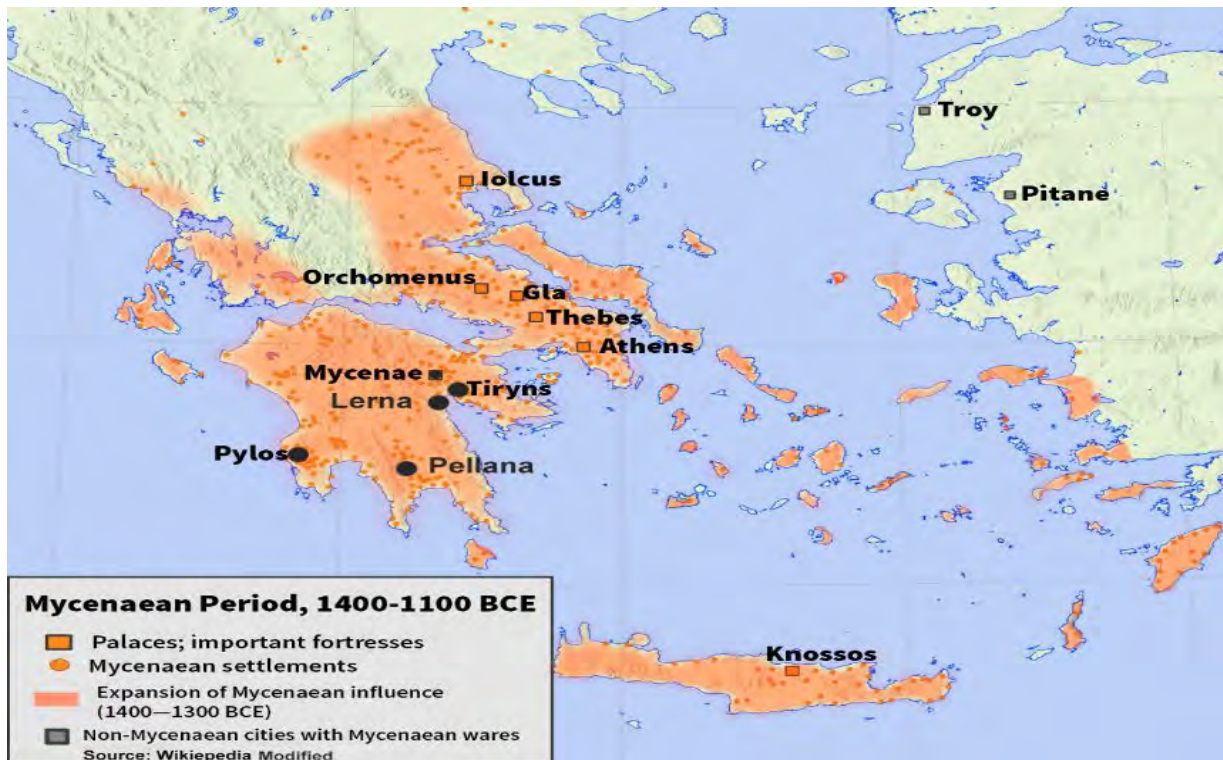
Image 5 Palaeokastro & Parnona mountains

PREFACE

History as a guide

History as a guide is a fascinating study of mankind as it offers a comprehensive and thought-provoking exploration of the tools and methodologies necessary to understand the collapse of societies throughout history. I prefer to believe the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, integrating diverse sources and scientific tools to construct a more nuanced and accurate understanding of past civilizations. Therefore, in the interests of study of the subject, I have focused on the key points as shown below:

1. [History as a Guide](#): The importance of history as a tool for understanding societal collapses and human evolution. By analysing patterns of past failures and successes, we gain insight into human resilience and the risks of environmental degradation, internal strife, or external invasions. Yet, I warn readers that historical records, often shaped by dominant groups, must be interpreted with care to avoid biased conclusions.
2. [The Role of Myths, Literature, and Oral Stories](#): Myths, while not always factual, carry deep cultural insights. The Trojan War, for example, may be mythological but reflects real historical conflicts. Similarly, indigenous oral histories have proven to be remarkably accurate in documenting past events, such as volcanic eruptions or migrations. The role of King Tyndareus and his family residing in Pellana leads me to believe that Pellana indeed held a prominent position during the Hellenistic and Mycenaean period. The sources provided within this work; I hope will become invaluable context that written academic records often omit.
3. [Ancient Texts and Extinct Languages](#): Deciphering ancient texts like the Dead Sea Scrolls, cuneiform tablets, and extinct languages such as Linear B or Mayan glyphs gives us direct access to religious beliefs, trade networks, and governance structures of past societies.



Map 1 Mycenaean polis

4. [Archaeology and Material Culture](#): Physical artifacts and ruins are a primary source for understanding past societies. In this case, I have relied much on local oral stories passed down to me by members of Pellana, based upon their recollections of artefacts found. For example, the preservation of ancient, Lerna, Pylos, Tyrins, Mycenae, Troy, Orchomenos, Thebes and other similar sites, gives us an intimate view of Mycenaean administrative and urban life. Archaeology also uncovers early human technologies and innovations, providing evidence of the material culture that shaped these civilizations.
5. [Modern Technologies and Science](#): Tools like LiDAR, radiocarbon dating, and DNA analysis have revolutionized archaeology, allowing for more precise excavations and dating. Science also offers critical insights into environmental shifts, such as those identified through ice cores or tree rings, that shaped societal dynamics.
6. [Burials and Mortuary Practices](#): Mortuary practices and skeletal remains can reveal much about a society's health, social hierarchies, diet, and even experiences of violence, as seen in the mass graves from the Black Death.
7. [Symbols, Hieroglyphics, and Inscriptions](#): Symbolic systems, like Egyptian hieroglyphics or Native American petroglyphs, provide a window into how ancient societies understood the world around them. Inscriptions, such as the Rosetta Stone, offer primary records of governance and cross-cultural exchanges.
8. **Additional Sources**: Other tools include epigraphy (the study of inscriptions), geological and astronomical records, ethnography, and trade analysis. These sources further enrich our understanding by linking human history to natural phenomena and cultural exchanges across time and space.
9. [The Role of Interdisciplinary Approaches](#): The need for integrating history with other disciplines, such as archaeology, environmental science, anthropology, and sociology. Notable examples include [Jared Diamond's Collapse](#), which draws from multiple fields to explain societal collapse, and Yuval [Noah Harari's Sapiens](#), which combines anthropology and history to track the development of human societies.
10. **Challenges and Limitations**: While history provides crucial insights, it is also incomplete and fragmented. The loss of historical records, such as the destruction of the Library of Alexandria, and biases inherent in surviving materials complicate our understanding. Additionally, technological advancements constantly reshape our views of the past, as evidenced by new genetic discoveries that challenge old assumptions about human migration.

During my research I took a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to historical study of Pellana. By combining myths, scientific analysis, archaeology, and other diverse sources, a more nuanced narratives of the past offered me foresight and warnings for the future.

It is without doubt that the site of ancient Pellana was an administrative centre during the pre-classical period. The evidence lies in the numerous tholos tombs, artefacts found during excavations by learned individuals and by the locals in enhancing modern Pellana's infrastructure. Furthermore, the location, the outlying settlements found but not identified during the construction of the new highway, the oral stories, local finds and alleged looted artefacts are an indication that Pellana was indeed a major city during the [Hellenistic period](#). Its decline as the administrative centre for North Lacedaemon is a matter of academic speculation.

I am of the opinion that the complexities of societal collapse and resilience provide valuable insights for addressing contemporary challenges, making history a powerful tool for understanding both the fragility and strength of human civilization. That is true for society today, in the wake and/or challenges of [artificial intelligence](#) and other forms of developing technologies.

INTRODUCTION

In the current world of expanding technologies, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a tool, enabled me to extract the numerous threads of information from ancient and modern sources to weave an interesting and compelling case for Pellana being the administrative centre of ancient Lacedaemon and not that of Sparta. Whether a [Hellenistic/Mycenean King - Wanax or Great Chief](#) lived there will depend further archaeological. I am of the belief that in ancient Lacedaemon, there were numerous settlements governed by a chief or Wanax with one settlement that stood out from the rest. That in my view is Pellana. The other contender for that role is the site named as [the "Menelaion"](#) at the heights East of Sparta. Therefore, the author provides his own synthesis regarding ancient Pellana.

In preparing for this living document, I have borrowed heavily on the works of others and acknowledging them throughout. I do not expect to be taken seriously by archaeologists, academics, scholars and those whose life's work is dedicated to the excellence of learning. I have merely strung together all the various threads for others to use at some distant future as a guide. I am of the opinion that Pellana, is a historically significant site in Laconia, Greece, with a rich blend of mythology, archaeology, and strategic importance. Pellana's history spans from the [Early Helladic period](#) to the [Hellenistic era](#). Located at the foothills of Mount Taygetos, about 24 kilometres from Sparta by the old road and now 17 kilometres by the new highway completed in 2016.

Seeking out and finding out the various threads of information applicable was a monumental task in itself. However, it was a labour of love and interest, given that it was my palace of birth and doing so I have tried to gather together all the numerous threads to weave a new perspective. The historical, archaeological, and cultural significance of Pellana, showcasing its multifaceted importance in ancient Greek history and mythology. Below is a refined version that further emphasizes coherence and academic polish:

Although throughout the centuries, Pellana has been looted and its stones carried away for building other buildings; there is enough to indicate that Pellana serves was a microcosm of ancient Greek culture, blending mythology, religion, and history with strategic and geographic importance. Through the writings of Pausanias, Pindar, Strabo, and others, we gain a layered understanding of the city's significance. Its role as a refuge for mythological figures, a site of religious devotion, a theatre of military conflict, and a center of athletic tradition highlights the multifaceted legacy of Pellana, ensuring its place in the annals of ancient Greek history.

Pellana's archaeological record weaves a compelling narrative of its historical and cultural significance. From its monumental tholos tombs and sophisticated infrastructure to its debated identification with Homeric Lacedaemon, the site offers an invaluable window into the Bronze Age and Mycenaean periods of Laconia. Whether or not Pellana was the city of Menelaus and Helen, its discoveries have reshaped modern interpretations of ancient Greek civilization and its enduring myths.

At the confluence of archaeology, mythology, and cultural history, Pellana stands as a testament to the intersection of history and legend. Its wealth during the Mycenaean period, associations with figures like Tyndareus and Helen of Troy, and its potential role as Homeric Lacedaemon elevate it as a cornerstone of early Greek civilization. Continued research and preservation efforts promise to uncover further insights, reinforcing Pellana's status as a site of immense scholarly and cultural value.

Moreover, Pellana's geographical and historical trajectory reflects the dynamic interplay between place, culture, and identity. From its absence in early cartographic records to its modern renaming, Pellana's evolving identity highlights the enduring power of geography in shaping historical narratives. By reclaiming its ancient name, the site embodies the resilience of cultural memory and the significance of place in constructing national identity. [Peter Adamls](#)

PART ONE

Pellana the Administrative capital of ancient Lacedaemon

[The Administrative Capital of Ancient Laconia: Pellana.](#) In the annals of ancient Greek history, Laconia -home to the famed Spartan state, it possessed a tapestry of settlements pivotal to its political, military, and administrative functions. While Sparta remains the central emblem of Laconian identity, other cities, such as Pellana, played significant roles in shaping the region's dynamics. This document provides an overview of Pellana, exploring its historical relevance as a possible administrative hub during the early periods of Laconian organization, prior to the hegemony of Sparta.

Pellana was situated in northern Laconia, along the Eurotas River, approximately 17 kilometers north of Sparta via the new highway. Its geographical placement offered both defensive advantages and access to critical trade routes connecting the Peloponnesian interior with the wider Greek world. The fertile plains surrounding Pellana ensured agricultural sustainability, while its proximity to mountainous terrain provided natural fortification.

Archaeological evidence suggests Pellana was strategically positioned as an administrative center before Sparta consolidated its dominance in the region. It may have functioned as a logistical and political nexus, anchoring the region's development during the Late Bronze Age and early Archaic periods.

Pellana's significance is rooted in the [Mycenaean period \(circa 1600–1100 BCE\)](#), when it is thought to have been one of the fortified palace centres characteristics of Mycenaean Greece. Local traditions and archaeological findings point to a well-organized settlement with evidence of palatial architecture and administrative facilities, akin to other Mycenaean hubs such as Mycenae and Pylos.

During the [Dorian migration \(circa 1100 BCE\)](#), the landscape of Laconia underwent significant change. Sparta began its rise to prominence by the 8th century BCE, absorbing or subordinating neighbouring settlements, including Pellana. However, references in later classical texts suggest that Pellana retained some degree of prominence as a regional hub, possibly serving ceremonial or administrative roles.

While historians (not all) believe that there was a Dorian invasion of the Peloponnese, I prefer the softer model of nomadic clans or tribes moving into the Peloponnese with families and flocks seeking good watered grazing lands. The Dorians arrived hundreds of years after the collapse of the Mycenaean culture and their entry into the Peloponnese should not be seen as an invasion. It is true that at some major Mycenaean centres there appears signs of hostilities, but that in itself does not mean a full-scale invasion.

Modern excavations at Pellana have unveiled a wealth of artifacts, including: Tholos Tombs: Monumental tombs attributed to elite Mycenaean rulers, indicating Pellana's role as a significant power center. Fortifications and Urban Layout: Evidence of urban planning and defensive structures highlights its strategic importance. Pottery and Tools: Finds indicate active trade with other Mycenaean centres, reflecting a thriving economy.

These discoveries affirm Pellana's status as a Mycenaean administrative site and provide insights into its sociopolitical organization. The transition from Mycenaean dominance to the Spartan-led Dorian hegemony reshaped Pellana's identity. While Sparta's militaristic society overshadowed its neighbours, Pellana likely continued as a secondary administrative centre or as a Northern fortress gate monitoring the northern approaches into Laconia.

On the other hand, numerous battles occurred over control of the Eurotas river headwaters and this may have been another reason for Pellana being maintained as sentinel outpost of the north. With Belemina outpost, Mt Chelmo fortress and Loganikos outpost, Pellana was well suited to act as an administrative centre. A major settlement was excavated near the borders of current Arcadia and Laconia, close the Euvrotas river. The settlement boasted of numerous buildings with mosaics, artefacts, a huge cemetery and living quarters. The settlements can still be located as it is next to the small St Johns chapel. The new highway has completely covered this ancient settlement.

Pellana, situated in Lakonia, Greece (37.208300, 22.324400), is known for its Mycenaean structures and its associations with the Minoan, Mycenaean, Spartan, Roman, Frankish and Ottoman empires. Once the administrative capital of ancient Lacedaemon long before the arrival of the Dorians, it administered the Mycenaean Euvrotas valley. The Dorians who settled in Sparta, passed by Pellana, peacefully and without any known clashes, with their clans and livestock following the same route taken by the new highway completed in April 2016.

The site today is an archaeological site of significant historical importance that reveals layers of ancient civilization spanning from the Early Helladic to the Hellenistic periods. Initial excavations in 1926 led by Th. Karachalios uncovered two tholos tombs at a site known as 'Spelies,' (caves). Subsequent explorations revealed a wealth of artifacts and structures, including a large tholos tomb constructed around 1500 B.C., which is believed to be royal due to its considerable size and elaborate design (Pellana - Archaic to Roman polis at Kalyvia of Georgitsi –[Pellana]). This tomb exemplifies Mycenaean funerary practices and provides insight into the social hierarchies of the time.

Determining whether Pellana served as the administrative capital of ancient Laconia (Lacedaemon) during the Mycenaean period involves examining its archaeological, historical, and strategic significance within the region. While there is evidence to suggest that Pellana was a major center of Mycenaean activity, its status as the definitive administrative capital remains subject to scholarly debate. An analysis of the available evidence is provided along with its implications for understanding Pellana's role in ancient Lacedaemon.

The acropolis of Pellana, located on Palaeokastro hill, has also yielded remains from various periods, including Hellenistic walls and potential palatial structures from the Early Helladic period. Unfortunately, the skeletal remains found were only photographed and not covered for posterity. The discovery of a monumental stone-paved road dating back to Mycenaean times suggests advanced infrastructure supporting trade and communication across the region (Pellana, LH Chamber Tomb cemetery. During heavy rains, it is possible to observe the rivulets of rain wash away the topsoil to expose numerous ancient artefacts.

Dr. Th. Spyropoulos has posited that Pellana may correspond with the Homeric city Lacedaemon, associated with figures like Menelaus and Helen (Pellana - Archaic to Roman polis at Kalyvia. However, despite these findings' significance, restoration efforts for some structures remain incomplete due to bureaucratic delays within Greece's Ministry of Culture.

As much as I would like to see that Pellana is in fact the ancestral home of Menelaus and Helen, there is insufficient evidence at this stage to support this supposition. Therefore, as archaeological studies continue in Pellana, they will continue to contribute and add value to the already accumulated stored knowledge about ancient Greek Hellenistic and Mycenean society, as well highlighting the ongoing challenges in heritage preservation.

PART TWO

Archaeological finds at Pellana

Archaeological Evidence. The archaeological discoveries at Pellana indicate that it was a significant Mycenaean settlement. Key findings include:

1. **Chamber Tombs:** The discovery of monumental chamber tombs near Pellana suggests that the site was a center of elite activity, possibly associated with a local ruling class. These tombs are consistent with Mycenaean burial practices observed at other palatial centres like Mycenae and Pylos.
2. **Cyclopean Walls:** Remains of large-scale Cyclopean masonry at Pellana are indicative of Mycenaean architectural traditions and hint at its importance as a fortified settlement.
3. **Artifacts and Pottery:** Tools, and other material remains point to sustained habitation and administrative activity during the Mycenaean era, around the 16th to 12th centuries BCE. Despite the looting, vandalism and removal of structures over the centuries, there are still remnants of ancient ruins, artefacts, pottery, tombs and foundations of ancient Pellana visible to the naked eye. Of these, only a professional in the science archeology can interpret. However, although no definitive evidence of a large palace complex akin to those at Mycenae, Tiryns, or Pylos has been uncovered, there is sufficient evidence to circumnavigate the complications surrounding the argument for Pellana as a full administrative capital.

STRATEGIC AND GEOGRAPHIC SIGNIFICANCE.

Pellana's location at the foothills of Mount Taygetos and its proximity to the Eurotas River valley positioned it strategically within Laconia. It served as a gateway between the mountainous regions and the fertile plains, facilitating trade, agriculture, and defence. This geography would have supported its role as a significant center for regional administration and control, but whether it was the primary administrative hub of the entire region is less clear. The site's relative accessibility and potential wealth, however, make it a plausible candidate for such a role.

The Role of the Menelaion and Sparta. Traditional scholarship has often centered the Menelaion, located near Sparta, as the administrative heart of Mycenaean Laconia. However, the Menelaion high-altitude location and limited archaeological findings suggest that it may have functioned more as a cultic site dedicated to Menelaus and Helen than as an administrative center. Sparta itself did not rise to prominence until the Dorian period, after the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system. In the Mycenaean era, the regional administrative structure may have been more decentralized, with multiple important sites like Pellana playing significant roles.

Modern Interpretations and Theories. Recent interpretations of Mycenaean Laconia suggest that it may not have had a single administrative capital in the centralized sense seen at Mycenae or Knossos. Instead, it might have operated as a network of interconnected centres, with Pellana, Amyclae, and other settlements each contributing to regional governance and economy. If this decentralized model is accurate, Pellana could have been a major node within the broader administrative framework of Mycenaean Laconia, if not its sole or primary capital.

While Pellana was undoubtedly a major Mycenaean settlement with significant administrative, economic, and strategic importance, the absence of unequivocal evidence for a large palace complex suggests that its designation as the administrative capital of ancient Lacedaemon remains inconclusive. It is more plausible that Pellana was one of several important centres in a distributed system of governance. Future archaeological discoveries may yet shift this understanding and solidify Pellana's role in the administrative hierarchy of Mycenaean Laconia.



Image 6 Royal Tomb

Historical and Strategic Context of Pellana. Pellana is located at the foothills of Mount Taygetos, approximately 30 kilometres from Sparta via the ancient road and now more accessible due to modern infrastructure. Its position offers both strategic advantages and agricultural potential, vital for sustaining a Mycenaean palace economy. The ancient site connects directly to the Eurotas River valley, providing a natural corridor for trade and communication. Unlike the Menelaion, situated high in the Taygetos foothills with limited space and resources, Pellana's lower elevation allowed for larger-scale settlements and an extensive agricultural base. Archaeological evidence supports Pellana's significance during the Mycenaean period (circa 1600–1100 BCE). Excavations have revealed chamber tombs, Cyclopean masonry, and artifacts consistent with Mycenaean palace structures. These findings are consistent with the economic and administrative functions of a Wanax's (king's) domain as described in the Linear B tablets from other Mycenaean sites such as Pylos and Mycenae.



Image 7 Tholos tomb

PART THREE

Mythological significance and connections to Menelaus and Helen (Daughter of Tyndareus)

Exploring Pellana as the Palace of Menelaus and Helen: A Synthesis of Mythology, Archaeology, and Strategic Significance. The debate over the true site of King Menelaus and Helen's palace—Pellana or the Menelaion—offers a fascinating window into ancient Greek history and mythology. By focusing on Pellana, this essay seeks to explore the potential of this historically rich and strategically important site to serve as the home of the legendary King Menelaus, "Master of the War Cry," and Helen, whose beauty ignited the Trojan War. Drawing upon archaeology, ancient sources, and modern scholarship, the case for Pellana as the true seat of Mycenaean power in Laconia will be assessed against the traditional view favouring the Menelaion near Sparta.

The mythological ties between Menelaus, Helen, and Laconia are well-documented in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as in later works by Euripides and Pausanias. The Homeric epics describe Menelaus as a powerful ruler in Laconia, whose kingdom was central to the Achaean coalition against Troy. While the Menelaion traditionally claims this legacy, the lack of substantial palace-like architecture at the site casts doubts on its suitability as the seat of a *Wanax*.

Pellana, on the other hand, aligns with Homeric descriptions of a flourishing Mycenaean stronghold. Its proximity to fertile lands and strategic waterways could have supported the wealth and influence attributed to Menelaus. Furthermore, the identification of Pellana as an ancient trade hub strengthens its connection to Helen, whose abduction by Paris symbolized a clash of civilizations rooted in competition for resources and alliances.

Comparing Pellana and the Menelaion. The Menelaion proponents often cite its commanding views of the Eurotas Valley and its symbolic association with Spartan dominance. However, these attributes better suit a cult site dedicated to Menelaus and Helen than a functioning palace. The structures uncovered at the Menelaion, though significant, lack the architectural scale and complexity of known Mycenaean palaces like those at Tiryns or Mycenae.

In contrast, Pellana offers a more plausible setting for a Mycenaean administrative and residential complex. The chamber tombs discovered at Pellana suggest a center of elite activity, potentially including the burial of royal figures. This aligns with the Mycenaean practice of monumental burials near palatial centres, reinforcing Pellana's candidacy as the true palace site.

Modern Interpretations and Implications. Recent scholarship has revisited the question of Pellana's role in Mycenaean Laconia, emphasizing its archaeological significance. While definitive proof of Menelaus and Helen's presence remains elusive, Pellana's prominence within Mycenaean Laconia is increasingly acknowledged. This recognition not only reshapes our understanding of Laconian prehistory but also highlights the interplay between mythology and archaeology in reconstructing ancient landscapes.

Pellana therefore presents a compelling case as the historical and mythical seat of King Menelaus and Helen. Its archaeological richness, strategic location, and alignment with Homeric descriptions of Mycenaean palatial life challenge the traditional dominance of the Menelaion in scholarly discourse. As our understanding of Mycenaean civilization continues to evolve, Pellana stands as a testament to the complex narratives woven into the fabric of ancient Greece—where myth and history converge to illuminate the past.

The legacy of Menelaus & Helen in Laconia

Mythological Foundations. The excerpt traces the enduring cultural and mythological significance of Menelaus and Helen in Laconia, a region steeped in the lore of the Mycenaean age. Helen, central to the Trojan War saga, occupies a dual role in ancient Greek culture: she is both a mythical figure of Homeric epic and a subject of local hero cult worship. Her association with Sparta (historically Lacedaemon) is reinforced by religious traditions, such as the cults of Helen and the Dioscuri (her divine brothers Castor and Pollux) at Therapne.

However, recent archaeological claims, such as the proposed relocation of Menelaus' palace to Pellana, challenge traditional interpretations rooted in literary and religious sources. This tension underscores the fluidity of myth and its adaptation over time. While ancient Spartans embedded Helen's legacy into their cultural identity by situating her narrative firmly within Sparta, competing interpretations like Pellana suggest broader regional claims to mythological heritage.

Archaeological Context. The debate over Menelaus' palace exemplifies the interplay between archaeology and Homeric tradition. Excavations in Sparta have revealed settlements and structures that hint at significant habitation during the Late Bronze Age. However, no palace comparable to those at Mycenae or Pylos has emerged, reflecting either the absence of a central power structure in Laconia during this era or the limitations of current archaeological methods.

Despite these gaps, scholars caution against reading Homer as a direct historical account. The Iliad and Odyssey reflect a combination of historical memory and poetic embellishment, crafted long after the Mycenaean period. The excavation of a "mansion" in Sparta may thus represent a smaller-scale elite residence rather than a palace on par with Agamemnon's or Nestor's, aligning with Laconia's possibly decentralized power in the Late Bronze Age.

Tyndareus and the Political Foundations of Sparta. Tyndareus, the mythical king of Sparta and father of Helen, serves as a symbol of Sparta's pre-classical past. His expulsion and subsequent restoration by Heracles weave his story into the broader tapestry of heroic myth, underscoring themes of exile, alliance, and divine favour. These myths legitimized Spartan claims to power during the Archaic period, linking their territory and institutions to an illustrious heroic lineage.

The passage also highlights Tyndareus' diplomatic wisdom, particularly his role in orchestrating Helen's marriage. The oath of Tyndareus—where Helen's suitors swore to defend her chosen husband—laid the groundwork for the collective Greek response to her abduction by Paris, as recounted in the Iliad. This narrative element not only reinforces the sanctity of oaths in Greek culture but also reflects the importance of consensus and alliance in Greek geopolitics.

Religious and Cultural Syncretism. The conflation of two Helens—one a vegetation goddess and the other the Homeric heroine—illustrates the syncretic nature of Greek religion. This blending of local deities with Pan-Hellenic figures is a hallmark of ancient Greek cultural evolution, where older, agrarian cults were often reinterpreted in light of emerging narratives from epic poetry. The Helen worshiped at Therapne thus represents both the fertility of the land and the enduring allure of Homeric legend. Similarly, the Dioscuri, linked to Helen as protectors and warriors, embody the martial values of Spartan society. Their association with Pellana, as noted in Pausanias, enriches the tapestry of local myth and highlights the fluid boundaries between myth and geography in ancient thought.



Image 8 Euvrotas Valley

The First Sacred War and the Historical Pellana. The destruction of Pellana, tentatively attributed to Kleisthenes during the First Sacred War, connects the mythical significance of the site to tangible historical events. While definitive proof is lacking, the narrative aligns with patterns of inter-polis conflict in the Archaic period. The mention of Pellana's destruction serves as a reminder of how ancient cities often merged their historical and mythical pasts to construct a cohesive identity.

Complexities of source material. The legacy of Menelaus, Helen, and their associated myths highlights the interconnection of archaeology, literature, and cultural memory in reconstructing ancient Greek history. Whether examining the heroic age through the lens of epic poetry or interpreting archaeological findings in Laconia, it is essential to navigate the delicate balance between myth and material evidence. The shifting claims about sites like Pellana emphasize how the past is continuously reimagined, reflecting both ancient narratives and modern scholarly debates. This synthesis not only preserves the complexity of the source material but also situates it within broader academic discussions, offering insights into the rich interplay of history, myth, and archaeology in the ancient Greek world.



Image 9 Ancient Foundations

PART FOUR

Archaeological & historical insights

Modern archaeological discoveries support ancient descriptions, revealing tholos tombs and evidence of Mycenaean habitation. These findings suggest that Pellana was a significant settlement even before the classical era, linking it to the broader Mycenaean civilization. William Martin Leake's early identification of ruins, including city walls, provides a tangible connection to the narratives preserved in ancient texts. Strabo also speculates about Pellana's identity in Homeric tradition, considering it as a possible candidate for Enope, one of the cities offered by Agamemnon to Achilles (Geography 8.4.5). While this identification remains debated, it situates Pellana within the Homeric world, further enriching its historical tapestry.

Cultural Legacy. Pellana's contributions to Greek culture extend beyond myth and military history. The mention of Philippos, a boy boxer from Pellana honoured in Olympia (Pausanias 6.8.5), illustrates the city's role in fostering athletic excellence. This achievement not only brought prestige to Pellana but also integrated it into the Pan-Hellenic tradition of the Olympic Games. The city's association with divine myths, religious practices, and natural springs reflects the deeply intertwined nature of Greek culture, where, geography often shaped spiritual and social life. The spring Pellanis and its surrounding legends symbolize the ancients' reverence for nature and its integration into their worldview.

Mythological Origins. The name "Pellana" is steeped in legend, with two primary etymological roots. One interpretation links it to the word pella, meaning "stone" or "stony hill," which resonates with its rugged terrain. Another derives from a local myth involving a girl who fell into the spring Pellanis, her veil later surfacing in the spring Lancia (modern Zoros). This tale imbues the area with a mystical aura and ties it to ancient Greek storytelling traditions.

Tyndareus. Pellana is also intricately connected to the mythological figure Tyndareus, the exiled king of Sparta and father of Helen of Troy and the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux). According to legend, Tyndareus sought refuge in Pellana, strengthening its association with one of Greece's most enduring sagas—the events leading to the Trojan War. These connections position Pellana not just as a historical site but as a touchstone of Greek myth.



Image - 10 Tyndareus

PART FIVE

Geographical & historical significance of ancient Pellana

Pellana, a site of mythological intrigue and historical prominence, holds a unique position in the cultural and strategic landscape of ancient Greece. This ancient settlement, nestled near the Eurotas River and the Taygetos mountain range, served as both a frontier fortress and a cultural hub in Laconia. Its significance is underscored by its geographical advantages, mythological associations, and archaeological findings, which together reveal its multifaceted role in Greek history.

Strategic Role and Geographic Importance. Pellana's location along the Eurotas River and its proximity to Mount Taygetos underscored its strategic value. Serving as a frontier fortress, it marked a vital transition between Laconia and Arcadia. Ancient geographers like Strabo and historians such as Xenophon emphasize Pellana's defensibility and its role in controlling access to fertile plains and critical trade routes. The fortified structure known as Charakoma, attributed to the Spartans, highlights the town's military importance.

Archaeological evidence suggests Pellana's prominence predates the Mycenaean period, making it a possible contender for the ancient capital of Laconia. This has led some scholars to associate Pellana with the early city of Lacedaemon, linked to figures like Menelaus, the "Master of the War Cry," and Helen of Troy. Excavations by Dr. Theodoros Spyropoulos have unearthed royal tombs and palace structures, bolstering arguments for Pellana as a center of early Greek civilization and challenging established narratives of Mycenaean history.

Mythological and Cultural Connections. Beyond its strategic importance, Pellana was deeply embedded in the cultural and mythological fabric of Laconia. Its acropolis is traditionally identified as the site of Tyndareus's palace, connecting it to the legendary lineage of Spartan kings. Furthermore, its association with athletic traditions, possibly linked to local prizes and events, suggests a vibrant regional culture.

The springs of Pellanis and Lancia were more than just water sources; they were imbued with mythological significance and served as a testament to the town's connection to both practical sustenance and symbolic narratives. These natural features contributed to Pellana's ability to sustain its population while anchoring it in the collective imagination of the Greek world.

Decline and Legacy. Pellana's trajectory mirrors that of Sparta itself. As Sparta's power waned in the classical and Hellenistic periods, Pellana gradually faded from prominence, becoming a minor settlement by Roman times. However, its archaeological legacy offers invaluable insights into the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of ancient Laconia. The decline of Pellana, from a thriving Mycenaean hub to a small village, highlights the broader shifts in regional power and economic patterns. Despite this, its rich mythological and historical associations endure, keeping its legacy alive as a subject of scholarly interest.

Acropolis and Settlement at Palaeokastro. The acropolis of Pellana, situated on Palaeokastro Hill, has revealed a continuum of habitation from the Early Helladic period (circa 2500 BCE) to the Byzantine era:

- **Early Helladic Relics:** Stone crepis (terraces) and tumuli graves on the southern slope point to early Bronze Age activity.
- **Mycenaean Palace and Infrastructure:** Excavations suggest the presence of a palatial complex with a central megaron, storerooms, workshops, and domestic quarters. Cyclopean walls and a monumental gate—similar to the Lion Gate at Mycenae—add to the site's architectural grandeur.

- **Hellenistic and Frankish Remains:** Subsequent periods saw the construction of defensive walls and other structures, reflecting Pellana's strategic importance across millennia.
- **Controversy Over Homeric Lacedaemon:** Archaeologist Theodoros Spyropoulos proposed that the acropolis was the site of Homeric Lacedaemon and the palace of Menelaus and Helen, though other scholars argue it is too remote from known Mycenaean centres like the Menelaion.

Topography of Pellana in Eurotas valley

Ancient Pellana, located in the Eurotas Valley of Laconia in the Peloponnese, holds a critical place in understanding the historical geography and archaeology of the region. A settlement of considerable antiquity, Pellana is often associated with the early Mycenaean period and serves as a significant point of reference for scholars investigating the socio-political and economic development of prehistoric Greece. The following essay examines the topographical features, archaeological findings, and historical significance of Pellana, highlighting its role within the broader context of the Eurotas Valley.

Geographical Context. The Eurotas Valley, flanked by the Taygetus and Parnon mountain ranges, forms a fertile corridor in southern Greece. This natural environment, with its access to water from the Eurotas River and its defensible terrain, was conducive to early settlement and agricultural development. Pellana is situated on the northern fringes of the valley, approximately 25 kilometers from modern Sparta. Its elevation and strategic position near natural routes connecting the Laconian plain with northern territories made it a pivotal location for trade and communication during antiquity.

The topography of Pellana reveals a landscape dominated by rolling hills and valleys, interspersed with karstic formations and limestone outcrops. These geological features provided both natural fortifications and building materials, contributing to the settlement's defensive and architectural character. Additionally, the proximity to abundant water resources supported agricultural productivity, with evidence pointing to the cultivation of olives, grains, and grapes.

Integration into the Eurotas Valley Economy. The economic role of Pellana within the Eurotas Valley cannot be understated. Its fertile plains allowed for the surplus production of agricultural goods, which were likely traded with neighbouring regions. The site's position at the crossroads of several trade routes facilitated the movement of goods, ideas, and people, further enriching its economic and cultural landscape. Pellana's contribution to the region's agricultural and artisanal output underscores its integration into the broader Mycenaean and early Greek economies. Excavations of storage facilities and workshops suggest the presence of organized production systems, supporting the hypothesis of centralized economic activity.

The topography of ancient Pellana, marked by its strategic location, fertile lands, and defensible terrain, was instrumental in its development as a significant settlement in the Eurotas Valley. Archaeological findings, from tholos tombs to pottery and inscriptions, highlight its role as a cultural and economic hub during the Mycenaean period and beyond. While its prominence waned with the ascendancy of Sparta, Pellana remains a critical site for understanding the interplay between geography, economy, and power in ancient Laconia.

Future archaeological endeavours and interdisciplinary research are poised to shed further light on the enduring legacy of Pellana, enriching our comprehension of early Greek civilization and its intricate networks of settlement and trade.

Economy and Notable Products. Pellene was famous for its high-quality cloaks, which were prized in local games and contests (*Strabo, Pindar*).

Military and Political Role. During the Peloponnesian War, Pellene uniquely supported Sparta among the Achaean cities and later played a role in the conflicts of the Achaean League. In Alexander the Great's era, the tyrant Chaeron, with Alexander's backing, ruled Pellene (*Thucydides, Pausanias*).

Pellana location and identity

Distinct from Pellene, Pellana (modern Pellana in Laconia) was located on the road connecting Sparta to Arcadia. Unlike Pellene, it appears to have been primarily a regional hub and not a significant city-state. Mentioned in the context of Spartan territory, it was linked with the broader geopolitical sphere of Laconia and held strategic value as part of a transit route.

Cultural and Historical Distinction

Pellana does not share the same mythological or cultural prominence as Pellene. It is primarily noted in passing within Spartan contexts and lacks the extensive archaeological or literary references found with Pellene.

Differentiating Pellene and Pellana. While both locations are historically significant, Pellene in Achaia was a major city with religious, cultural, and political influence, whereas Pellana in Laconia served a more subdued role as part of Spartan-controlled territory. Key differences include:

- **Location:** Pellene in Achaia (near the Corinthian Gulf) vs. Pellana in Laconia (Spartan Road to Arcadia).
- **Cultural Importance:** Pellene was a city-state with festivals, temples, and mythological connections; Pellana was a smaller, less documented settlement.
- **Economic Role:** Pellene's famed cloaks underline its economic significance, absent in Pellana's records.

Routes from Sparta to [Belemina](#)



Image - 11 Remnants of Belemina to Sparta Road.

Belemina to Sparta. The route connecting Sparta to Belemina during the archaic to byzantine period, played a significant role in the history and development of the region, serving as a major northward passage throughout antiquity. Key insights into this route, including its evolution from the Archaic to the Byzantine period, reveal the interplay between geography, infrastructure, and historical context.

Key Features of the Sparta-Belemina Route

1. Historical Significance:

- a. This route was vital for movement northward from Sparta, enabling communication, trade, and military access. It also linked Sparta to key neighbouring regions, reinforcing its geopolitical influence during the Classical and Byzantine eras.

2. Course of the Route:

- a. The ancient road initially followed a path roughly aligned with the modern and Turko-Venetian Road up to the Kopanos Bridge. However, further north, it diverged to follow the Eurotas River, particularly near Helleniko and Pellana, sites pivotal in Spartan history.
- b. Unlike the modern road, the ancient path adhered closely to the river to bypass a steep cleft north of the divergence point. This adaptation showcases ancient engineering aimed at avoiding difficult terrain.

3. Geographical Challenges and Infrastructure:

- a. **Bridging the River:** The deep cleft mentioned north of the divergence was likely bridged in antiquity, emphasizing the importance of maintaining connectivity. The use of bridges to cross challenging areas like the Eurotas underscores the sophistication of ancient infrastructure. The precise alignment of these ancient bridges, particularly those north of Kopanos, may have shifted during later periods, as evidenced by changes in road alignments observed in Byzantine and post-Byzantine times.

4. Byzantine Adjustments:

- a. Estimating how long the alternative, more direct routes persisted into the Byzantine era is challenging. Byzantine engineers likely adapted classical road systems, but certain deviations might have been retained for practical reasons, such as avoiding erosion or maintaining older infrastructure.

Cultural and Archaeological Implications.

- a. The continuity and adaptation of the Sparta-Belemina route reflect the strategic importance of the Eurotas River basin.
- b. Infrastructure like bridges not only facilitated transportation but also served as markers of technological prowess and territorial control.
- c. Archaeological remains along this route, including bridge fragments and road sections, offer valuable insights into the evolution of travel and trade from Sparta's zenith in the Classical period to its endurance in Byzantine times. This route stands as a testament to the enduring significance of geography in shaping historical developments and the innovative spirit of ancient and medieval engineers in overcoming natural obstacles.

PART SIX

Contributing factors to [collapse of Mycenaean society](#)

The collapse of the Mycenaean civilization around 1200 BCE has been a subject of intense scholarly debate, as it marked the end of the Late Bronze Age in Greece and ushered in the so-called Greek Dark Ages. This collapse is often attributed to a complex interplay of natural and human-induced factors, including natural disasters, warfare, societal struggles, and economic instability. Below is a synthesis of current academic understanding of the potential causes. In my opinion natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and famine were the main causes for decline of the Mycenaean palatial system and as such, Pellana in the North of Lacedaemon suffered the same fate. Evidence of broken pottery, damaged walls, volcanic ash deposits, Linear B texts (Watchers at Pylos) indicate that such disasters would have been devastating and volcanic eruptions could have impacted the climate.

Natural Disasters:

- **Earthquakes.** The Mycenaean heartland, located on the tectonically active Greek mainland, experienced frequent seismic activity. Archaeological evidence of collapsed buildings and signs of reconstruction suggests that earthquakes may have contributed to the destabilization of key urban centres like Mycenae, Tiryns, and Pylos. Earthquakes alone, however, are unlikely to explain the widespread and long-lasting collapse but could have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. (See below).
- **Climate Change and Famine.** Paleoclimatic data indicate that the Late Bronze Age experienced periods of drought and cooler temperatures, which could have reduced agricultural productivity. A decline in food production may have led to famine, population decline, and social unrest, further weakening the Mycenaean states.
- **Volcanic Activity.** Some researchers have suggested that volcanic eruptions, such as the Thera (Santorini) eruption, impacted the region's climate and trade. However, the Thera eruption occurred centuries earlier (circa 1600 BCE) and is less directly connected to the Mycenaean collapse. Other indirect impacts from distant eruptions might have worsened climatic challenges during the Mycenaean decline. (See below)

Human-Induced Factors:

- **Warfare and Invasion.** Evidence of widespread destruction at major Mycenaean sites points to violent conflict. Burned palace complexes and defensive architecture suggest internal uprisings or external invasions. The ["Sea Peoples"](#) theory posits that marauding groups, possibly from the Mediterranean, attacked and destabilized Mycenaean and other Late Bronze Age civilizations. Although the exact identity and origin of the Sea Peoples remain debated, the hypothesis highlights the interconnectedness of regional collapses.
- **Internal Societal Struggles.** The Mycenaean civilization was a hierarchical society centered around palace economies. These palaces controlled resources, trade, and production, and their collapse disrupted administrative, economic, and social structures. Evidence of abandoned sites and a lack of centralized governance suggests that internal power struggles or civil strife may have undermined societal cohesion.

Economic Decline. The Mycenaean economy was heavily dependent on trade, particularly for acquiring tin (essential for bronze production). Disruption of trade networks in the Eastern Mediterranean—possibly due to conflict or piracy—could have created resource shortages. An overreliance on palace economies may have made the society particularly vulnerable to economic shocks, leading to systemic collapse when these centres fell.

Synthesis of Causes. Most modern historians and archaeologists favour a "systems collapse" model, which argues that multiple factors interacted to destabilize the Mycenaean civilization. The theory suggests that natural disasters, resource scarcity, and climate stress weakened the society, while warfare and social unrest acted as catalysts for collapse. The interconnected nature of the Late Bronze Age world meant that disruptions in trade or conflict in one region had ripple effects throughout the Mediterranean.

For example, droughts might have strained food supplies, leading to social unrest. This unrest, combined with potential invasions and economic difficulties, could have led to the collapse of centralized palace systems. Once these systems failed, the complex societal structure could not sustain itself, leading to depopulation, abandonment of urban centres, and the loss of writing systems such as Linear B.

Taking all of the above factors into consideration and no other, it is reasonable to assume that the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization was likely the result of a combination of natural and human-induced factors rather than any single cause. Modern scholarship emphasizes the interplay between environmental challenges, economic and trade disruptions, and social and political instability. This multifaceted approach provides a nuanced understanding of how complex societies can unravel when faced with compounded stressors.

Earthquakes

Earthquakes profoundly influenced the decline of ancient Pellana in Laconia by damaging its infrastructure, disrupting its agricultural systems, and contributing to long-term population decline. As part of the seismically active Eurotas Valley, Pellana was unable to withstand the environmental and economic pressures that recurrent seismic events imposed. This case highlights the vulnerability of ancient societies to natural disasters and underscores the interplay between environmental and historical factors in the evolution of human settlements. Further geological and archaeological research in the region will continue to shed light on how seismic activity shaped the lives of ancient inhabitants and the landscape they called home.

Ancient Pellana, a significant settlement in the Eurotas Valley of Laconia, flourished during the Mycenaean period but eventually faded into historical obscurity. Among the various factors contributing to its decline, seismic activity played a critical role in shaping the settlement's environmental and structural stability over the centuries. Located in a tectonically active region, Pellana was susceptible to earthquakes that impacted its infrastructure, agricultural systems, and long-term viability as a center of habitation.

Seismic Activity in the Eurotas Valley. The Eurotas Valley lies near the Hellenic Arc, a major tectonic zone resulting from the collision between the Eurasian and African plates. This geotectonic context makes the region prone to frequent and sometimes severe earthquakes. Historical and geological evidence shows that seismic events have shaped the landscape of the Peloponnese for millennia, with their effects being especially pronounced in settlements like Pellana, which depended on the integrity of its infrastructure and the fertility of its surrounding land.

Impact on Infrastructure. One of the most direct consequences of earthquakes on Pellana was the damage inflicted on its architectural structures. As a settlement with a Mycenaean acropolis and monumental tholos tombs, Pellana's buildings were susceptible to collapse during seismic events. The widespread use of limestone and other local materials in construction, while suitable for the time, made the buildings vulnerable to the stresses induced by earthquakes.

Repeated seismic activity could have rendered key structures unusable, eroding the administrative and ceremonial significance of the site. Evidence from other Mycenaean sites, such as Tiryns and Mycenae, indicates that earthquakes often led to the abandonment or rebuilding of settlements. In Pellana, such damage likely contributed to its declining prominence, as the resources required to repair or reconstruct damaged facilities would have strained its economy and population.

Agricultural and Environmental Disruption. The seismic impact extended beyond architectural damage to the natural environment, particularly the agricultural base that sustained Pellana. Earthquakes often disrupt watercourses, alter drainage patterns, and lead to soil destabilization. In the case of the Eurotas Valley, a significant earthquake could have caused shifts in the Eurotas River's flow or damaged irrigation systems, making it harder to maintain consistent agricultural output. Soil liquefaction and erosion triggered by earthquakes might have also degraded the fertility of the land. These environmental changes would have undermined Pellana's ability to produce surplus food, a key factor in supporting its population and maintaining trade networks. Over time, diminished agricultural productivity could have driven inhabitants to relocate to more stable areas.

Cumulative Effects and Population Decline. The cumulative effect of recurring earthquakes likely created a sense of insecurity among Pellana's inhabitants. In a pre-modern society without the engineering means to mitigate seismic risks, the constant threat of destruction would have made long-term settlement in Pellana less attractive. This situation contrasts with the later Spartan polis, which developed in a relatively stable location within the same valley, benefiting from the consolidation of political and economic resources. As earthquakes disrupted daily life and weakened the economic foundation of the settlement, Pellana may have experienced population decline and gradual migration to more secure regions. These movements, combined with other factors such as shifting trade routes and the rise of rival centres like Sparta, ultimately contributed to its marginalization.

The Decline of Pellana in a Broader Context. The decline of Pellana cannot be attributed solely to earthquakes, as other historical dynamics—such as the centralization of power in Sparta and changes in regional trade—also played significant roles. However, the environmental impact of earthquakes provided a foundational destabilizing factor that weakened the settlement's ability to adapt to these broader challenges. In a region where seismicity remains a defining feature of the landscape, the fate of Pellana exemplifies how natural disasters can influence human history by reshaping the physical and social environments in which communities operate.

Physical survey. A physical survey conducted by the author of the landscape of Pellana, revealed that there was a monumental chasm between the Palaeokastro and that of village of Pellana today. Commencing at the home of Dimitri Maliaros home, down to the current lower centre of the village known as the Vrisi lie huge boulders and rocks on other side of the road. The chasm its self may have been as deep as 15 metres.

There is a sharp rise to the road leading up to the mid upper level of the village. This is to the road between Stavros Mihalopoulos and that of the White Springs Tavern operated by Dina Sigalos. Numerous graves were found near the Vrisi area and Mycenaean artefacts were found during the digging of the water pump. Photographic evidence of work being undertaken to install a water pump and oral histories contributed to our knowledge of ancient Pellana. (See Image 15, page 69)

The Rassias castle owned by the Rassias families was built by embedding hundreds of olive and plane tree trunks deep into the wet clay as foundations. On top of these trees, earth, clay and rock was placed on top and pressed down, absorbing any water that may have remained. Ancient material was used to provide a solid foundation upon which the "castle" was built. Today, water still can be seen gushing out in torrents at the base of the Rassias castle during the spring when the snows have melted. The Rassias castle also has a deep well built into the foundations.

Eruption of Thera

The eruption of the Thera (Santorini) volcano in the late Bronze Age (circa 1600 BCE) was one of the most significant geological events in the ancient Aegean world. Its environmental impact extended far beyond the immediate vicinity of Thera, influencing ecosystems, climate, and societies throughout the eastern Mediterranean, including regions such as Pellana in the Eurotas Valley, located in present-day southern Greece.



Understanding the Context:

- **Thera Eruption Overview.** The eruption was massive, ejecting volcanic ash and pumice into the atmosphere and depositing tephra across the Aegean and beyond. It caused a significant cooling effect on the global climate due to the vast quantities of aerosols released into the atmosphere. Tsunamis generated by the eruption devastated nearby coastal regions.
 - **Pellana and the Eurotas Valley.** Pellana was an important site during the Mycenaean period, situated in the fertile Eurotas Valley, a hub of agriculture and trade. While geographically removed from Thera, Pellana would have experienced indirect environmental impacts rather than direct devastation.
- Image 12 Thera erupting - A reconstruction

Environmental Impacts on Pellana:

1. **Volcanic Ash Fallout.** Ash clouds from Thera reached much of the Aegean region, potentially depositing fine layers of volcanic material in the Eurotas Valley. This could have temporarily affected agriculture by altering soil chemistry and damaging crops. Longer-term impacts on soil fertility, however, may have been negligible or even beneficial, as volcanic ash can enrich soils over time.
2. **Climate Disruption.** The eruption likely caused a "volcanic winter," marked by reduced sunlight and cooler temperatures, disrupting agricultural cycles. Prolonged cooling could have led to lower crop yields, food shortages, and economic stress in agricultural communities like Pellana.
3. **Tsunamis and Coastal Effects.** While the Eurotas Valley is inland and insulated from direct tsunami impacts, coastal trading partners and ports might have been disrupted. Trade networks essential to Mycenaean economic stability could have been temporarily or permanently weakened, indirectly affecting Pellana's economy and supply chains.
4. **Hydrological Changes.** Volcanic aerosols and climatic shifts could have influenced rainfall patterns, affecting river systems like the Eurotas. Variability in water availability might have further stressed agricultural systems.

Socio-Environmental Consequences:

- **Disruption of Mycenaean Society.** The Mycenaean world, including Pellana, depended heavily on stable agricultural production and trade. Environmental stressors from the Thera eruption may have contributed to social upheaval. Shifts in power dynamics and resource allocation could have arisen as communities adapted to changing conditions.
- **Cultural and Religious Responses.** Catastrophic natural events often had profound cultural and religious significance in ancient societies. The people of Pellana might have interpreted the eruption as a divine sign, influencing rituals or political shifts.

- **Resilience and Recovery.** Mycenaean societies were adaptive and could have mitigated short-term impacts through storage, trade, or migration. The long-term resilience of Pellana, evidenced by its continued occupation, suggests strategies were implemented to counteract these environmental challenges.

While the eruption of Thera did not directly devastate Pellana, its environmental effects would have cascaded into the Eurotas Valley, manifesting through altered climate, disrupted trade networks, and agricultural challenges. These impacts likely contributed to broader societal shifts during the Mycenaean period, underscoring the interconnectedness of ancient Aegean civilizations. A detailed examination of archaeological and paleoenvironmental data from Pellana and surrounding regions would provide a fuller understanding of how this transformative event shaped life in the Eurotas Valley.

New Study (2018) into the collapse. [A new study in 2018 into the collapse of the Mycenaean empire](#) suggests a significant shift in understanding the factors that contributed to its downfall. The study undertaken in 2012, a team led by German archaeologist Joseph Maran of Heidelberg University and geophysicist Klaus-G. Hinzen were conducting research in Tiryns and Midea.

The recent study highlights that the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization may have been driven more by social unrest and invasions than by natural disasters, calling for a revaluation of the factors contributing to this significant historical event. This shift in understanding not only enhances the narrative of Mycenaean history but also informs broader discussions on the dynamics of ancient societies facing existential threats. Traditionally, the dominant theory was that devastating earthquakes led to the destruction of Mycenaean palaces around 1200 BC. However, recent evidence indicates that internal uprisings or external invasions may have played a more critical role in this historical transition.

Key Insights from the New Study:

1. **Re-evaluation of Earthquake Theory:** The study, led by Joseph Maran and Klaus-G. Hinzen, concludes that while seismic activity might explain some damage observed at sites like Tiryns and Midea, many structural damages cannot be attributed to earthquakes. This calls into question the long-held belief that earthquakes were the primary catalyst for the collapse.
2. **Evidence of Internal Conflict:** The researchers argue that signs of internal strife or civil unrest could have contributed to the collapse. The rigid hierarchical structure of Mycenaean society, dominated by a warrior elite (the Wanax), may have led to social tensions and uprisings among the populace.
3. **Possibility of Invasion:** The study supports the idea that external invasions, possibly from groups like the Sea Peoples or the Dorians, could have significantly impacted Mycenaean stability. These invasions might have exploited the weakened state of Mycenaean cities following any internal disturbances.
4. **Shift in Focus from Natural Disasters to Socio-Political Factors:** The findings suggest that scholars should focus more on the socio-political dynamics within Mycenaean society and less on natural disasters. This perspective opens up discussions about the complex interactions between different groups within the region and the impact of external pressures.
5. **Understanding the Transition to the Dark Ages:** The collapse of the Mycenaean civilization led to the Greek Dark Ages, a period characterized by reduced population and loss of literacy. Understanding the causes of the collapse can provide insights into how societies transition during times of crisis.
6. **Influence on Modern Scholarship:** This new perspective encourages scholars to reevaluate existing theories about the collapse of other ancient civilizations, considering the potential for internal conflict and external invasions as common factors in societal decline.

PART SEVEN

The decline of ancient Pellana

The decline of Mycenaean Pellana as an administrative center and complex of ancient Lacedaemon (Sparta) is tied to the broader collapse of the Mycenaean civilization, a phenomenon that profoundly reshaped the Aegean world during the Late Bronze Age (circa 1200–1100 BCE). While definitive evidence is limited due to the scarcity of written records and reliance on archaeological interpretation, history and academia suggest a combination of interconnected factors that contributed to the decline of Pellana:

1. The Mycenaean Collapse. Pellana's decline parallels the widespread disintegration of Mycenaean palatial centres, including Mycenae, Tiryns, and Pylos. This collapse marked the end of the centralized palace economies that had dominated the Late Bronze Age. The system of redistributive economies, which relied on strong administrative hubs, failed, leaving cities like Pellana vulnerable.

a. Possible triggers of the collapse include:

1. **Internal strife:** Evidence of fortifications and signs of destruction suggest widespread instability and conflict within Mycenaean states.
2. **Resource depletion:** Overexploitation of local resources may have weakened the economic base of the palace-centred systems.
3. **Systemic failure:** The tightly interwoven trade and administrative networks of the Mycenaean world may have been too rigid to withstand disruptions.

2. Dorian Invasion or Migration. Classical traditions, preserved by later writers like Herodotus and Thucydides, attribute the fall of Mycenaean centres to the Dorian invasion - a migration of Greek-speaking tribes into the Peloponnese. While archaeological evidence for a large-scale invasion is debated, changes in material culture, such as simpler pottery styles (Protogeometric pottery replacing Mycenaean ceramics), suggest a shift in populations or social structures. Pellana, as a Mycenaean administrative center, likely suffered during this period of upheaval, with its role being supplanted by new settlements or centres aligned with the Dorian newcomers.

Environmental and Climatic Factors. Environmental shifts, including droughts or climatic cooling, may have reduced agricultural productivity in the fertile Eurotas valley. This would have weakened Pellana's economic base, which depended on controlling and redistributing agricultural surplus. Geological studies indicate that earthquakes, a frequent occurrence in the Peloponnese, may have damaged infrastructure or contributed to instability in the region.

Shift to Sparta as a Power Center. By the Iron Age, Sparta emerged as the dominant city in Laconia, absorbing or replacing earlier Mycenaean administrative hubs like Pellana. The transition reflects a broader cultural shift from Mycenaean hierarchical systems to the more militarized and oligarchic Spartan society of the Archaic and Classical periods. Archaeological evidence suggests that Spartan culture, while influenced by its Mycenaean predecessors, diverged significantly, developing its own unique social, political, and military structures.

- **Archaeological Evidence of Decline.** Excavations at Pellana reveal traces of Mycenaean habitation, including tombs and structures indicating its importance during the Bronze Age. However, there is a noticeable reduction in activity and material remains dating to the subsequent Dark Ages (circa 1100–800 BCE), a period marked by decentralization and cultural regression.



Image 13 - Hoplite warrior. The only reason they are called the Dark ages is because of our lack of knowledge for that time period and as such we can only speculate using other dark age examples to fill in the gaps. The absence of monumental architecture or significant finds from this later period suggests that Pellana never regained its administrative prominence after the Mycenaean collapse.

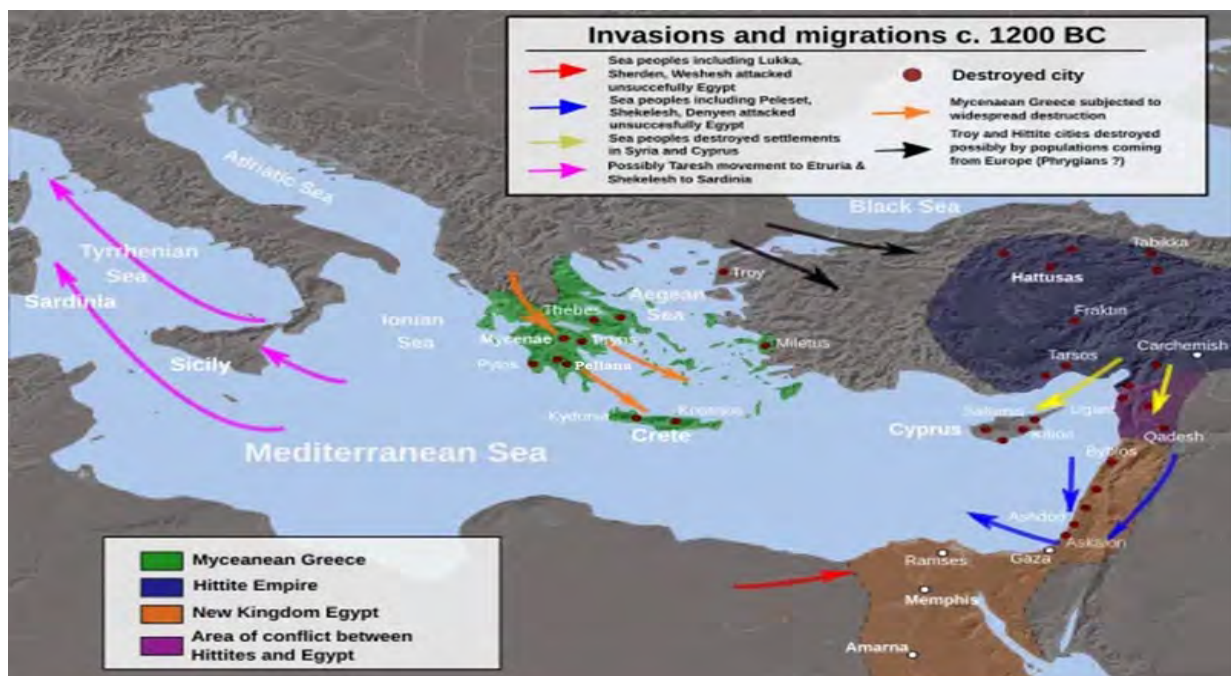
- **Scholarly Theories on Pellana's Decline**

- **Displacement by Sparta:** Scholars like Paul Cartledge argue that Pellana's role as a regional center was supplanted by the rise of Sparta in the early Iron Age. The Spartan polis consolidated its power through the conquest and unification of Laconia, relegating earlier centres like Pellana to obscurity.

- **Natural and Human-Made Disasters:** Theories proposed by scholars such as Carl Blegen emphasize that a combination of natural disasters (earthquakes) and human conflicts (internal rebellions or invasions) catalysed the Mycenaean decline.

- **Loss of Trade Networks:** The collapse of long-distance trade routes in the Aegean disrupted the economic lifelines of Mycenaean centres, including Pellana.

The decline of Mycenaean Pellana reflects the broader unravelling of the Mycenaean civilization, driven by a convergence of social, political, economic, and environmental factors. While precise details remain elusive, the archaeological record and historical theories suggest that Pellana's administrative importance diminished with the systemic collapse of the palatial economy and the subsequent rise of Sparta as a dominant regional power. Continued excavations and interdisciplinary research may yield further insights into this transformative period.



Mycenean collapse

PART EIGHT

Mythological - Historical & Societal connections

The findings at Pellana intertwine archaeology with myth and history:

- **Royal Association:** The monumental royal tomb is speculated to be linked to Menelaus, Tyndareus, or their dynastic predecessors, strengthening Pellana's ties to Homeric tradition. Inscribed upon the entrance to the largest of the Tholos tombs is the symbol of a lion. This symbol represents the tomb of royalty.
- **Homeric Lacedaemon Debate:** Spyropoulos's claim that Pellana was the Homeric city of Lacedaemon situates it as a critical center in the Bronze Age and aligns it with epic tales of Menelaus and Helen of Troy.
- **Religious Significance:** A sanctuary dedicated to Helen was reportedly active until the 7th century BCE, reflecting the site's enduring cultural and spiritual importance. On the upper level of the Palaeokastro are the ruins of religious foundations facing the East, including the skeletal remains of Mycenaean origin. Exposed to the elements, these have since disappeared and only photographs remain.



Image 14 - lone Pillar of Asclepius temple

- **Asclepius temple:** A temple dedicated to the God of Healing; Asclepius has been identified to the South of the Rassias castle. Trenches dug some metres below identified the foundations of a temple. Only a lone pillar remains of the temple. Clay pipes have been found running from the temple to the well located inside the enclosure of the now closed olive oil factory of "Fasaria" (Yiannis Filipopoulos). Water flows into the well from beneath the foundations of the Asclepius temple. It is worth noting that Asclepius temples were associated with water as healing properties and most temples found have been close to water sources. [Sources: Yiannis Filipopoulos and Peter Adamis]

Artifacts and Cultural Contributions. The volume and variety of artifacts unearthed at Pellana illuminate the region's cultural richness: A gold statue found amongst the ruins disappeared and is now housed in a museum in the USA. It is anticipated that at some future time, additional excavations of Pellana may be made to expose the layers of ancient Pellana. There is speculation whether there is more to ancient Pellana, other than its alleged ties with Menelaus and Helen.

- **Material Culture:** Protogeometric pottery, amber jewellery, figurines, and the earliest known Laconian cloaks connect Pellana to broader Mycenaean and post-Mycenaean traditions. Pottery and utensils were found near Rassias castle located at the lower centre of the village, by children, during pre-WW2 years and used as toys before being thrown away or broken. These are housed in storage at the museum in Sparta.
- **Structures.** Dwellings, cyclopean outer walls, main gate, water tunnel, child burials, work houses, stables and storage rooms similar to those found at Mycenae, Tyrins and Pylos. What is of interest is that the majority of these face the East to take advantage of the morning sun. On the Northern side of the Palaeokastro, the earth beneath the olive trees is strewn with numerous sherds of broken pottery.

The ground beneath appears somewhat hollow and one wonders whether there are remains or the foundations of further ancient building structures. To the East of the Palaeokastro, lie small settlements that have only been recently discovered and covered by the main highway. [Source: George Mihalopoulos and Peter Adamis]

To the North past the Tholos tombs lie other ancient structures of which their origin is unknown. Similar finds have been identified at the small knoll to the East, overlooking the new highway, of the Palaeokastro. These have yet to be excavated and identified. [Source: Peter Adamis, Kostas Mihalopoulos & Nicholas Bakis]

To the South at the Palialona (Adamis family cottage), a Mycenaean Road had been identified leading up to the cottage. During the early nineteen twenties, ancient foundations were found on top of the knoll at Palialona. A cemetery containing numerous graves and skeletal remains were found on top of the knoll. The skeletal remains were gathered and deposited at the current Ossuary located at the Cemetery to the West of Pellana. The Grave stone slabs were reutilised as a threshing field and used by the local villagers after harvesting their crops. [Sources: Phillip Rassias, Evgeni Rassias, Kaliopi Adamis, Vasili Adamis, Andonia Glekas]

- **Water cistern.** A deep-water cistern has been excavated at the Palaeokastro along with the remains of Hellenistic walls. A much larger version of the water cistern with the very same structure was found in ancient Argos. Given that Argos is one of the oldest and most inhabited city, the similarities are so unique that it is possible that the same craftsman was responsible for both cisterns. Source: Peter Adamis and Kostas Mihalopoulos]
- **Trade connections.** Leaving aside the Homeric connections, the material identified at Pellana coincide with similar finds at other Hellenistic and Mycenaean centres. I am of the opinion that there are Hellenistic and Mycenaean connections between Mycenae, Tyrins, Argos, Ithaca, Pylos and Lerna with that of Pellana.
- **Inscriptions and Early Scripts:** Inscriptions from the 10th century BCE link the site to the early development of written language in Greece, possibly influencing the transmission of the alphabet to other regions. Artifacts and coins with the letter E (Epsilon) have been found amongst the ancient ruins. Another inscription with the word "FIVRON – [Fibres]" - (Greek: ΦΙΒΡΩΝ) was found at the "Palialona" (Old threshing floor) These are believed to be housed in storage at the museum in Sparta. [Sources: Eleni Tsihli, Kaliopi Adamis, Vasili Adamis, Thanasis Smirios]
- **Bronze Age Artifacts:** Items from the tholos tombs reveal trade connections and local craftsmanship, including fine pottery and imported goods. A bronze horse with a rider was found some six metre below the surface by Dimitri Glekas who was working to install a village pumping station. The same bronze horse was

taken by a local Doctor and its current whereabouts is unknown. Bronze tips were also found by the author at mid upper level of the Palaeokastro.

Decline and Legacy. As Sparta rose to prominence, Pellana's significance diminished, paralleling the broader decline of Mycenaean civilization. By Roman times, Pellana was a small village, though its archaeological and mythological legacy remained intact. Later periods saw sporadic activity, with Byzantine pavements and coins attesting to continued, albeit diminished, use.

Cultural and Mythological Connections of Pellana. Pellana's cultural and mythological dimensions intertwine to create a compelling narrative of its significance in ancient Greece. As an archaeological site, Pellana not only reveals monumental structures and artifacts but also serves as a physical link to the myths and traditions that shaped early Greek identity. Its prominence in the Mycenaean era, its association with Homeric epics, and its connections to legendary figures such as Tyndareus and Menelaus underscore its pivotal role in the cultural history of Laconia.

Mycenaean Wealth and Mythical Lineage. The grandeur of Pellana's vaulted tombs and monumental architecture points to the power and affluence of its Mycenaean rulers. Archaeologist Theodoros Spyropoulos's proposal that Pellana was the site of Homeric Lacedaemon ties the city directly to the legends of Menelaus and Helen of Troy. This hypothesis is supported by:

- **Palatial Complex:** The acropolis at Palaeokastro is posited as the location of a Mycenaean palace that served as the administrative center of a flourishing Bronze Age polity. According to mythology, Tyndareus, the father of Helen, Castor, Pollux, and Clytemnestra, fled to Pellana after being exiled from Sparta. The city is therefore enshrined in the narrative of the Trojan War, amplifying its cultural resonance.
- **Royal Tombs:** The tholos tombs, particularly the massive 10-meter-diameter "Great Tomb," likely belonged to elite figures, potentially Menelaus or Tyndareus. Image 15 Menelaus and Helen reunion at Troy



Association with Homeric Epics. Pellana is deeply connected to the Homeric tradition, with Spyropoulos identifying it as the Lacedaemon referenced in the Iliad and Odyssey. In these texts, Lacedaemon is depicted as the seat of Menelaus and Helen, making it a vital setting for Greek mythology. Although other scholars favour the Menelaion near modern Sparta, the monumental scale of Pellana's Mycenaean structures strengthens the argument for its Homeric identity. The grand roads, Cyclopean walls, and sophisticated infrastructure at Pellana align with descriptions of the wealth and influence of Menelaus's kingdom. This alignment situates Pellana at the heart of discussions about the interplay between myth and historical geography.

Technological and Architectural Contributions. Pellana's association with the Minyans, a pre-Mycenaean people renowned for their engineering expertise, further enhances its cultural narrative. The Minyans are credited with feats such as draining Lake Lacedaemon and contributing to the prosperity of the Taygetos region. Architectural advancements at Pellana, including its monumental tholos tombs and paved roads, may reflect Minyan influence. These connections reinforce the idea that Pellana was a center of innovation and technical achievement in early Greek civilization, predating the cultural dominance of Mycenae.

Religious and symbolic significance

The discovery of a sanctuary south of the Pellanida Spring, possibly dedicated to Asclepius or a Nymph, underscores Pellana's role as a spiritual center. Additionally, evidence of veneration of Helen at Pellana until the 7th century BCE points to its enduring mythological importance.

- **Sanctuary of Asclepius:** The remains of striped column vertebrae and other artifacts indicate a sacred space, reflecting the integration of religion into the social and cultural fabric of Pellana.
- **Symbolic Architecture:** The pyramidal layout of some structures aligns Pellana with symbolic designs found in advanced ancient civilizations, emphasizing its cultural sophistication.

Continuity Through the Ages. Pellana's importance did not vanish with the Mycenaean civilization. During the Classical and Hellenistic periods, the acropolis was fortified in response to external threats faced by Sparta. This continuity highlights its strategic importance and the resilience of its cultural legacy.

- **Fortifications:** In the 4th or 3rd century BCE, the acropolis of Pellana was reinforced, reflecting its role in the defence of the Spartan hinterland.
- **Byzantine Influence:** Later artifacts, including pavements, coins, and statues, show that Pellana remained a site of significance into the medieval period.

Preservation and Legacy. Efforts to preserve and showcase Pellana's historical legacy continue today. The Pellana Women's Association has undertaken the development of a museum in the old primary school, aiming to protect and promote the village's rich cultural heritage. Additionally, signage and infrastructure improvements have made the site more accessible to tourists, reinforcing its historical and cultural importance.

Implications for Early Greek Civilization. The discoveries at Pellana challenge traditional narratives about the origins and spread of Greek culture. Spyropoulos's hypothesis about Pellana's role as Homeric Lacedaemon and its association with a native Greek development of the alphabet push back against theories of external influences, such as the adoption of the Phoenician script. Pellana's monumental tombs, palatial structures, and mythological connections position it as a critical hub in the early development of Greek civilization. These features suggest that it may have served as a precursor or parallel to Mycenaean centres like Mycenae and Tiryns.

Mycenaean funerary practices

Giffen is of the belief that Mycenaean religion and funerary customs were deeply influenced by both indigenous traditions and external interactions, including Minoan, Near Eastern, and Indo-European cultures. While Homeric epics provided a cultural ideal, archaeological and textual evidence suggests that these ideals were selectively integrated into everyday practices. This interplay between myth, ritual, and historical reality highlights the Mycenaeans' complex identity and their lasting influence on subsequent Greek culture.

Giffen's, 'The nature of Mycenaean religious and burial customs' describes a rich and detailed analysis of Mycenaean religious and funerary customs, drawing connections between archaeological findings, artistic depictions, and textual evidence from Linear B tablets and Homeric epics. It emphasizes the interplay between myth and history, exploring how Mycenaean practices reflected and were influenced by cultural exchange with Minoan Crete, broader Indo-European traditions, and the ideals extolled in Homeric narratives.

Key Themes and Findings:

1. Religious Practices and the Role of the Wanax:

- The megaron, a significant architectural feature, served as a religious and communal hub. While its origins are debated—either Anatolian or indigenous to Greece—it became central to Mycenaean ritual life. The hearth within the megaron symbolized the presence of Hestia, though she is curiously absent in Linear B records, suggesting her essence was embodied in the hearth itself.

- Ritual feasting and gift-giving were crucial in consolidating the authority of the Wanax (king). This practice, rooted in Indo-European traditions, reinforced social hierarchies and communal bonds. Homeric examples, such as Agamemnon's failure to honour Chryses in *The Iliad*, underscore the cultural and religious significance of hospitality.

2. **Cross-Cultural Influences.** The Mycenaeans inherited significant religious elements from the Minoans, particularly the veneration of goddesses. Two distinct divine figures, Diwia (associated with Minoan traditions) and Potnia (the "Lady" or "Mistress"), reflect the blending of Minoan and Indo-European religious systems. The divine marriage or hieros gamos between Indo-European male gods (e.g., Zeus) and Minoan goddesses may have legitimized the integration of new patriarchal systems with existing matriarchal traditions.

3. **Funerary Customs and Burial Practices.** Mycenaean burials varied between cremation and inhumation, with tholos tombs representing elite burial practices. However, practical concerns, such as during wartime, sometimes necessitated cremation, as evidenced by Patroclus' funeral in *The Iliad*. This act adhered to ritual propriety despite logistical constraints. The competitive "war of the tombs" highlights the role of burial as a status symbol, though communal burials and grave re-use suggest practical and political motivations. The desecration or re-appropriation of tombs may have served as a means of asserting dominance over rival families.

4. **The Myth-History Nexus.** Homeric epics provided a moral and cultural framework, celebrating values like arete (virtue) and dike (justice). However, archaeological evidence reveals a more complex reality, where practices did not always align with the idealized hero-cult. For example, ancestor veneration rarely extended beyond a few generations, challenging the narrative of enduring hero worship. The decline of the Mycenaean world and the onset of the Dorian invasions may have fuelled nostalgic myths of a heroic past, as captured in Homer's lament about living in an age of "lesser men."

Monumental architecture & urban planning

Pellana's archaeological remains highlight a sophisticated approach to urban planning and monumental construction:

- **Tholos Tomb Design:** The tombs combine rock-cut and stone-built techniques, featuring sloping dromoi (entrance corridors) and relieving triangles, hallmarks of Mycenaean engineering. These structures parallel those at major sites like Mycenae and Vapheio, highlighting the site's prominence.
- **Mycenaean Paved Road:** A wide, monumental road connected the acropolis to surrounding areas, facilitating trade and movement. Its construction underscores Pellana's role as a regional hub. However, upon inspection, the author is of the opinion that the said road appears more like the foundations of an outer wall, similar to those found at the entrance to the Palaeokastro ruins.
- **Water Management:** Springs and aqueducts near Pellana suggest advanced hydrological systems, crucial for sustaining settlements and agricultural productivity. A tunnel ran from the Palaeokastro down to where the current pumping stations is located. The ancient tunnel now completely submerged due to earthquakes enabled this residing at the Palaeokastro with access to water in the event of hostilities.

Mycenean settlements. During the construction of the new highway, ancient Mycenaean, Spartan and Perioicic settlements were found approximately every five kilometres. These settlements may have been under the safety of Pellana who would have provided support in times of peril. Apart from being staging stopovers for weary traveller, these same settlements may have also been responsible to maintaining the road clear for traffic. Today, a small group of volunteers keep sections of the old road to Sparta clear of nature's attempts to annex it.

Mapping evidence

The cartographic journey of Pellana is a testament to the dynamic relationship between geography, history, and identity. Its intermittent presence on maps mirrors broader historical processes, from cultural assimilation to national restoration. By studying Pellana's mapping history, we gain a deeper understanding of how geographic documentation not only reflects historical realities but also shapes perceptions of cultural and political significance.

This framework weaves the key details of Pellana's mapping history into a narrative that emphasizes its broader historical and cultural implications. The analysis provides a structured overview of Pellana's representation in cartography over centuries, situating it within broader historical, cultural, and political contexts. Below is a synthesized discussion of key points to frame a deeper essay or study:

The evolution of Pellana's cartographic representation offers insights into the interplay between geographic documentation, historical identity, and political agendas. From its absence on early maps to its reemergence and renaming, Pellana's mapping history reveals shifting priorities in cartography and underscores the region's complex cultural identity.

Absence in Early Maps (16th to Early 17th Century). The omission of Pellana in influential maps by Mercator, Hondius, Zedtwitz, and Seutter demonstrates how smaller settlements were often overlooked in favour of larger, more prominent locations. This reflects:

- **Cartographic Priorities:** Early maps prioritized trade hubs or strategically significant cities, neglecting smaller, rural settlements.
- **Technological and Methodological Limitations:** The imprecision of early mapping techniques and the selective documentation of known regions often excluded lesser-known areas like Pellana.

Emergence in Later Maps. The growing presence of Pellana in maps by L. Laurenberg and the Riga Map underscores its increasing recognition, likely tied to its strategic location between Laconia and Arcadia.

- **Strategic and Geographic Significance:** Its inclusion suggests that Pellana served as a waypoint or had local prominence, warranting its documentation.
- **Cultural Memory:** The designation of Pellana as "Pallana" in the Riga Map reflects both linguistic variation and evolving awareness of the settlement in Greek cartographic traditions.

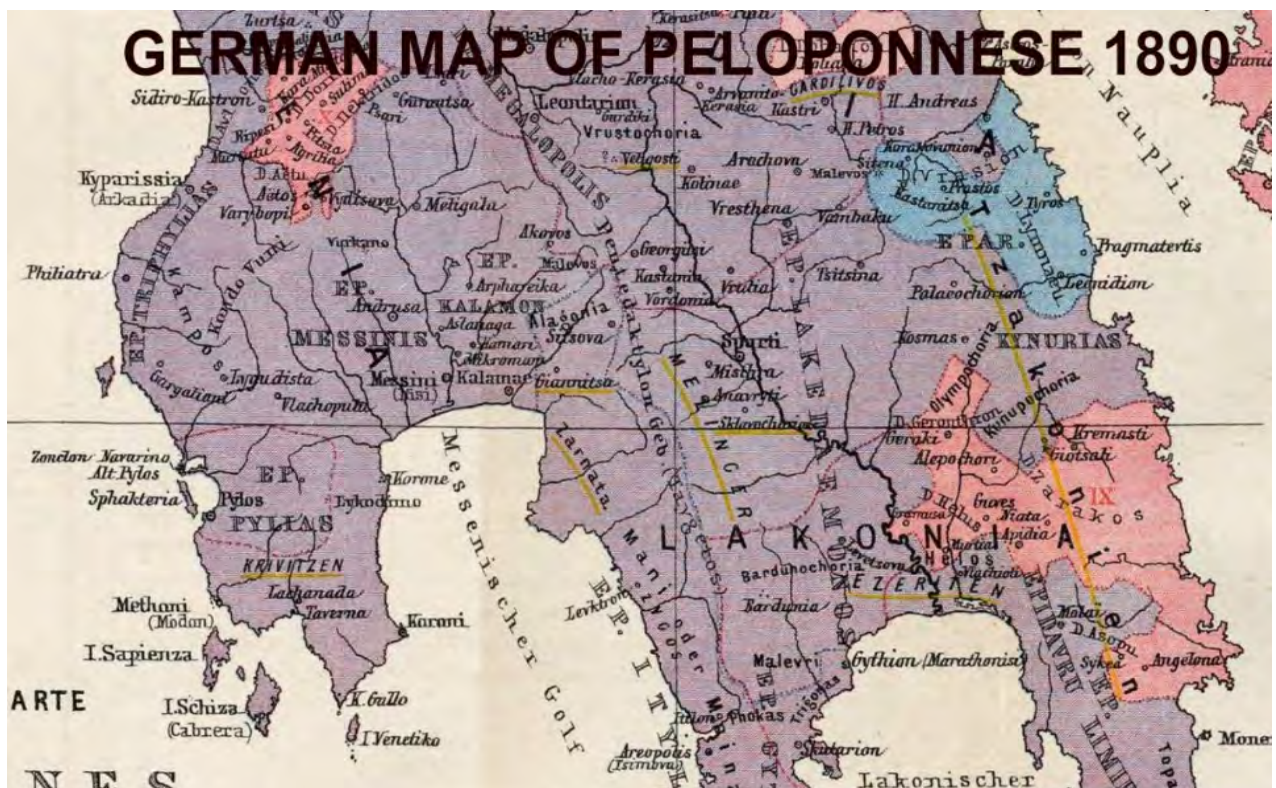
19th Century Shifts. The prominence of Pellana in 19th-century maps, contrasted with its absence in others, reflects broader historical dynamics:

- **Marco Berra and Carl Metzeroth's Maps:** The emphasis on Pellana, despite its isolation, indicates its relative importance in the local geography during this period.
- **Kalyvia of Georgitsi.** Upon liberation, the mountain clans descended down to the Euvrotas valley, building winter cottages for the olive oil harvest and over the year as mall community rose from the ashes of ancient Pellana. and long before mountain clans descended down from Georgitsi to build their winter cottages during the olive oil harvest. Another example of the village is the Rassias castle which was bult in 1885.



Rigas map 1796

- Rigas map of 1796. Engraved by the well-known engraver Franz Müller and published in Vienna in three rounds between 1796-1797, the Charta (Greek: Χάρτη), was one of three maps published by Rigas during the preparation of his revolutionary plan against the Sultan's absolute power over the enslaved Greeks and other Balkan peoples. In this map lies the location and name of ancient Pellana. This map was created while Greece was under Ottoman occupation.



German map 1890

German Map of 1890: The replacement of Greek names with Slavic names highlights the lingering effects of Slavic migrations in the Middle Ages and the inconsistent use of standardized naming conventions. During the Middle Ages, the Melingoi, a Slavic tribe, settled in the foothills of the western part of the Taygetos mountain range and over time became Hellenised. An Albanian tribe called the Arvanites settled in Laconia during the 13th and 14th centuries and they too became Hellenised.

To the East of the Taygetos mountain ranges lay the people of Mani. Although the [Maniotes](#) are of the belief that they are descendants of the ancient Spartans, the truth of the matter is that they are the direct descendants of the [Perioicic \(Dwellers about\)](#), freed by a Spartan king of a bygone era. These points add to the layered cultural influences shaping the region.

Modern Recognition and Nationalism. The official renaming of [Pellana in 1932](#) as part of the Greek state's nationalist project underscores the political and cultural importance of geographic names:

- **Restoration of Ancient Identity:** The deliberate revival of the ancient name "Pellana" symbolizes a reclamation of Hellenic heritage, aligning with broader efforts to solidify national identity in the wake of Ottoman and Slavic influences.
- **Artifacts and Inscriptions:** Stone inscriptions, such as the one at Rassias Castle, serve as tangible evidence of Pellana's historical presence, reinforcing its significance independent of cartographic records.

Interpretations and Broader Themes. **Cartographic Variability:** The sporadic inclusion of Pellana highlights the evolving priorities of mapmakers, influenced by technological advancements, political agendas, and cultural awareness.

1. **Cultural and Political Shifts:** The fluctuating names of Pellana reflect a tapestry of historical influences, from Byzantine and Ottoman to Slavic and modern Greek.



Image 16 Gauls, Slavs, Albanians, Franks and Venetians Influence

2. **Slavic and Ottoman Influence:** The presence of Slavic names in 19th-century maps illustrates the enduring impact of medieval migrations, revealing the complex layering of identities in the region.
3. **Nationalism and Geographic Memory:** The 20th-century renaming of Pellana underscores the role of place names in forging national identity, serving as markers of cultural continuity and sovereignty.



Image 17 Otoman influence

PART NINE

Pellana post classical period

The history of Pellana during the post-classical period is deeply intertwined with the broader historical, cultural, and political dynamics of Laconia, a region of strategic importance in the southeastern Peloponnese. From its Mycenaean prominence to its decline under Ottoman rule, Pellana serves as a compelling microcosm for understanding the shifts that shaped Laconia from antiquity through the Byzantine, Frankish, and Ottoman eras.

Below, are the key phases of this trajectory, situating Pellana within the region's evolving narrative.

Geographic and Historical Foundations of Laconia. Laconia's distinct geography shaped its historical development. The rugged Taygetos Mountains, the fertile Euvrotas River valley, and the eastern hills of Mount Parnona fostered diverse settlement patterns. Pellana, located north of Sparta, benefited from proximity to the Euvrotas River and abundant water resources. These features likely contributed to its hypothesized role as an administrative hub of Mycenaean Lacedaemon under Menelaus, although this remains a subject of scholarly debate.

As a site of continuous occupation since the Neolithic period, Pellana boasts archaeological layers that reflect its adaptation to changing regional dynamics. While the Dorian invasion and subsequent rise of classical Sparta marked a departure from Mycenaean traditions, Pellana's role within this framework remains obscure, likely overshadowed by Sparta's ascendancy.

Roman and Early Byzantine Transformations. The Roman conquest in the mid-2nd century BCE brought structural and economic changes to Laconia, including Pellana. While Sparta experienced a cultural revival under Roman patronage, the peripheral settlements of northern Laconia, including Pellana, diminished in importance. The catastrophic earthquake of 375 CE and Visigoth raids in 396 CE further disrupted the region, marking the decline of urban centres and leaving Pellana a minor settlement during this turbulent era.

Medieval Decline and Slavic Incursions. The early medieval period witnessed profound changes in Laconia's socio-political fabric. The 6th and 7th centuries saw the arrival of Slavic tribes such as the Ezeritai and Melingoi, who exploited Laconia's fertile and water-rich areas, including Pellana's environs. However, this period was marked by the fragmentation of older towns and a loss of classical urban continuity. Byzantine re-Hellenization efforts from the 9th century onwards helped stabilize the region, but by this time, Pellana's prominence had waned significantly.

The Frankish and Byzantine Contestation. The Fourth Crusade in 1204 ushered in a period of Frankish dominance, further diminishing Pellana's status. The construction of fortresses in strategic locations, such as Mystras, underscored the geopolitical reorganization of Laconia. By the 13th century, the Byzantine reconquest and the establishment of the Despotate of Morea marked a cultural revival centred around Mystras, but Pellana remained a rural backwater.

It is of interest to note that the Fourth Crusade is considered to be the beginning of the decline of the Byzantium Empire. The Venetians used the Franks effectively to sack Constantinople and thus weaken the Empire for future generations, thus creating the foundations for the Ottomans.



Image 18 The struggle for Independence

Ottoman Era and Post-Independence Transition. During Ottoman rule, Pellana continued its decline, with sparse references in tax registers suggesting minimal settlement activity. These records, while fiscal in nature, provide insights into the agricultural productivity and demographic shifts of the region. Following the [Greek War of Independence](#) in 1821, the area was sparsely repopulated by settlers from nearby villages such as Georgitsi.



Image 19 War of Independence

The renaming of Pellana to "The Kalyvia of Georgitsi" symbolizes the erasure of its classical and Byzantine heritage, further solidifying its transformation into a marginal village. Today remnants of those Kalyvia (cottages) can still be seen amidst the secondary undergrowth surrounding the village of Pellana today.



Pellana's historical trajectory mirrors the broader patterns of rise, decline, and transformation in Laconia. From its speculated Mycenaean significance to its near-abandonment under Ottoman rule, Pellana reflects the interplay of geography, political shifts, and cultural transformations that shaped the southeastern Peloponnese.

Today, the ruins of Pellana offer a rich archaeological record that holds potential for further exploration, particularly through the study of Ottoman-era tax registers and other archival sources. By examining these records, historians can continue to reconstruct the socio-economic history of this enigmatic site and its role in the evolving narrative of Laconia.

Visitors will require local support and guides to enable them to visit the ancient ruins without entering prohibited areas designated by the Department of Archaeology. There are stiff fines and it's an offence to remove items from the ancient ruins. Image 20 Lacedaemon warrior

PART TEN

SOURCES ACCORDING TO TRAVELLERS

ANCIENT TRAVELLERS

The ancient city of Pellana offers a fascinating window into the interplay of myth, religion, and geopolitics in ancient Greece. Situated in Laconia near the Eurotas River, Pellana's multifaceted significance emerges through its role as a mythological refuge, religious center, and strategic military outpost. The city's legacy is preserved in the accounts of ancient authors such as Pausanias, Strabo, Pindar, and Xenophon, whose works collectively highlight the cultural richness and historical complexity of this often-overlooked city.

Pausanias and the Mythological Legacy. Pausanias' *Description of Greece* offers some of the most detailed accounts of Pellana, portraying it as a mythological refuge. It served as a haven for Tyndareus, the father of Helen of Troy and the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux), following his exile from Sparta by Hippocoon (3.1.4; 3.21.2). According to myth, Hermes brought the infant Dioscuri to Pellana (3.26.2), elevating the city's significance as a site of divine intervention.

The Sanctuary of Asclepius. The city also housed a sanctuary dedicated to Asclepius, the god of healing. As described by Pausanias (3.21.2), this sanctuary was located near the spring Pellanis, tied to a local legend of a maiden's veil reappearing at another spring, Lanceia. Springs were often seen as sacred in ancient Greece, symbolizing divine intervention and serving both practical and ritual purposes. Though now reduced to a single marble pillar in a field, the sanctuary once linked Pellana to the broader cult of Asclepius, whose healing practices often involved water.

Athletics and Religious Festivals. Pindar's odes highlight Pellana's role in regional athletic traditions. Events held in Pellana awarded victors wool cloaks and other prizes, emphasizing the city's importance as a cultural hub. These athletic competitions were not merely recreational but were deeply tied to religious rituals and civic identity, further embedding Pellana in the myth-religious fabric of ancient Greece.

Military and Defensive Role. Pellana's strategic location on the frontier with Arcadia made it a vital outpost for Laconian defence. Strabo emphasizes its role as a boundary settlement, positioned near the Eurotas River and the road connecting Sparta to Arcadia (Geography 8.7.5). Xenophon's accounts corroborate this, likening Pellana to Sellasia, another Spartan fortress. Its control over key routes and water resources amplified its strategic value in military conflicts.

Communication Networks. Pellana was part of a sophisticated system of Mycenaean fire watchtowers, which facilitated communication across Lacedaemon, Arcadia, Messenia, and even the Aegean islands. These towers linked Pellana to other fortified sites, such as Loganikos and Mt. Chelmos, underscoring its role in ancient Laconia's defensive and communication networks.

Conflict and Conquest. The city's importance made it a target during military campaigns. Diodorus Siculus recounts its capture by Arcadian forces during the classical period, resulting in the death of over 300 Spartans and the enslavement of its inhabitants (15.67.2). Such accounts highlight the city's contested status and its centrality in the power dynamics of the Peloponnesian region.

Athletic Prestige. Pindar's references to Pellana's athletic contests celebrate its cultural prominence. Victories in these events were seen as manifestations of divine favour and civic pride. For instance, Pindar's mention of wool cloaks and other prizes reflects a tradition of rewarding excellence, tying athletic success to religious and social values.

Water and Myth. The Pellanis and Lanceia springs were more than practical water sources; they were imbued with mythological significance. The story of the maiden's veil symbolizes the blending of natural features with cultural and supernatural narratives, common in Greek traditions.

Geographical Descriptions by Pausanias. Pausanias situates Pellana in a rich landscape of landmarks such as Characoma and Belemina, the latter noted for its abundant water resources. These geographic details highlight the logistical considerations of ancient societies, where access to water was crucial for survival and urban development. Pellana exemplifies the layered complexity of ancient Greek cities, where mythology, religion, and geopolitics converged. As a site of mythological refuge, religious devotion, and strategic importance, Pellana's legacy is a testament to the richness of the ancient Greek world.

The accounts of Pausanias, Strabo, Pindar, and others illuminate its role as a vibrant center of cultural and military activity, providing modern readers with a deeper appreciation of its historical significance. Despite its diminished physical remnants, the spirit of Pellana endures in the literary and archaeological record, bridging the past and present through its enduring narrative.

EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY TRAVELLERS

The exploration of Greece by prominent figures such as Colonel William Leake, Josiah Conder, and Karl Baedeker reflects the layered fascination with its historical geography, cultural continuity, and natural beauty, spanning the Romantic to early 20th-century periods. These accounts, while serving distinct purposes—ranging from Romantic idealization and scholarly archaeology to practical tourism—collectively enrich our understanding of the Eurotas valley, particularly ancient Pellana's significance as an outwork for Sparta. During the research, it was interesting to note, that a number of travellers had passed by the ancient ruins and did not recognise or identify them as the site of ancient Pellana.

Below is an analysis of how these works converge and diverge in their representation of Greece, focusing on the geographical, historical, and cultural dimensions.

LEAKE'S TRAVELS IN THE MOREA: SCHOLARLY PRECISION AND MILITARY CONTEXT. Colonel William Leake's *Travels in the Morea* (1830) exemplifies a rigorous blend of topographical precision and historical reconstruction. His identification of Pellana as a strategic site along the Eurotas River underscores its importance in Sparta's defence against incursions from Messenia and the Megalopolis region. By cross-referencing Pausanias' descriptions of the temple to Aesculapius and the fountains of Pellana, Leake contextualizes the site within its classical framework.

Key Contributions:

1. **Geographical Documentation:** Leake meticulously describes Pellana's location relative to notable landmarks such as Belemina and Characoma, providing invaluable data for modern historians and archaeologists.
2. **Military Importance:** His emphasis on the defensive role of sites like Pellana and Sellasia aligns with Sparta's broader military strategy in antiquity.
3. **Historical Ambiguity:** Despite uncertainties regarding Pellana's exact location, Leake provides compelling circumstantial evidence linking physical features to ancient accounts.

Leake's work, in my opinion, while highly analytical, lacks the emotional or aesthetic dimension often seen in Romantic literature. His narrative caters to a scholarly audience, prioritizing empirical observation over personal reflection or poetic flourish. What is of interest is that Leake was once employed to assist the Ottomans in the Balkans. Once he retired, he devoted the remaining part of his life to learning and writing. And as such wrote on his travels to the Morea. (Peloponnese)

CONDER'S THE MODERN TRAVELLER: ROMANTIC OBSERVATIONS AND CULTURAL INTERPLAY. Josiah Conder's *the Modern Traveller* (1824) embodies the Romantic era's fascination with Greece as a cradle of Western civilization. Drawing on Edward Dodwell's travels, Conder combines geographical detail, historical speculation, and cultural commentary to present Greece as both a picturesque landscape and a repository of classical heritage. Conder's work serves as a bridge between scholarly inquiry and popular travel literature, making ancient Greece accessible to a broader audience while romanticizing its past.

Key Features:

1. **Romantic Idealization:** Conder's descriptions of the Taygetus Mountains and the integration of ancient ruins with natural beauty evoke the sublime—a hallmark of Romantic aesthetics.
2. **Cultural and Economic Notes:** His attention to contemporary practices, such as sericulture and small-scale milling, provides a living contrast to the grandeur of antiquity.
3. **Historical Speculation:** Like Leake, Conder identifies the fountains near Pellana as consistent with Pausanias' accounts, though his approach leans more on interpretive imagination.

Baedeker's Greece Handbook for Travellers: Practicality Meets Scholarship. Karl Baedeker's *Greece Handbook for Travellers* (1905) reflects the practical, detail-oriented ethos of early 20th-century tourism. His guide combines precise itineraries with historical and archaeological insights, catering to travellers seeking to experience Greece's layered history firsthand. Unlike Leake or Conder, Baedeker's work prioritizes usability and systematic presentation, catering to the practical needs of travellers while retaining scholarly depth.

Key Elements:

1. **Detailed Itineraries:** Baedeker's meticulous mapping of routes, such as the two-day journey from Sparta to Messene via Leontari, exemplifies his handbook's utility.
2. **Integration of Myth and History:** The Eurotas valley's association with legends like Penelope's journey is interwoven with archaeological descriptions of tombs and aqueducts, blending narrative with empirical data.
3. **Archaeological Richness:** Sites like Pellana and Belemina are framed within their ancient and medieval contexts, emphasizing the continuity of human settlement in the region.
4. **Comparative Analysis: Themes and Approaches.** The three works highlight common themes, yet they diverge in style, purpose, and audience.
5. **Geographical Focus:** Leake's precision offers foundational insights for scholars and archaeologists, Conder's broader, romanticized descriptions appeal to literary-minded readers and Baedeker strikes a balance, blending practicality with scholarly thoroughness.
6. **Cultural and Historical Emphasis:** Leake centres his analysis on military strategy and historical geography, Conder explores Greece's cultural resonance, linking its ancient past to contemporary practices and Baedeker integrates mythology and archaeological findings into an accessible narrative.
7. **Romantic vs. Empirical Narratives:** Conder embodies the Romantic tradition, celebrating Greece's aesthetic and symbolic significance, and Leake and Baedeker prioritize empirical observation, though Baedeker's descriptions occasionally evoke the picturesque.
8. **Audience and Legacy:** Leake targets a scholarly audience, contributing to archaeology and historical geography, Conder popularizes Greek antiquity for armchair travellers and literary enthusiasts and Baedeker transforms Greece into a structured destination for early 20th-century tourists.

9. **Broader Implications: Greece in European Imagination.** These accounts collectively shaped European perceptions of Greece during pivotal cultural and political moments:
- **Philhellenism:** Romantic travel literature, including Conder's and Byron's works, fuelled support for Greek independence by emphasizing its classical heritage.
 - **Tourism and Cultural Identity:** Baedeker's handbooks helped establish Greece as a premier destination for heritage tourism, blending education with leisure.
 - **Archaeological Development:** Leake's empirical rigor laid groundwork for modern archaeological practices, influencing subsequent explorations of the Peloponnese.

The works of Leake, Conder, and Baedeker exemplify the evolving narratives of Greece in Western travel literature, from Romantic idealization to systematic documentation. Their explorations of sites like Pellana and the Eurotas valley not only enrich our understanding of ancient Greek geography and culture but also reflect the changing lenses through which Greece was viewed—as a cradle of civilization, a romantic ideal, and a modern tourist destination. Together, they offer a multifaceted portrait of a land where history, myth, and nature intertwine.

MODERN TRAVELLERS

PERIOICIC: THE DISCOVERY OF CLASSICAL - GRAHAM SHIPLEY 1993. Graham Shipley's work offers a comprehensive revaluation of the perioicic, emphasizing their critical yet underappreciated role in Spartan society. By synthesizing archaeological, geographical, and textual evidence, the study reveals the complexities of Perioicic communities, their contributions to Sparta, and the mechanisms of their subordination. Below is a detailed breakdown of the major themes and arguments presented in the text:

1. **Geography and the Perioicic Economic Framework.** Shipley underscores the impact of Lakonia's natural topography on the organization and economy of Perioicic settlements:
2. **Self-Sufficient Communities:** Most perioicic relied on mixed farming practices (olive cultivation, cereal production, and pastoralism) tailored to the geographic constraints of their regions.
3. **Regional Diversity:** Larger settlements like Gythio benefited from maritime access and trade, while remote communities maintained a more isolated and agrarian existence.
4. **Unified Subordination:** Despite their geographic and economic differences, all Perioicic communities were united in their subservience to Spartan dominance, which restricted their potential for growth and autonomy.
5. **Socio-Political Structure.** Shipley challenges traditional assumptions about the Perioicic political identity:
6. **Ambiguity of "Poleis":** Classical authors referred to Perioicic settlements as *poleis*, though these lacked true political independence. The term may reflect Spartan diplomatic practices rather than functional autonomy.
7. **Internal Organization:** Wealthier landowners likely played a key role in local governance, collaborating with Sparta to maintain order and fulfill obligations, such as supplying military personnel.
8. **Cultural Cohesion:** Sharing Greek language, religion, and customs, the perioicic were distinct from the Helots and closer to the Spartans culturally, reinforcing their role as semi-autonomous allies.

9. **Economic and Military Contributions.** The perioic were indispensable to Spartan power:
10. **Economic Output:** Their labour sustained Sparta's non-agricultural industries, including crafting weapons and armour. However, Spartan policies suppressed the accumulation of wealth in Perioic communities, stifling urban development and public construction.
11. **Military Integration:** Perioic hoplites were a significant component of Spartan military forces. Their loyalty was incentivized through war spoils and limited privileges, fostering collaboration rather than rebellion.
12. **Mechanisms of Spartan Control** Sparta employed a range of indirect methods to dominate the perioic:
13. **Economic Restrictions:** By monopolizing Perioic labour and output, Sparta prevented the emergence of wealth that could challenge its authority.
14. **Suppression of Urbanization:** Deliberate policies inhibited the growth of monumental architecture and civic infrastructure in Perioic towns, ensuring their peripheral status relative to Sparta.'
15. **Military Obligations:** The perioic integration into the Spartan military ensured their dependence on Spartan leadership while also limiting their capacity to resist.
16. **Transformations in the Fourth Century BCE.** The decline of Spartan dominance ushered in significant changes for the perioic:
17. **Emergence of Urban centres:** The weakening of Spartan control allowed Perioic towns to develop public buildings and local governance structures. Federations like the Tripolis (e.g., Pellana and nearby towns) reflect this newfound autonomy.
18. **Political Realignment:** Perioic communities began aligning with broader Peloponnesian trends, such as federal alliances, to ensure mutual protection and economic collaboration.
19. **Complex Loyalty and Collaboration.** The perioic long-standing loyalty to Sparta, despite their subordination, is a key theme in the text:
20. **Geographical and Cultural Fragmentation:** The isolation of many Perioic towns hindered coordinated rebellion.
21. **Elite Collaboration:** Wealthier perioic, integrated into Spartan systems of governance and military command, often benefited from their association with Sparta, sharing in its spoils and prestige. The few instances of rebellion, such as in 399 BCE and 370 BCE, highlight growing tensions as Spartan power waned and its demands on Perioic communities increased.
22. **Historiographical Challenges and Contributions.** Shipley critiques the historical marginalization of the perioic in ancient and modern scholarship:
23. **Ancient Sources:** Classical texts focus on the Spartiate elite, reducing the perioic to peripheral figures with little agency.
24. **Modern Narratives:** Many post-war studies perpetuate outdated views, framing the perioic solely in terms of their economic and military functions without exploring their cultural and social complexities. Shipley argues for a more nuanced understanding of the perioic as dynamic communities with their own histories and identities, challenging their portrayal as mere extensions of Spartan hegemony. Shipley's analysis repositions the perioic as central figures in Spartan history, highlighting their critical contributions

to the city's military and economic systems. However, their constrained autonomy reflects the inherent inequalities of Spartan society.

25. **Urban centres and Spartan dominance.** The eventual emergence of urban centres and federations among the perioicic underscores their adaptability and resilience, offering a compelling counterpoint to the narrative of Spartan dominance. The work concludes with a call for further archaeological research to deepen our understanding of Perioicic life, ensuring their rightful place in the broader study of ancient Greek civilization. Shipley's work not only fills a significant gap in Spartan historiography but also invites scholars to reconsider the complexities of semi-autonomous communities in antiquity.

SPARTA IN LACONIA - CAVANAGH, W. G.; WALKER, SUSAN – 1995. The book *Sparta in Laconia*, edited by W.G. Cavanagh and Susan Walker, is a collection of scholarly essays examining the historical, archaeological, and cultural evolution of Sparta and the surrounding Laconian region from prehistoric times to the Byzantine period. This work, which grew out of the XIXth Classical Colloquium at the British Museum in 1995, provides a multidisciplinary approach to understanding Sparta's rich heritage. Here's an analysis of its contents and related historical insights:

Overview of Contributions:

1. **Focus on Archaeology and Methodology:** H.W. Catling revisits the archaeological efforts of the British School at Athens, underlining its pivotal role in uncovering Spartan and Laconian material culture. Contributions like those from C.B. Mee and W.G. Cavanagh (on the Laconia Survey) and K. Wilkinson (geoarchaeological studies) highlight advances in field methodologies and their application in analysing Spartan landscapes.
2. **Prehistoric to Classical Era:** T.G. Spyropoulos delves into the Bronze Age, proposing Pellana as a critical administrative center in prehistoric Laconia. P. Cartledge examines Spartan urban development and its relationship with the Chora (countryside) through the Archaic to Hellenistic periods, illustrating Sparta's unique urban model and boundary practices. M. Pipili and C.M. Stibbe focus on Laconian art, particularly pottery and vase painting, revealing both distinctive local styles and their cultural significance.
3. **Religious and Social Practices:** S. Hodkinson studies the dedications of bronze artifacts in Spartan sanctuaries, reflecting shifts in religious and social values during 650-350 BCE. T.J. Smith's exploration of dance, drink, and dedications in the Archaic "Kosmos" (world order) illuminates social rituals central to Spartan culture.
4. **Later Periods:** The Roman and Byzantine eras are represented through studies like those by A. Panayopoulou on Roman mosaics and D. Nicol's exploration of Byzantine Mystra, offering insights into the continuity and transformation of Spartan identity.

Pellana in Historical Context

1. **Bronze Age Importance:** Spyropoulos positions Pellana as a Bronze Age administrative hub, reflecting the early centralization of power in Laconia. The archaeological evidence supports its significance, but some critiques suggest the interpretation leans heavily on a singular narrative.
2. **Classical Significance:** Pellana, as described in ancient sources (e.g., Diodorus Siculus, Pausanias, Strabo), served as a frontier fortress on the Eurotas. It was a strategic point in Spartan defence, paralleling Sellasia on the Oenus River. Diodorus recounts its violent capture by the Arcadians, emphasizing its geopolitical role and vulnerability in Sparta's borderlands.
3. **Multidimensional Approach:** The integration of literary references (e.g., Plutarch's *Agis*), archaeological surveys, and historical geography (e.g., Leake's *Morea*) enriches our understanding of Pellana's dual role as a cultural and military locus.

Interdisciplinary and Temporal Coverage. The book excels in bridging various disciplines:

1. **Art and Archaeology:** Analysis of artifacts, pottery, and architectural ruins contextualizes Spartan material culture within broader Greek traditions.
2. **History and Society:** Insights into Spartan governance, religious practices, and societal values illuminate the ideological shifts from the militaristic to the Byzantine periods.
3. **Geography and Environment:** Studies on the Eurotas Valley and Spartan acropolis emphasize the role of geography in shaping Spartan identity and resilience.

Pellana's Place in Spartan Studies. Pellana emerges as a microcosm of the broader Spartan experience:

1. **Prehistoric Importance:** It reflects early administrative centralization.
2. **Classical Frontier:** As a border fortress, Pellana highlights Sparta's reliance on strategically placed outposts for territorial control.
3. **Cultural Layering:** The blend of archaeological and historical evidence reveals how Pellana adapted through Spartan, Roman, and Byzantine influences.

Sparta in Laconia is an invaluable resource for understanding Sparta's multifaceted legacy. Its emphasis on both macro (city-state) and micro (specific sites like Pellana) perspectives allows for a nuanced appreciation of Spartan culture and history. Through a combination of archaeological findings, methodological advancements, and historical texts, it paints a comprehensive picture of a region that has fascinated scholars for centuries.

CROSSING THE RIVER: OBSERVATIONS ON ROUTES AND BRIDGES IN LACONIA FROM THE ARCHAIC TO BYZANTINE PERIODS - PAMELA ARMSTRONG, W. G. CAVANAGH, GRAHAM SHIPLEY – 1992. The Sparta-Belemina route exemplifies the interplay between geography and infrastructure in ancient Laconia. Its alignment with the Eurotas River, strategic role, and adaptations over time reflect its critical importance to Spartan and regional connectivity. Further archaeological investigation could illuminate the specifics of its construction and the broader historical contexts in which it operated

Sparta-Belemina Route. The Sparta-Belemina route served as a key northward passage from Sparta throughout its history, with its alignment and evolution reflecting both natural geography and human engineering. Below are the main insights and implications of the study:

1. Historical Importance of the Route.

- a. **Primary Northward Link:** This route was central to Sparta's connectivity, facilitating trade, military campaigns, and communication with northern territories and neighbouring regions.
- b. **Hellenistic Enhancements:** The route likely connected to a northern gate in Sparta's Hellenistic walls, underscoring its strategic importance during that period.

2. Course and Deviations

- a. **Alignment with the Eurotas River:** The ancient route closely followed the river, deviating from the modern road north of the Kopanos bridge, particularly near Helleniko, to navigate natural obstacles like deep clefts.

- b. **Impact of Geography:** The classical road's adherence to the Eurotas River indicates practical engineering to minimize construction challenges and maintain navigability in difficult terrain.

3. Bridges and Infrastructure

- a. **Cleft Crossing:** A bridge constructed north of the divergence point addressed the challenges posed by a deep cleft, highlighting the infrastructural efforts invested in maintaining the route's functionality.
- b. **Durability and Adaptation:** The existence of the route and its crossings into the Byzantine period suggests a long-standing importance and periodic maintenance or realignment to meet evolving needs.

4. Evolution Over Time

- a. **Continuity and Change:** While the ancient road's alignment diverges from modern roads, its persistence into the Byzantine period illustrates the enduring utility of the corridor. The Turko-Venetian Road, constructed much later, partially mirrors the route, reaffirming its practicality across centuries.
- b. **Challenges in Chronology:** Estimating the full timeline of alternative alignments, especially during Byzantine times, remains difficult due to limited archaeological evidence.

PILGRIMS AND PILGRIMAGE IN ANCIENT GREECE - MATTHEW DILLON – 1997. This excerpt from Matthew Dillon's work, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece*, highlights the diversity of athletic and cultural festivals in Ancient Greece beyond the well-known Panhellenic games at Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea. Pindar's mentions of these festivals and their prizes reflect the wide-ranging local traditions and the ways in which they fostered both competition and community across Greek city-states.

Analysis of Key Points

1. **Diverse Festival Locations and Scope:** Dillon lists numerous sites, such as Achaean cities, Argos, Eleusis, and Thebes, which hosted festivals featuring contests. While these festivals were not of Panhellenic stature, they attracted competitors from various regions, suggesting the significant social and religious roles these events played.
2. **Unique Rewards and Local Practices:** Prizes varied widely across festivals, reflecting local customs and economic resources. For example:
 - a. The league of Dorian cities in Asia Minor awarded bronze tripods that victors dedicated to the temple at Triopion.
 - b. Arcadia and Thebes offered artistic works, possibly woven goods or woollen cloaks.
 - c. Specific prizes included a bronze hydria at Pythia and monetary rewards in Ionia.
3. **Integration of Religious and Cultural Elements:**
 - a. Many of these contests were tied to religious observances or local cult practices, such as the Heraia at Argos or the contests at the tomb of Iolaos in Thebes.
 - b. The prizes, often symbolic (e.g., shields or woollen cloaks), emphasized the interplay of athletic excellence with civic pride and religious dedication.

4. Implications for Pilgrimage and Community:

- a. Competitors and spectators traveling to these festivals contributed to cultural exchange and the formation of networks across the Greek world.
- b. The localized nature of the festivals preserved regional identities while also fostering broader Hellenic connections.

The above showcases the rich tapestry of athletic and cultural traditions in Ancient Greece beyond the Panhellenic games. It emphasizes the role of festivals in uniting diverse city-states through shared values of athleticism, artistry, and religious devotion. By participating in and supporting these events, communities celebrated their unique identities while contributing to the interconnected fabric of Greek civilization.

AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE – 2001. The October 2001 issue of the American Journal of Archaeology provides a multifaceted analysis of Spartan and Laconian archaeology, with a particular emphasis on evolving scholarly interpretations and method. This issue underscores the complexity of Spartan and Laconian archaeology, offering nuanced perspectives on its material culture, sociopolitical dynamics, and urban development. The contributions collectively illustrate the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in revising long-standing narratives. Below are key highlights of the referenced articles:

1. H.W. Catling, "The Work of the British School at Athens at Sparta and in Laconia". Catling offers an insightful review of the motivations and quality of the British School's archaeological efforts in the region. This work is essential for understanding the broader context of Spartan and Laconian studies, particularly the early focus on urban identity, material culture, and topography.
2. T.G. Spyropoulos, "Pellana: The Administrative Centre of Prehistoric Laconia". Spyropoulos provides a compelling argument for Pellana's significance as a Bronze Age administrative center. Drawing on recent excavations, he positions Pellana as a hub of political and economic activity in prehistoric Laconia. However, the critique of over-reliance on a singular interpretation of the evidence - mainly reflecting the excavator's perspective—cautions against an overly narrow view.
3. P. Cartledge, "City and Chora in Sparta: Archaic to Hellenistic". Cartledge focuses on the delineation of urban and rural spaces, exploring how Spartan identity was constructed and maintained without traditional fortifications. This spatial organization reflects a blend of practical and ideological concerns, as Sparta sought to emphasize its distinctiveness from its *perioicic* neighbours.
4. R. Fortsch, "Spartan Arts: Its Different Deaths". Fortsch examines the apparent decline in artistic production during the Archaic period, linking it to the development of Sparta's famously austere culture. The analysis suggests that changes in sociopolitical priorities, particularly the focus on militarization and collective identity, led to a reduced emphasis on artistic expression.
5. S. Hodgkinson, "Patterns of Bronze Dedications at Spartan Sanctuaries, c. 650–350 B.C.". Hodgkinson uses innovative methodologies to analyse the dedications found in Spartan sanctuaries, uncovering patterns that reflect changes in religious practices and social organization. The study provides evidence of continuity in religious devotion despite the broader shifts in Spartan society.

Broader Themes:

1. The Role of Pellana: Spyropoulos's findings place Pellana as a critical node in Laconian prehistory, offering a contrast to the later dominance of Sparta. This challenges the traditional view of Laconia's political geography during the Bronze Age.

2. **Transition to Austerity:** Fortsch and Hodgkinson both highlight the sociocultural transformation in Sparta, marked by a shift from artistic and individual expression to collective, austere values.
3. **Urban Identity:** Cartledge's exploration of spatial boundaries provides a framework for understanding how Sparta's self-conception evolved across different periods, reflecting the integration of political and ideological priorities in urban planning.

LECTURE ANCIENT PELLANA – T. SPYROPOULOS – 2002. It has been some 22 years since Spyropoulos excavated the ancient ruins at Pellana. his 2002 discoveries and subsequent discussions led by Theodoros Spyropoulos on Ancient Pellana represent a significant milestone in the understanding of Mycenaean Greece and its connection to Homeric traditions. Spyropoulos' assertion that Pellana was the original Lacedaemon offers a bold reinterpretation of the region's history, tying it to the legendary capital described in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

The discoveries at Pellana, presented by Spyropoulos and discussed further at the PAEDIA Conference, invite a re-evaluation of Mycenaean history and its cultural legacy. While more research and excavations are needed to confirm these claims definitively, the alignment between archaeological evidence and Homeric descriptions offers a compelling case for Pellana's prominence in ancient Greece. It is important to note that his work continues to inspire academic debate and exploration of the Mycenaean world.

Key Highlights from Spyropoulos' Presentation

1. **Identification of Lacedaemon:** Spyropoulos linked Pellana with Lacedaemon, a city named after its mythological founder, King Lacedaemon, and closely associated with other significant locales such as Sparta and Amyclae. This assertion places Pellana at the heart of Mycenaean political and cultural life, positioning it as a central node in controlling access throughout the Peloponnesian region.
2. **Archaeological Discoveries:**
 - a. Excavations on Palaeokastro Hill revealed royal tombs and pre-Mycenaean residences. These findings suggest a long and uninterrupted occupation from approximately 2700 BC, underscoring Pellana's importance during the Bronze Age.
 - b. Evidence of a grand Mycenaean palace complex dating to circa 1350 BC, later destroyed and succeeded by the palace of Menelaus. Architectural features such as the Great Hall and Cyclopean walls align with Mycenaean palatial structures found in Mycenae and Tiryns.
3. **Connection to Homeric Epics:** Spyropoulos argued that the palace aligns with descriptions in *The Odyssey*, specifically as the residence of Menelaus and Helen. The palace's structure and layout, including the Great Hall and the royal apartments, support this claim.
4. **Cultural and Administrative Significance:**
 - a. The Mycenaean administrative system at Pellana is reflected in its auxiliary buildings, workshops, archives, and sanctuaries. These findings reveal a society organized around a rigid bureaucratic hierarchy, consistent with broader Mycenaean practices.
 - b. The Cyclopean fortifications and the foresight in urban planning indicate advanced engineering skills, likened to the grander Mycenaean sites.

5. **The 2004 PAEDIA Conference:** Two years after Spyropoulos' presentation, the Third International PAEDIA Conference brought together scholars specializing in the Bronze Age and Homeric studies. This gathering, underlined by Spyropoulos' work, expanded scholarly discussion on the region's role in the events leading to the Trojan War and its historical repercussions.

Significance of Spyropoulos' Work. Spyropoulos' research challenges traditional interpretations of Lacedaemon's location and historical significance. By arguing for Pellana's centrality in Mycenaean Greece, he not only provides an archaeological basis for Homeric accounts but also enriches the broader understanding of Bronze Age civilizations in the Peloponnesian region.

HELOTS & MASTERS IN LACONIA AND MESSENIA - LURAGHI, NINO, AND SUSAN E. ALCOCK – 2003. In *Helots & Masters in Laconia and Messenia* (2003), Nino Luraghi and Susan E. Alcock provide a detailed exploration of the relationship between the Spartans (masters) and their Helot labour force in the regions of Laconia and Messenia, emphasizing both the practical and social implications of land division and cultivation in Spartan society. Their analysis sheds light on the dynamic and evolving relationship between land, labour, and the Spartan elite, as well as the key role of the Helots in shaping the agricultural landscape of Laconia.

In this excerpt, Luraghi engages with the work of Jameson, who had previously critiqued the estimations of Paul Cartledge concerning the land available for *klêroi* (allotments of land given to Spartans for farming) in Laconia. Jameson rejected Cartledge's figures of 50,000 to 75,000 hectares, offering instead a range of 1,221 to 1,456 *klêroi* based on his own analysis of the Eurotas Valley and the Helos plains. Luraghi notes that Jameson's views challenge a longstanding tradition of scholarship on the topic, which includes the contributions of scholars such as Jarde, Kahrstedt, and Bolte, who had proposed different estimations of the land area available for *klêroi*.

Luraghi, however, supports Cartledge's higher estimate, arguing that there were likely over 1,500 *klêroi* in Laconia during the peak Spartan population between 480 and 465 BCE, with evidence from mobilization figures appearing to back this claim. He agrees with Jameson that there may have been *klêroi* land outside the Helos plain, specifically noting possible expansion into the plains around Kyparissia and areas near the Perioic communities in the Eurotas valley, such as Pellana, Geronthrai, and Khrysapha. Some of this land may have been granted to Spartans who were excluded from the elite class of the *homoioi*, as seen in the example of the Parthenia, who were sent as colonists to Taras.

Luraghi further suggests that the structure of *klêroi* may have evolved over time. As the Spartan population increased, there may have been subdivisions of existing *klêroi*, leading to the creation of new allotments. This process might have been driven by the Helots themselves, who, in an effort to increase their output (and thus retain more after paying fixed rents), could have contributed to agricultural innovations and the incorporation of marginal lands. Luraghi also speculates that periods of stable occupation, during which *klêroi* were not frequently inspected, may have allowed for more intensive farming practices. The concealment of production—perhaps in order to minimize the share owed to the state or the Spartans—could have played a role in this process as well.

INVENTORY OF ARCHAIC AND CLASSICAL POLEIS - MOGENS HERMAN HANSEN AND THOMAS HEINE NIELSEN – 2004. This excerpt from *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* by Mogens Herman Hansen and Thomas Heine Nielsen explores the complex interrelations of Homeric geography, Spartan territorial control, and the identification of ancient cities in Messenia and Laconia. It provides insights into the historical and literary contexts of various poleis, emphasizing their role within the broader territorial framework of Sparta.

Homeric Geography and Spartan Expansion. The excerpt addresses the Homeric references to settlements later associated with Messenia, illustrating the anachronistic nature of Homeric geography. For instance, *Odyssey* 2.15 inaccurately places Ortilochos' home in Messenian Pharaï rather than Arcadian territory, a point debated in ancient and modern scholarship.

The seven cities listed in Iliad 9 as offerings from Agamemnon to Achilles (e.g., Kardamyle, Enope, Antheia, and vine-clad Pedasos) are interpreted as evidence of early Spartan control over southeastern Messenia, potentially predating the Spartan conquest of Messenia around 735–710 BCE. The identifications of these cities—many of which remain debated and speculative—underscore how ancient authors like Strabo and Pausanias used geographical and literary traditions to situate these poleis within Spartan or Messenian contexts. For example, Enope is identified variably as Pellana, Kardamyle, or Gerenia, reflecting the fluidity of ancient geographical knowledge.

Spartan Territorial Organization. Sparta's territorial control, as described by Herodotus and other Classical authors, extended beyond the city-state itself to encompass a wide region referred to as Lakonike or Lacedaemon. This territory included both the Spartan *chora* (core agricultural land) and the dependent perioicic poleis, such as Pellana and Geronthrai. The description of Lacedaemon as “hollow” (*koile*) in Iliad 2.581 hints at Spartan dominance over the Eurotas Valley and nearby plains, suggesting an early consolidation of Spartan territory. Pellana fits this description more than all other Mycenaean settlements considered.

Pellana and Belemina. The discussion of Pellana highlights its historical significance as a dependent polis within Lakonike. Sources like Pausanias, Strabo, and Polybius describe it as part of the Spartan sphere during the Archaic and Classical periods, though its status as a polis appears to have been retroactively applied. Similarly, Belemina is presented as a contested site, with ancient authors and modern scholars debating its exact location and role within Spartan territory.

Spartan Core Territory. The Spartan *chora* was characterized by fertile land and strategic boundaries, encompassing the Eurotas Valley and flanked by perioicic territories. The approximate 270 km² of Spartan-controlled land included prime agricultural areas critical to the sustenance of the Spartan state and its citizen-soldiers. The delineation of Spartan territory reflects a mix of historical reality and interpretative traditions, with no ancient references to the modern concept of a “Spartiate”

This passage demonstrates how ancient texts and archaeological findings intersect in the study of Spartan and Messenian territories. It underscores the fluidity of historical geography, where literary sources, political expansion, and scholarly interpretation combine to construct an understanding of the ancient Greek world. The nuanced debates over city locations and territorial boundaries reflect the challenges of reconciling Homeric poetry with historical realities and Classical authorship.

PARALLELS AND CONTRASTS - EARLY MYCENAEAN MORTUARY TRADITIONS IN MESSENIA AND LACONIA - D.J. BENNET & I.E. GALANAKIS – 2005. Tumuli and pithoi (the latter hosting burials of both adults and children) are also attested, though not with the same intensity as in south-west Messenia. Pits and cists are also found, with cists being the predominant type in the Kato Samikon tumuli (Boyd 2002: 186–9). Built graves are rare. Only two examples have been reported so far, one at Babes: Arnokataracho and the other at Kato Samikon: Klidi (Papadimitriou 2001: 43–5; Boyd 2002: 191).

Chamber tombs do not appear prior to the late LH II period²¹ and even then, they are not as popular as in the region north of the Alpheios. We should note, however, the extensive cemetery (over 87 chamber tombs) at Palaeopyrgi in Gortynia, north of the Alpheios (Cavanagh & Mee 1998: 99; Demakopoulou & Crouwel 1998: 269–70), with its tholoi rock-cut chamber tombs that are similar in shape—and date? —to those at Pellana in Laconia.

III. the Laconian funerary landscape in the late MH–LH II periods. Turning to Laconia (Cavanagh et al. 1996; see also Banou 2000), the mortuary record shows some notable differences. So far, no MH tumulus has been found, although possible EH tumuli have been reported at Orchomenos in Arcadia (Spyropoulos 1996) and Pellana in Laconia (Spyropoulos 1998; 2002). Furthermore, pithos burials are rare, although they are attested (e.g. Ayios Stephanos). This picture strikingly contrasts with the situation in Messenia and southern Elis.

In Laconia, on the other hand, pits and cists along with a few built graves²² appear to be the exclusive components of the mortuary landscape. At the beginning of the LBA, rock-cut chamber tombs make their appearance (Dickinson 1977: 63–4, n. 34). Interestingly, it is in the early LBA, after the appearance of the tholos type in Messenia, that most of the round-chambered, tholos-like, rock-cut tombs appear (not only in Laconia, but also in Messenia).

Those at Pellana and Epidauros Limera are the most striking examples, comparable with those at Chora: Volimidia in Messenia. A few chamber tombs, like those on the island of Kythera, follow the same late MM–early LM chamber tomb tradition (Dickinson 1994: 233). Although the most distinctive feature of Neo palatial rock-cut tombs on Kythera and Crete is their multiple chambers, single-chamber examples also exist. This observation led Dickinson to suggest different sources of inspiration for the formation of the chamber tomb type in the Aegean. (Dickinson 1983: 64–5; 1984: 116–7; 1994: 223–4; cf. Boyd 2002: 58–61).

Chamber tombs appear in Laconia and Messenia sometime in late MH III–early LH I. The rock-cut tombs on Kythera and Crete predate these examples. It has already been argued that the inspiration for the formation of the chamber tomb type need not be common. In the case of Messenia, chamber tombs could have constituted an alternative to tholos tombs, while in Laconia rock-cut tombs might represent a feature appropriated from the Cretan (or Kythera) tradition. Interestingly enough, however, rock-cut chamber tombs with a tholoi form appear quite early both in Laconia (Pellana: Palaeokastro) and Messenia (Chora: Volimidia), as noted above, suggesting parallels between the two regions, at least in funerary architecture.

In general, grave goods are considerably rare during early MH times and architectural sophistication is limited to that required for the construction of tumuli (Cavanagh & Mee 1998: 31–3). From the late MH (MH III) period, however, conspicuous display of grave goods appears, together with greater complexity in mortuary practice. (Dickinson 1977; Voutsaki 1995; 1998; 1999; Cavanagh & Mee 1998: 49–55).

Tomb form starts to constitute an important parameter in funerary practices with its architectural sophistication, in terms of size, masonry quality and so forth, culminating in LH I–LH II (Zavadil 2001, I: 182–90). It is not until the LH IIA period, however, that certain sites become significant (in terms of size, burial numbers or architectural sophistication). During LH IIA–LH IIIA1, Vapheio: Palaeopyrgi, the Menelaion, and Vourvoura: Analipsis might have constituted important regional centres. Their floruit, however, seems to have been short-lived.

Already by LH IIIA1, the aforementioned sites, instead of being transformed into major, large-scale centres, as one might have expected, show no such signs. On the contrary, Pellana—although it might have been important at a regional level during LHIIA2–LH IIIB—has not yet produced evidence to suggest that it might actually have acted as an extensive, regional, administrative centre (Dickinson 1992: 112).³² So far, a ‘super-centre’ of the size and complexity of Pylos (ca. 15 ha) and Mycenae (ca. 30 ha) is lacking in Laconia. And yet the settlement at Vapheio:

LANDSCAPES OF THE ANCIENT PELOPONNESE. A HUMAN GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACH - GRAHAM SHIPLEY 2006. Eurotas–Alpheios furrow must have been often in their minds. An inscription dedicated at Olympia by the Spartans states explicitly the distance between the two places, perhaps illustrating the Spartans’ mental geography. The Arkadian towns in the upper Alpheios headwaters were of key importance for all Arcadians and for their northern neighbours. Complementing this topographical node was the area to its west, comprising the northern slopes of the Taygetos range.

Here Sparta’s dependent ‘perioicic’ settlements down to the fourth century (Aigys, Malea, Kromnos, Belemina) hardly seem to have been integrated into Lacedaemonian society and geopolitical structures, judging by their obscurity in the historical record. Perhaps they were a relatively late focus of Spartan interest. Or perhaps western Arkadia, lacking a major centre before the foundation of Megalopolis by Sparta’s enemies, seemed so powerless to the Spartans that they invested little in this area and focused instead on the Alpheios route.

Another focus of Spartan strategic concern, and no doubt of others' concern about Sparta, was the Kynouria–Thyreatis region on the east coast, an area perennially disputed with Argos. All these considerations explain why Philip II could be induced to deprive the Lacedaemonians of these outlying areas – unjustly as it seemed to some – and why successive Spartan leaders, over the following century and more, attempted to use these areas as bridgeheads for expansion and the recovery of lost domains.

SPARTA AND ITS PERIOICIC NEIGHBOURS - GRAHAM SHIPLEY – 2006. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PELLANA TO SPARTA. Sparta and its perioicic neighbours, particularly Pellana, offers a nuanced view of the interrelations between the dominant Spartan polis and the smaller communities that composed its periphery. Below is an analytical synthesis of the key points, with a focus on historical, archaeological, and theoretical frameworks that inform this discourse.

Sparta and the Perioicic: Clarifying the Relationship

1. **Terminology and Scope:** The terms Lakonike (Λακωνική) and Lacedaemon (Λακεδαίμων) reflect distinct historical and geographical dimensions of Sparta's dominion. While the former refers broadly to Spartan-controlled territory, the latter focuses on the Eurotas valley and its immediate surroundings, including the city of Sparta itself. The differentiation underscores the layered governance structure in Laconia. A distinction is made between Spartiates (full Spartan citizens) and Lacedaemonians (a broader category encompassing perioicic). This is significant for understanding Sparta's socio-political fabric and its military arrangements.
2. **Role of the Perioicic:** Perioicic, or "those who dwell around," occupied a semi-autonomous role within Spartan territory. Though subordinate to Sparta, their settlements were organized as dependent *poleis* with some level of internal governance. This reclassification challenges earlier views that perioicic settlements were mere rural outposts devoid of civic structures. Key examples include settlements like Pellana, Gythio, and Geronthrai. The perioicic contributed economically (crafts, trade) and militarily (supplying troops) to Sparta, reinforcing their integral yet distinct position in the Laconian system.
3. **Historical Myths and Reinterpretations:** The lecture refutes the monolithic perception of Spartan equality and dominance. Hodkinson's analysis shows economic stratification among Spartans, with wealth disparities existing despite the official ideology of egalitarianism. Similarly, the "top-down" narrative of Spartan governance is revised to reflect a more decentralized interaction between Sparta and its perioicic neighbours. These communities often managed local resources and governance, albeit under Spartan oversight.
4. **Identifying Perioicic Poleis:** A total of 23 settlements in Laconia are categorized as definite, probable, or possible perioicic poleis. This includes coastal towns like Kythera and Boia and inland settlements such as Pellana and Sellasia. The uneven distribution of evidence, favouring coastal areas, reflects the archaeological visibility of such sites and the survival of inscriptions. For Messenia, the perioicic status of several settlements is suggested but remains less definitively established due to limited textual and material evidence.
5. **Defining a Polis:** The work of the Copenhagen Polis Centre is pivotal in redefining what constitutes a *polis*. Rejecting modern metrics such as size or sovereignty, the ancient Greek usage of the term guides the classification. This redefinition includes dependent and small-scale communities, aligning with how perioicic towns functioned under Spartan rule.
6. **Recent Archaeological Contributions:** Survey archaeology, initiated by efforts like the British School at Athens' "Survey of Laconia" (1903-04), continues to illuminate perioicic sites. Excavations at Geronthrai and Gythio have revealed both prehistoric and classical layers, underscoring the long-term habitation and importance of these communities.

ATHENS AND SPARTA - NIKOLAOS KALTSAS – 2007. It is worth considering briefly relations within Laconia, between Sparta and the perioicic. Agis IV's abortive reforms in the 240s, later rebranded by Cleomenes III, included a redistribution of land, which was to put poor citizens on a firmer footing, re-enfranchise inferiors, and replenish the citizen body. Plutarch puts it in terms of a redivision of Laconia as a whole, telling us that Agis assigned 4,500 plots to Spartans out of "the land from the ravine at Pellana toward Taygetos, Malea and Sellasia," while the area designated for the 15,000 perioicic plots was "that outside" (Τῆν ἐξω)

The choice of place-names is puzzling at first sight, but I have suggested elsewhere that "Malea" means neither the former perioicic polls of that name on the Arcadian border, nor Cape Malea (or Maleas), but the Parnon range as a whole. It signifies the eastern boundary of Sparta's own polls territory. In other words, the area marked out for Spartan farms was the existing territory of the city. Agis and Cleomenes did not envisage increasing Sparta's territory at the expense of neighboring perioicic, or redrawing the borders of any polls' territory. Indeed, Agis and Cleomenes were in no position to redraw the map

BYZANTINES AND ACHAEAN HOSTILITIES 1259 - 1283 - JUHO WILSKMAN – 2007. The excerpt from Juho Wilschman's thesis highlights the strategic and architectural significance of medieval castles in the Morea during the Byzantine-Achaean hostilities of 1259–1283. The passage focuses particularly on lesser-documented or speculative fortifications and their roles in the volatile political and military landscape of the late Byzantine period.

Strategic Importance of Southeastern Morea Castles. The castles mentioned—such as Pellana, Chelmos, and Zarnata—are noted as potential Byzantine constructions, often situated in regions of military and strategic significance. These fortifications likely served as defensive points and control hubs during the Byzantines' effort to reclaim and consolidate territories against the Franks. The placement of these castles in challenging, inaccessible locations, such as hilltops or regions overlooking anchorages, underscores their defensive utility.

1. **Pellana:** Positioned between Chelmos and Mystras, Pellana is identified as a hill castle potentially built on ancient ruins. Its location in an inaccessible area suggests its role as a defensive stronghold, providing oversight of a border region that shifted between Byzantine and Frankish control.
2. **Chelmos:** Overlooking anchorages, this castle likely served both defensive and logistical purposes, securing key coastal access points.
3. **Zarnata and Others:** These sites are further evidence of the Byzantine practice of fortifying villages and utilizing pre-existing ancient ruins to bolster defences in contested regions.

Byzantine and Frankish Architectural Influences. The castles in Morea, such as Kalavryta, Karitane, and Bardoun, share characteristics typical of Frankish fortifications, including simple designs with donjons (central keeps) and inner and outer castle structures. However, the degree to which Byzantine fortifications in the region adopted these features remains uncertain due to the scarcity of archaeological evidence for some sites, like Pellana and Chelmos. This blending of styles illustrates the interchange of military architecture in a zone of cultural and political overlap.

Borderland Context. The castles' placement reflects their role in a fluctuating frontier between the Byzantine Despotate of the Morea and the Frankish Principality of Achaea. By the late 13th century, this region represented a contested zone where fortifications not only provided defence but also symbolized political control and territorial claims. The passage underscores the complexity of identifying and contextualizing medieval fortifications in Morea. While clear documentary evidence is often lacking, the strategic placement of castles such as Pellana and Chelmos aligns with Byzantine efforts to establish control in borderlands. These fortifications exemplify the integration of ancient ruins into medieval military architecture and highlight the interplay of Byzantine and Frankish influences in the region's contested landscapes.

HONOURING THE DEAD IN THE PELOPONNESE - HELEN CAVANAGH, WILLIAM CAVANAGH AND JAMES ROY – 2009. The evidence collected by Tsountas concerning the tombs at Mycenae, indicates that the plastering and decoration of the façade and the doorway took place just before the interment and the closing of the tomb. Papadimitriou referred also to this practice for the decoration of the façade of the built chamber tomb. Unfortunately, there is no evidence for the exact time of decoration at the different stages of the use of a tomb. Only two chamber tombs had incised decoration. The large tomb at Antheia in Messenia, with a rock-cut bench along one of the sides of the rectangular chamber, was provided with a series of incised discs above the lintel. The façade and the chamber of the large chamber tomb at Pellana in Laconia were also decorated with an incised lion and a griffin, as well as a palm tree, respectively.

Among the decorative designs used in LH tombs were patterns already known from Minoan frescoes, such as simple bands, running spirals, rosettes, discs, papyrus or palm-tree motifs and triangles, in blue, yellow, red and black, whilst in some cases orange and dark red were also used. Pictorial decoration, painted and incised, was used in only two chamber tombs, at Thebes and Pellana, respectively. In the Mycenaean chamber tombs the decoration involved mostly the façade, sometimes the doorway and, in a few cases only, the chamber.

THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS - CARLOS J. MOREU – 2009. Carlos J. Moreu's work on the Eastern Mediterranean Crisis, specifically the presence of Handmade Burnished Ware (HBW) in Greece, provides valuable insights into cultural and migratory dynamics during the 12th and 13th centuries BCE. This pottery type, associated with northern intruders or "Sea Peoples," serves as a marker of external influence in the Aegean world during a time of widespread upheaval.

Key Highlights from the Text

1. Handmade Burnished Ware (HBW):

- **Definition and Characteristics:** HBW, often referred to as "Coarse Ware," is identified by its handmade production and burnished finish. It contrasts with the finely crafted, wheel made pottery typical of the Mycenaean period.
- **Origins and Spread:** Originating in northern regions, HBW is found in Troy (VIIb1, 12th century BCE) and contemporaneous sites in Greece. It represents a cultural intrusion, possibly linked to migrations or the influence of foreign groups.

2. Geographic Distribution in Greece:

- **Limited Quantities:** Although present, HBW remains a minority pottery type at these sites. Mycenaean wheel made pottery dominates the assemblages, suggesting HBW was an introduced rather than indigenous tradition. HBW is found in significant, centrally located Mycenaean sites such as Tiryns, Mycenae, and Athens, as well as regional centres like Pellana, Delphi, Lefkandi, and the Menelaion of Sparta.
- **Chronology and Cultural Context:** The primary use of HBW aligns with the 12th century BCE, a time of societal stress across the Eastern Mediterranean, known as the "Crisis of 1200 BCE.". Earlier examples (13th century BCE) in places like Tiryns indicate a gradual introduction of this ware, predating the full-blown collapse of Mycenaean palatial culture.
- **Potential Links to the Sea Peoples.** The appearance of HBW coincides with historical records and archaeological evidence of migrations and invasions during the Late Bronze Age collapse. The spread of this pottery type could signify the movement of "barbarian" groups from the north into Mycenaean territories, bringing their material culture with them.

3. **Impact on Local Cultures.** The presence of HBW in Mycenaean centres like Pellana and the Menelaion suggests interactions between Mycenaean and non-Mycenaean populations. However, its limited adoption implies these interactions did not lead to significant cultural assimilation, with Mycenaean traditions remaining dominant.

4. Pellana and Spartan Context

- **Pellana's Role.** As a key administrative center in prehistoric Laconia, Pellana's inclusion among the HBW sites indicates its involvement in the broader cultural networks of the Late Bronze Age. The presence of HBW at Pellana may point to its role as a frontier or transitional zone where interactions with northern groups could occur.
- **The Menelaion and Sparta.** The Menelaion of Sparta, a site linked to Mycenaean elite activity, also exhibits traces of HBW. This suggests that even the heartland of Mycenaean power was not entirely insulated from external influences.

Wider Implications of HBW Findings

- **Markers of Migration and Crisis.** The introduction of HBW coincides with the destabilization of the Eastern Mediterranean, marked by the fall of major powers like the Hittites and the decline of Mycenaean palatial systems. HBW serves as archaeological evidence for the movement of people, possibly linked to the "Sea Peoples" and other migratory phenomena.

Cultural Exchange and Resistance. The limited adoption of HBW within Mycenaean sites suggests a selective integration of foreign materials. Mycenaean Greece maintained its cultural identity despite external pressures.

Chronological Significance. The gradual appearance of HBW from the 13th century BCE may reflect early stages of interaction between Mycenaean societies and external groups, culminating in more significant disruptions by the 12th century BCE. The study of Handmade Burnished Ware enriches our understanding of the Late Bronze Age Aegean, highlighting the interplay between external influences and local resilience during a time of crisis.

At sites like Pellana and the Menelaion, HBW's presence underscores the reach of these cultural shifts into Laconia. Yet, the continued dominance of Mycenaean pottery traditions reveals a society striving to preserve its identity amidst mounting challenges. This dynamic interplay provides a crucial lens through which to view the transformative events of the "Crisis of 1200 BCE."

LATE HELLADIC III C PERIOD IN THE AEGEAN - FRANCESCO IACONO – 2011. Francesco Iacono's discussion of the Late Helladic III C period in the Aegean, particularly regarding Handmade Burnished Ware (HBW) and Urnfield bronzes, sheds light on cultural dynamics and material exchanges during this transitional era. His observations about their contextual patterns provide insights into the social and ritual practices of the time.

The findings at Pellana, as analysed by Iacono, highlight the site's importance in understanding Late Helladic III C cultural shifts. The juxtaposition of HBW and Urnfield bronzes in both settlement and funerary contexts underscores the fluidity and adaptability of material culture during a time of significant societal transformation. These artifacts not only reflect practical and aesthetic choices but also hint at evolving ritual practices and cross-regional interactions in the post-palatial Aegean world.

Key Points on HBW and Urnfield Bronzes

1. Contexts of HBW:

- a. HBW is predominantly found in settlement contexts, suggesting its primary use in daily domestic life or as utilitarian pottery.
- b. **Exceptions in Funerary Contexts:** The discovery of HBW jugs at Pellana and Perati (Fig. 1.2.8-9) highlights unique cases where this pottery appears in burial settings, contrasting with its usual association with living spaces.

2. Contexts of Urnfield Bronzes:

- a. Urnfield bronzes, in contrast, are more often associated with funerary and cultic contexts, indicating their symbolic or ritual significance rather than everyday use.
- b. These artifacts are more commonly found in inland sites, differing from HBW, which is frequently discovered in coastal settlements.

3. Overlap and Exceptions:

4. Sites where HBW and bronzes are found together, such as Pellana, represent anomalies in their typical distribution patterns. This overlap might reflect unique local practices or transitional phases in material culture.
5. Iacono suggests that these contexts should not be seen as contradictory but rather as part of a sequential or overlapping progression in the cultural and functional use of these materials.

Pellana's Role in LH III C

1. **HBW in Funerary Contexts:** The presence of an HBW jug in a burial at Pellana deviates from its typical domestic association. This could indicate: The adoption of foreign material culture into local burial customs.
2. **Transition.** A transitional phase where HBW began to acquire symbolic or ritual connotations in addition to its utilitarian role.
3. **Bronzes and Inland Sites:** Pellana's inland location aligns with the pattern of Urnfield bronzes being found in such areas. The co-occurrence of HBW and bronzes here suggests it may have been a crossroads of cultural exchange, blending influences from inland and coastal regions.

Broader Implications

1. **Material and Cultural Exchange:** The contrast between HBW's coastal prevalence and the inland concentration of bronzes suggests distinct yet overlapping networks of exchange. Pellana, with evidence of both, exemplifies a site where these networks intersected.
2. **Ritual Significance:** The occurrence of both HBW and bronzes in burial contexts, though rare, points to their emerging ritual or commemorative roles, potentially linked to changing perceptions of death and status during this tumultuous period.

and settlement choices of ancient communities. Topography, or the physical features of the land, is highlighted as a critical determinant in the practicality and sustainability of habitation in a particular area. Whether a site offered flat terrain or required strategic access to water supplies or natural resources would often dictate its desirability and functionality as a settlement location.

The acropolis of Pellana, cited as an example, reflects how ancient communities optimized their surroundings. During its peak prosperity in the 13th century B.C., Pellana's position above a fertile, well-watered plain in Laconia made it an ideal settlement. The reference to Spyropoulos (1998) underlines how the fertile plain not only supported agricultural activities but also contributed to the community's economic and cultural development.

This observation aligns with broader archaeological studies, such as Swiny's (1981: 80–81), which stress that environmental and topographical features frequently influenced ancient human settlement patterns, demonstrating a symbiotic relationship between humans and their environment in prehistory. Such factors underscore the importance of environmental considerations in archaeological interpretations of ancient societies.

MYCENAEAN CIVILIZATION - COLETTE HEMINGWAY & SEÁN HEMINGWAY 2003. Mycenaean is the term applied to the art and culture of Greece from ca. 1600 to 1100 B.C. The name derives from the site of Mycenae in the Peloponnese, where once stood a great Mycenaean fortified palace. Mycenae is celebrated by Homer as the seat of King Agamemnon, who led the Greeks in the Trojan War. In modern archaeology, the site first gained renown through Heinrich Schliemann's excavations in the mid-1870s, which brought to light objects whose opulence and antiquity seemed to correspond to Homer's description of Agamemnon's palace. The extraordinary material wealth deposited in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae (ca. 1550 B.C.) attests to a powerful elite society that flourished in the subsequent four centuries.

During the Mycenaean period, the Greek mainland enjoyed an era of prosperity centred in such strongholds as Mycenae, Tiryns, Thebes, and Athens. Local workshops produced utilitarian objects of pottery and bronze, as well as luxury items, such as carved gems, jewellery, vases in precious metals, and glass ornaments. Contact with Minoan Crete played a decisive role in the shaping and development of Mycenaean culture, especially in the arts. Wide-ranging commerce circulated Mycenaean goods throughout the Mediterranean world from Spain and the Levant.

The evidence consists primarily of vases, but their contents (oil, wine, and other commodities) were probably the chief objects of trade. Besides being bold traders, the Mycenaean were fierce warriors and great engineers who designed and built remarkable bridges, fortification walls, and beehive-shaped tombs—all employing Cyclopean masonry—and elaborate drainage and irrigation systems.

Their palatial centres, "Mycenae rich in gold" and "sandy Pylos," are immortalized in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Palace scribes employed a new script, Linear B, to record an early Greek language. In the Mycenaean palace at Pylos—the best preserved of its kind—Linear B tablets suggest that the king stood at the head of a highly organized feudal system. By the late thirteenth century B.C., however, mainland Greece witnessed a wave of destruction and the decline of the Mycenaean sites, causing the withdrawal to more remote refuge settlements.

LAGGARD LAKONIA - SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN LAKONIA DURING THE MYCENAEAN PERIOD - LEEUWARDEN, JUNE 2012. The Palace of Menelaos and Eleni is located in Palaeokastro, according to Spyropoulos (1998), and Palaeokastro thus should be "the Mycenaean capital" of Lakonia, as Castleden ironically remarks (2005, pp. 16-17).

The acropolis hill of the settlement Palaeokastro lies on the western edge of the modern village of Pellana, approx. 30 km north of Sparta. Chamber tombs, cut into a low sandstone hill, are approx. 500 m north of the hill of Palaeokastro. On the plateau of Tryporrachi, 400 m to the east, also some Mycenaean tombs are visible. On the acropolis stood a mediaeval castle; strata of Mycenaean inhabitation have been disturbed and are not recognizable. On the second lower terrace of the acropolis to the south there are traces of a settlement of the Mycenaean period (LH IIIA2 to LH IIIB2/IIIC early).

The site is on the edge of a fertile plain, stretching for a considerable distance to the south (bounded on the east by the Eurotas). It is a strategic location, controlling the passage from Lakonia to the Megalopolitis and Messenia. Spyropoulos remarks: "During the thirteenth century BC when the Mycenaean kingdoms in the Peloponnese were consolidated and their geographical borders were stabilised, as they are portrayed in Iliad ii, one of the princes of Lakonia became the king (Wanax) of the whole territory."

The most probable place for this to take place was Pellana, which presents, among other evidence, to be discussed below, continuous habitation and continuous funerary use of the great Tombs until the beginning of the twelfth century BC" (1998, p. 35). The intriguing part of this text is that one of the princes of Lakonia became the king (*wa-na-ka* or *Wanax*) of the whole territory. Apart from the fact that there is no literary written proof of this supposition, there is the question of what "the whole territory" implies. Lakonia is not a geographic entity.

There are no clear boundaries in Mycenaean times: the landscape is formed by geology and the social landscape is made by man. Homeros speaks of "κοίλην Λακεδαίμονα κητώεσσαν": the hollow land of Lacedaemon with its many ravines (see above, p. 6). [Pellana and its surrounding environment]. Did Homer not just mean the valley of the river Eurotas, the Sparta and the Helos plains, from Palaeokastro in the north until Ayios Stephanos in the south, where the closest density of people was? And those "princes": are meant here the local social (LH II) or regional political (LH III) rulers in the area?

And how and why should one of them become *wa-na-ka* of the whole area? Let us look at the archaeological data of Palaeokastro. The most striking feature is the big tholoi chamber tomb dating from LH IIA, the same period as the Vapheio and Analipsis tholos tombs. In the cemetery are at least five other beehive shaped chamber tombs, dating from LH III or earlier. They all have stomion and dromos, and some have deep pits and niches. The smallest has a diameter of 4,0 m.

The big tholoi chamber tomb, with a diameter of 10,05 m, is the largest known chamber tomb in the Mycenaean Mainland, and the skills to build it match that of the tholos tombs: the rock-cut "tholos" tombs have adopted several constructional features from the stone-built tholos tombs. This tomb has a rather short, but impressive dromos, and the top of the dromion is triangular in shape, as were probably the dromion of all these graves.

Spyropoulos is right in postulating that the construction of this huge chamber tomb testifies to great expertise and technical virtuosity of a kind not found in any other funeral monument of this type in the whole Greek mainland, but he is way out of the way when he concludes that the tomb was "then" a royal tomb and Palaeokastro an administrative centre (1998, p. 35).

He himself admits that whether there was a "royal residence" built on the top of the acropolis during the Middle Helladic or the Mycenaean period will remain a matter of speculation (1998, p. 35-36). In fact, one can detect in the site of the settlement only a few stone blocks, maybe indicating a ring wall; and on the east slope of the grave hill stones are found, which might be originate from the settlement. There is found a burial mound or tumulus as early as EH, just below the top of the acropolis; it is the first (and only) one discovered in Lakonia.

It might be the burial place of a chief, a local leader, but it is absolutely not to be proven that this was the resting place "of the chieftains, who ruled over Pellana and perhaps over Lakonia during the Early and Middle Bronze Age Periods", and that the "line of chieftainship remained probably unbroken until the Early Mycenaean Period, when the royal tholos tomb was constructed nearby and survived up to the end of the Mycenaean period" (Spyropoulos 1998, p. 36); this is a pure romantic phantasm.

The immobilia either do not support Spyropoulos's thesis. From the settlement a few sherds of EH pottery and LH III Mycenaean pottery are collected; from the cemeteries little is known of the contents of the (since long robbed) chamber tombs: some Mycenaean pottery (LH IIIA, possible LH IIIB) in a grave pit, also 25 violet glass beads and other beads, two seal stones (one amber, one semi-precious stone) and a female figurine of style "Φ".

In the big tholoi chamber tombs is found only LH II pottery, including two palace style jars and two alabastra (LH IIA); a lump of meteoric iron, some bits of gold foil; in the dromos pottery of LH I. No doubt Palaeokastro was an important local settlement in LH II; but there are no signs nor proof that this local settlement has grown into a regional and political centre in LH IIIA, let alone a palace with economic and political power over the whole of Lakonia or Lacedaemon.

Palaeokastro (Pellana). The acropolis hill of the settlement Palaeokastro lies on the western edge of the modern village of Pellana, approx. 30 km north of Sparta. The chamber tombs are approx. 500 m north of the hill of Palaeokastro. On the plateau of Tryporrachi, 400 m to the east, also some Mycenaean tombs are visible.

Literature. Banou 1996, pp. 42-44; Boyd 2002, pp. 195-200; Cavanagh et al. 1996, p. 288 (GG69); Spyropoulos 1998; Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1961, pp. 125-128;

Description and character. On the acropolis stood a mediaeval castle; strata of Mycenaean inhabitation have been disturbed and are not recognizable. On the second lower terrace of the acropolis to the south there are traces of a settlement of the Late Mycenaean period (LH IIIA2 to LH IIIB2/early C). The site is on the edge of a fertile plain, stretching for a considerable distance to the south (bounded on the east by the Eurotas), while the spring in the middle of Pellana's village provides copious water all the year round. It is a strategic location, controlling the passage from Lakonia to the Megalopolis and Messenia. The chamber tombs are cut into a low sandstone hill.

Relevant finds (MH III - LH IIIC). From the settlement: a few sherds of EH pottery and LH III Mycenaean pottery. From the cemeteries: little is known from the contents of the (since long robbed) chamber tombs (see immobilia): some Mycenaean pottery (LH IIIA, possible LH IIIB) in a grave pit. Also 25 violet glass beads and other beads, two seal stones (one amber, one semiprecious stone) and a female figurine of style "Φ". Bones in disorder in several pits; more than one burial per pit. In the biggest chamber tombs is found only LH II pottery, including two palace style jars and two alabastra (LH IIA); a lump of meteoric iron, some bits of gold foil; in the dromos pottery of LH I. Also, barbarian ware in another tomb (LH IIIC).

From the settlement: a few stone blocks indicating a ring wall? On the east slope of the grave hill are stones from also the settlement? From the cemeteries: at least six big beehive shaped chamber tombs at one side of the hill, with stomion and dromos, and diameter between 4.0 m and 10.05 m, and some with deep pits and niches. The biggest tomb might date from LH IIA, the others from LH III, or also earlier.

The biggest tomb is the largest known chamber tomb, and the skills to build it match that of the tholos tombs: the rock-cut "tholos" tombs have adopted several constructional features from the stone-built tholos tombs. This tomb has a rather short, but impressive dromos, and the top of the dromion is triangular in shape (as were probably the dromion of all these graves). An EH burial mound; the first one discovered in Lakonia; maybe there are more next to it? A cemetery of MH/LH graves on the acropolis; a shaft grave surrounded by other shaft graves, deep pits and niches. The biggest tomb might date from LH IIA, the others from LH III, or also earlier.

The biggest tomb is the largest known chamber tomb, and the skills to build it match that of the tholos tombs: the rock-cut "tholos" tombs have adopted several constructional features from the stone-built tholos tombs. This tomb has a rather short, but impressive dromos, and the top of the dromion is triangular in shape (as were probably the dromion of all these graves). An EH burial mound; the first one discovered in Lakonia; maybe there are more next to it? A cemetery of MH/LH graves on the acropolis; a shaft grave surrounded by other shaft graves.

Spyropoulos, T.G., 1998. Pellana, the administrative centre of prehistoric Laconia. In: Cavanagh, W.G. and Walker, S.E.C., eds. *Sparta in Laconia. Proceedings of the 19th British Museum Classical Colloquium held with the British School at Athens and King's and University Colleges, London 6-8 December 1995*. British School at Athens Studies, vol. 4. London: British School at Athens, pp. 28-38.

THE KINGDOM OF MYCENAE - JORRIT M. KELDER – 2022. Jorrit M. Kelder's exploration of Mycenaean palatial centres in *The Kingdom of Mycenae: A Great Kingdom in the Late Bronze Age Aegean* underscores the complexity and significance of the Mycenaean civilization's architectural and administrative achievements. The mention of sites such as Pellana, Dimini, and Salamis highlights the challenges and opportunities in uncovering and interpreting Mycenaean archaeological remains.

1. Pellana in Laconia. The rock-cut tholos tomb at Pellana is a significant archaeological feature. Such tombs are typically associated with elite or royal burials and suggest the presence of a nearby palatial or administrative center. Despite the prominence of this find, the corresponding palatial center has not yet been located, leaving much about the site's importance and role in Mycenaean Laconia speculative. The archaeological finds at Pellana have been minimally documented, with Kelder noting that they have largely been disseminated only via a poster. This lack of thorough scholarly publication hinders comprehensive analysis and integration into broader Mycenaean studies.

2. Dimini near Volos. Excavations at Dimini have revealed several Megara, structures central to Mycenaean architecture, with one apparently used for cultic purposes. The absence of a fully identified palatial complex parallels the situation at Pellana, where monumental architecture is suggested but remains elusive. Kelder expresses optimism about the discovery of a palatial complex at Dimini, describing it as "a matter of time," given the site's significant remains and layout.

3. Salamis. A complex uncovered in 2006 was labelled "palatial," but evidence such as a Linear B archive, which would firmly establish its status, is lacking. This highlights the methodological caution required when interpreting archaeological evidence without definitive markers of administrative or political control.

Themes and Implications

- **Archaeological Incompleteness.** The uncertainty surrounding the identification of palatial centres at Pellana, Dimini, and Salamis illustrates the challenges of interpreting fragmented archaeological records. The lack of comprehensive publications further exacerbates the difficulty in fully understanding the significance of these sites.
- **Indicators of Palatial Centres.** Features like tholos tombs and Megara are strong indicators of hierarchical and complex societies, even in the absence of a fully excavated palace. These architectural elements reflect the centralized organization and sociopolitical structures characteristic of Mycenaean Greece.
- **Regional Diversity.** The varying levels of excavation and preservation at these sites highlight regional differences in the development and visibility of Mycenaean centres. Sites like Mycenae and Pylos, with more extensive and better-documented finds, serve as models for interpreting less complete sites like Pellana.
- **Interdisciplinary Needs.** The gaps in publication underscore the need for interdisciplinary collaboration and thorough documentation in Aegean archaeology. Improved dissemination of findings would enable scholars to place sites like Pellana and Dimini more effectively within the broader Mycenaean network.

Pellana's Potential Significance. Pellana's tholos tomb suggests that it played a crucial role in Mycenaean Laconia, potentially as an administrative or ceremonial center. However, the lack of a discovered palatial complex limits our ability to confirm its political or economic importance. Further excavations and better publication of existing findings could clarify its relationship to other Mycenaean sites, such as the Menelaion in Sparta, and contribute to a fuller picture of the region's Late Bronze Age landscape.

Kelder's discussion of Pellana, Dimini, and Salamis highlights both the potential and limitations of current Mycenaean archaeological research. While the presence of monumental structures like tholos tombs and Megara suggests significant regional roles, the absence of definitive palatial evidence at these sites leaves critical questions unanswered. These gaps underscore the ongoing need for rigorous excavation, detailed analysis, and comprehensive publication to better understand the complexity of Mycenaean civilization.

PELOPONNESIAN POLITICS: 371-361B.C. - EDMUND JAMES GASKELL - 2022. Pellana emerged as a significant focal point during the instability following the Battle of Leuctra, reflecting the evolving power struggles in the Peloponnese. Its role can be understood from both a strategic and symbolic perspective:

Pellana's Role During This Difficult Period (371–361 BCE). Pellana's role during this period was emblematic of the broader shifts in Peloponnesian politics. It was both a strategic military objective and a symbol of the changing power dynamics in the region. The attack on Pellana highlighted the weakening of Sparta, the assertiveness of Arcadia, and the fragility of alliances in the face of competing ambitions. Its capture and eventual recapture by Sparta were part of the larger story of a region grappling with the aftermath of Theban ascendancy and the enduring shadow of Spartan resilience.

A Strategic Military Asset. Pellana was positioned as a key defensive outpost on Sparta's northern frontier. It functioned as the first line of defence for Laconia against incursions from Arcadia and its allies. Its location made it a prime target for demonstrating the vulnerability of Sparta's territory after Leuctra. The Arcadian attack on Pellana, led by Lycomedes, underscored the weakened state of Spartan defences and signalled Arcadia's growing ability to challenge Sparta militarily. This raid revealed how Arcadian forces could penetrate deep into Laconian territory, a shift in power dynamics that would have been inconceivable before Leuctra.

A Symbol of Spartan Decline. The fall of Pellana, even if temporary, was a symbolic blow to Spartan dominance. For centuries, Sparta had been the undisputed hegemon in the Peloponnese, and its inability to defend strategic outposts like Pellana highlighted its diminished military and political influence. The Arcadian occupation of Pellana, coupled with their actions at Asine, showcased a broader shift in regional power. Arcadia's aggressive behaviour symbolized a new era in which smaller states could assert themselves against their traditional overlords.

A Catalyst for Alliance Fractures. The raid on Pellana strained the alliances forged after Leuctra. While the Arcadian actions reflected their ambitions for autonomy and territorial expansion, these moves raised tensions with Thebes, whose leaders like Epaminondas sought to maintain unity among their allies. The raid also provoked Spartan efforts to retake Pellana and strengthen their position, as seen in their subsequent campaigns to recover lost territory. These counterattacks reflected Sparta's enduring resilience and further complicated the delicate balance of power.

A Reflection of Arcadian Ambitions. The attack on Pellana was not merely opportunistic but reflected Arcadia's nationalist aspirations under leaders like Lycomedes. It symbolized their intent to carve out a more significant role for Arcadia in the Peloponnese, independent of Theban or Spartan interests. However, the Arcadian incursions into Pellana and later Asine revealed the limitations of their ambitions. They lacked the resources and unity to hold these gains long-term, creating opportunities for Spartan retaliation and renewed conflict.

PART ELEVEN

Scholarly Scepticism and Support

The topic of Pellana's identification as Homeric Lacedaemon and its potential role as the site of Menelaus' palace reflects broader academic tensions in interpreting Laconian prehistory. This contested issue intertwines mythological resonance, archaeological evidence, and scholarly scepticism. Below is an exploration of the key narratives, counterarguments, and implications for understanding Spartan and Laconian archaeology:

Contrasting Narratives: Pellana's Role in Mycenaean Laconia. Proponents of Pellana's significance emphasize its archaeological richness and geographic positioning within Laconian prehistory. Excavations led by T.G. Spyropoulos underscore the site's material wealth, suggesting it could have been a central administrative hub during the Mycenaean period. Notably, Spyropoulos identifies features such as a Mycenaean roadway and artifacts indicative of elite activities, which he links to a regional authority akin to that described in Homeric poetry.

Additionally, Pellana's geographic placement fits well with descriptions of a fertile and centralized location within Lacedaemon, adding weight to its potential identification with Menelaus' domain. These interpretations resonate with the broader view of Mycenaean palace systems, where centralization of authority and cultural prominence were defining features. However, this narrative does not exist without challenges.

Counterarguments and Scholarly Scepticism

1. Rival Claims: The Menelaion. The Menelaion, near modern Sparta, has long been considered a more credible contender for Homeric Lacedaemon. Excavations by the British School at Athens reveal a continuous use of this site as a cultic and cultural hub, particularly in honouring Menelaus and Helen. Critics argue that the enduring prominence of the Menelaion in Laconian history supports its association with the Homeric narrative, despite its smaller scale compared to major Mycenaean palaces like Mycenae or Pylos.

2. Chronological Discrepancies. The dating of Pellana's archaeological strata remains a contentious issue. Key features, such as the Mycenaean roadway identified by Spyropoulos, have been reinterpreted as potentially later constructions, possibly undermining their association with the Homeric period. Moreover, the lack of Cyclopean walls, a hallmark of Mycenaean palatial centres, weakens Pellana's case for being a major administrative hub.

3. Homeric Geography: Poetic, Not Literal. Homer's epics are replete with mythological embellishments, and the geographical descriptions of Lacedaemon are no exception. Some scholars, such as Paul Cartledge, argue that Homer's use of the term "Lacedaemon" is more poetic than precise, referring broadly to the Spartan kingdom rather than a specific site. This complicates efforts to anchor the narrative in a definitive archaeological location.

4. Methodological Critiques. Spyropoulos' interpretations face criticism for relying heavily on mythological correlations and overinterpreting material evidence. Prominent archaeologists, including David Blackman and Cartledge, caution against the conflation of artifact abundance with historical significance, noting that no single site in Laconia has yielded conclusive evidence of a Mycenaean palace complex akin to those at Mycenae or Tiryns.

Broader Implications: Sparta and Laconian Archaeology. The debate surrounding Pellana exemplifies the broader challenges in reconstructing Laconian prehistory and understanding Sparta's historical evolution. Several thematic insights emerge from the literature:

1. **Centralization and Urban Identity.** Studies such as those by Spyropoulos and Cartledge highlight the interplay between urban centres and their surrounding territories. Cartledge's analysis of Sparta's unique city-chora dynamics, where control was maintained without traditional boundary walls, provides context for understanding Laconia's broader administrative and cultural organization.

2. **Cultural and Ideological Shifts.** The transition of Sparta from a vibrant artistic and cultural hub to an austere militarized society is a recurring theme. R. Fortsch's work on the decline of Spartan artistic production demonstrates how societal values shifted toward militarization during the Archaic period, influencing religious practices and artistic expression.

3. **Methodological Rigor in Archaeological Interpretation.** H.W. Catling emphasizes the need for comprehensive and interdisciplinary approaches to Spartan archaeology. His critique of past methodologies, combined with new technological advances in dating and analysis, underscores the potential for future research to resolve lingering questions about sites like Pellana and the Menelaion.

The identification of Pellana as Homeric Lacedaemon remains a vividly contested issue, reflecting broader tensions in the interpretation of Laconian prehistory. Proponents of Pellana emphasize its archaeological significance and mythological alignment, while sceptics point to the methodological, chronological, and contextual challenges undermining its primacy. These debates illuminate not only the complexities of Mycenaean Laconia but also the evolving methodologies of Spartan archaeology. Moving forward, a more integrated approach, combining textual analysis, material culture studies, and advanced archaeological techniques, will be essential in resolving these long-standing scholarly disputes.

Support for Pellana as the Mycenaean and Homeric Administrative hub

The advocacy for Pellana as the administrative capital of ancient Lacedaemon presents compelling evidence rooted in monumental architecture, mythological connections, and archaeological findings, yet the debate remains unresolved due to the complexities of evidence interpretation and scholarly biases. Below is a structured analysis of the arguments supporting Pellana's significance: While the identification of Pellana as the administrative capital of ancient Lacedaemon remains contested, the site's architectural grandeur, burial practices, and mythological resonance establish it as a critical locus of Mycenaean and Laconian history. Continued interdisciplinary research and methodological rigor are essential to resolving these debates. Regardless of its precise role, Pellana represents a vital piece of the intricate tapestry of Greek prehistory, reflecting the interplay of history, legend, and identity. Key Arguments in Support of Pellana are as shown below:

1. **Monumental Architecture and Palatial Features.** Spyropoulos' excavations have uncovered architectural elements characteristic of Mycenaean palatial centres, including:
2. The megaron (throne room), storerooms, and workshops, which align with Mycenaean administrative and ceremonial functions.
3. Cyclopean walls and large-scale foundations, which suggest a robust and monumental construction style surpassing the smaller-scale remains of the Menelaion.

4. **Tholos Tombs and Hierarchical Society.** Pellana's tholos tombs, such as the "Great Tomb" with a 10-meter diameter, stand among the most significant in Mycenaean Greece. These tombs underscore:
 - a. The presence of an elite ruling class with distinct burial practices, separate from common citizens.
 - b. A societal hierarchy consistent with Mycenaean palatial culture, where centralized authority governed regional populations.
5. **Advanced Urban Planning.** The discovery of a monumental road or potential outer wall foundations around the palace grounds suggests strategic planning and reflects the sophistication of Mycenaean infrastructure.
6. **Mythological Resonance.** Pellana's alignment with Homeric geography and mythology strengthens its case:
7. **Homer's Odyssey.** Descriptions of Telemachus' journey to Lacedaemon arguably fit Pellana's grandeur and geographic setting better than the Menelaion.
8. **Connections to Tyndareus.** Helen, and the Dioscuri embed Pellana deeply in the mythological framework of Laconian heritage.
9. **Potential Linear B Discovery.** The reported discovery of a Linear B inscription could reinforce Pellana's role as an administrative hub, provided its authenticity is confirmed. Linear B tablets are hallmarks of Mycenaean bureaucratic systems, as seen in sites like Pylos and Knossos.
10. **Scholarly Perspectives.** Romanticized Accounts vs. Rigorous Analysis, the debate over Pellana's significance reveals two contrasting approaches:
11. **Romanticized Narratives:** Scholars like Ezard emphasize Pellana's idyllic setting and cultural allure, blending personal and mythological connections to argue for its prominence.
12. **Empirical Criticism:** More technical analyses question the architectural and chronological evidence, urging caution in equating monumental scale with Homeric significance.
13. **Challenges to Pellana's Identification.** While Pellana's monumental features are impressive, critics point to unresolved questions:
14. **Lack of Consensus on Homeric Geography:** Homer's descriptions of Lacedaemon are often poetic and symbolic, complicating efforts to link them to specific archaeological sites.
15. **Comparison with Other Sites:** The Menelaion historical continuity as a cult site, despite its smaller size, raises questions about Pellana's relative significance.
16. **Methodological Concerns:** Critics of Spyropoulos' interpretations highlight potential biases in linking myth to material evidence without sufficient corroboration.
17. **Future Research Opportunities.** Interdisciplinary Approaches and advances in technology and methodology offer opportunities to deepen understanding:

18. **Geospatial Analysis (GIS):** Mapping settlement patterns and interconnectivity could clarify Pellana's role within the Mycenaean administrative network.
19. **Radiocarbon and Stratigraphic Dating:** Accurate dating of Pellana's features could resolve chronological ambiguities.
20. **Focus on Inland Perioicic Settlements.** The study of inland settlements like Pellana, often overshadowed by coastal centres, could provide a more balanced perspective on Laconian socio-political dynamics.
21. **Integration of Textual and Material Evidence.** Linking archaeological findings with literary sources (Iliad, Odyssey, and historical texts) could refine interpretations of Pellana's historical and mythological roles.
22. **Oral evidence of looting.** Artefacts disappearing once they were excavated during the excavation of the Village pump station. Ancient building material thrown in the dumps, rivers or streams. Artefacts relocated to another Mycenaean location. Artefacts destroyed because their value was not recognised.

Contemporary Relevance and Legacy. Today, Pellana serves as a bridge between its storied past and modern cultural life. Its Mycenaean tombs, scenic location, and growing tourism infrastructure highlight its potential as a site of both scholarly interest and public engagement. As research progresses, Pellana's role in shaping narratives about ancient Lacedaemon may evolve, further enriching our understanding of Mycenaean Greece.



Image 21 Digging the pump station and exposing ancient artefacts

PART TWELVE

Academic Consensus

PELLANA - ACADEMIC CONSENSUS - 2024. The consensus among modern academics regarding Pellana reflects a complex and nuanced understanding of its historical, archaeological, and cultural significance, particularly in relation to Spartan society and the broader context of Mycenaean civilization. Overall, modern academic consensus on Pellana highlights its multifaceted role as a strategic military location, a cultural and administrative hub, and a significant player in the socio-political dynamics of ancient Laconia.

The ongoing revaluation of its historical significance reflects a broader trend in archaeology towards understanding ancient societies in their complexity and interconnectivity. Here are the key points of consensus based on contemporary scholarly discussions:

1. Strategic Importance.

- a. **Geographic Location:** Pellana was strategically located on the Eurotas River, serving as a critical point for trade and military movements. Its position made it vital for controlling access between different regions of Laconia and reinforcing Spartan defences.
- b. **Military Role:** During various conflicts, particularly after the Battle of Leuctra, Pellana emerged as a significant military asset, reflecting the shifting power dynamics in the Peloponnese. Its capture and recapture illustrated the declining power of Sparta and the rise of regional challengers, such as Arcadia.

2. Cultural and Administrative Hub

- a. **Bronze Age Significance:** Scholars like T.G. Spyropoulos argue for Pellana's role as an administrative center during the Bronze Age, linking it to Mycenaean political and cultural life. The presence of tholos tombs and other monumental architecture suggests an organized and hierarchical society.
- b. **Integration with Spartan Society:** The perioicic communities, including Pellana, played a critical role in supporting Spartan military and economic structures. They were semi-autonomous but remained subordinate, contributing to Sparta's military through their hoplite forces and sustaining local economies.

3. Archaeological Findings

- a. **Rich Material Culture:** Excavations have revealed significant archaeological finds, such as tholos tombs, pottery, and remnants of administrative buildings, which provide insights into the social and economic practices of the inhabitants.
- b. **Historiographical Challenges:** Some scholars critique earlier interpretations that may oversimplify the role of Pellana, advocating for a more nuanced understanding that recognizes its complexities and the variability of its status over time.

4. Cultural Identity and Interaction

- a. **Cultural Cohesion:** The perioic communities, including Pellana, shared cultural traits with the Spartans, such as language and religious practices, distinguishing them from the Helots. This cultural proximity reinforced their roles as allies rather than mere subjects.
- b. **Inter-regional Interactions:** The presence of Handmade Burnished Ware (HBW) and other artifacts indicates that Pellana was a site of interaction between Mycenaean and non-Mycenaean populations, contributing to the broader cultural and social dynamics of the Late Bronze Age. Image

5. Modern Interpretations

- a. **Re-evaluation of Historical Narratives:** Scholars are increasingly challenging traditional narratives that portray Spartan society as uniformly dominant. The complexity of Pellana's role emphasizes the need for a more integrated view of Laconian society, where local power dynamics and inter-community relationships played critical roles.
- b. **Continuing Research Needs:** There is a consensus on the need for further archaeological research to enhance the understanding of Pellana's significance and its contributions to the broader narrative of Mycenaean civilization and Spartan history.



Image 22 Ancient Pellana – Assumed Reconstructed based on foundations

PART THIRTEEN

Bridging ancient history & contemporary life

The village of Pellana, nestled in the foothills of Mount Taygetos in Laconia, Greece, serves as a tranquil yet historically significant locale. Renamed in 1932 to honour its ancient heritage, Pellana today is a vibrant reminder of its mythological and archaeological past while adapting to modern needs. With a small population of 262 as of the 2011 census, Pellana offers a unique blend of historical intrigue, cultural traditions, and natural beauty, making it an emerging destination for history enthusiasts and travellers.

HISTORICAL ROOTS AND RENAMING

- **Ancient Legacy:** The modern village of Pellana derives its name from the ancient city situated nearby, whose history extends back to the Mycenaean era. Ancient Pellana's role as a strategic settlement and possible contender for Homeric Lacedaemon places it at the heart of discussions on Bronze Age Laconia.
- **Renaming in 1932:** Formerly known as Kalyvia ("huts"), the village was renamed to reflect its historical significance, aligning with a broader 20th-century effort to restore ancient Greek place names and cultural identity.

CULTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVATION.

Archaeological Relics: Key finds from the area, including pottery, statues, and other artifacts, are housed in the Sparta Archaeological Museum. These relics underline Pellana's importance as a site of early Mycenaean civilization. Ancient relics identified by archaeologists are to be found in storage at the museum in Sparta. Numerous other ancient artefacts, looted over the centuries have found their way abroad and housed in museums under the heading of Mycenaean culture.

Preservation Efforts: Modern protective structures have been installed over the Mycenaean tombs, including the impressive tholos tombs, to safeguard them from environmental damage and to enhance accessibility for visitors

Tourism and modern attractions. Today, despite its young people leaving for the larger cities and or abroad, continues to survive as a community. During the summer months many return to enjoy the comforts of a rustic life style and a reminder of their youth. During the Winter months those living in the large cities return to harvest the olive trees for olive oil and prune their trees. Once the olives have been harvested, enough olive oil is retained for their consumption and the excess olive oil is sold to manufacturers and exporters who sell them abroad

Cultural, Historical and Natural Outdoor Activities.

Tourist Appeal: Pellana's combination of archaeological significance, scenic beauty, and cultural offerings positions it as an attractive destination for those exploring Greece's rich heritage. While ancient Sparta's settlement history begins around 1000 BCE, with no evidence of Mycenaean habitation at the main site, Pellana's robust Mycenaean remains - including monumental tombs and potential palatial structures—underscore its role as a preeminent Bronze Age center.

Archaeological Insights: As one of the few sites offering continuity from the Mycenaean to later periods, Pellana provides crucial insights into the evolution of Laconian civilization. Its strategic location near trade and communication routes emphasizes its historical importance. Although the majority of the ancient ruins are fenced off, it is still possible to view them from outside the enclosure.

It is recommended that a local guide be sought to shown those interested. Ottoman-era homes can still be seen at the villages of Pardali, Kastorio (Kastania) and Perivolia showcasing local craftsmanship provide visitors with a glimpse into the area's diverse historical layers.



Image 23 HANZAC Memorial

Hellenic ANZAC Gardens – (HANZAC): A unique memorial commemorating Greek, Australian, and New Zealand military heritage. Its features include marble stelae, a tholos-inspired tomb, and flags flown during significant commemorative events.

It was built by donations by Australians, New Zealanders and Greeks abroad and within Greece itself. A legacy to remind future generations that freedom comes at a price. Entry is free to the public.

Taygetos and Parnona mountain ranges. The Taygetos and Parnona mountain ranges offer stunning views, especially during winter when the peaks are snow-capped. Hiking trails and nature exploration opportunities abound, with visitors often encountering wild boar, goats, and local flora like oregano and wild asparagus. The Gorge at Kastorio (Kastania) is worthwhile visiting and there are tour guides available at Kastorio (Kastania).

Olive Press Tours. Family-run olive presses give tourists a hands-on experience of the region's agricultural traditions, highlighting its reliance on fertile plains and the Eurotas River. Visit the Karagiannis olive factory which has been in existence since 1865. The other olive factory operated for many years by Yiannis (Fasaria) Filipopoulos has closed and operating as a collective station during the olive harvest.

Festivals and Local Traditions. Pellana hosts lively festivals from April to September, celebrating local food, wine, music, and dance. A standout event is the May Day BBQ near the Prophet Ilias Church, which offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape. Such festivals attract not only the locals but many arrive from the larger cities and from abroad specifically to attend. Such is the attraction of these Northern village festivals.

Northern village and province taxi tours. Radio Taxi – Sparta and local taxi services provide scenic tours of the Northern villages for a price negotiated between the parties. Additional tours of other provinces may also be negotiable.

Farms. Tourist upon request may visit local farms such as the farms of Chris Glekas, Ilias Sigalos, Kostas Glekas, Stavros Mihalopoulos and or Paul Filipopoulos. In the neighbouring villages there are emu farms, dairy milk farms, fresh water fish farms.

Sgourdas Marble and Stone Masonry Garden. Nestled at the uppermost part of the village is the dwelling of Kostas Sgourdas and his wife Panagiota. They have created a wonderful garden that overlooks the Eurotas valley and view of the Taygetos mountain ranges. While Panagiota has concentrated on the garden, Kostas has created an interesting array of marble pieces, woven together to tell a story. Tourist upon request may visit the Sgourdas home and enjoy a warm cup of tea.



Pellanis Cavern: Recently restored for visitor safety, this Neolithic site offers insights into ancient habitation and wartime refuge, adding depth to Pellana's historical narrative. This cave is located some 1000 metres from the crest of the hill where the chapel Prophet Ilais is located. It is recommended that a local guide be sought for it is over difficult terrain.

Although some parts of the cavern have fallen due to the elements, there is enough of the cavern left for eager tourist to view. A brief survey of the cavern, indicates that it has been inhabited over the centuries.

It is well known that it housed Cattle rustlers, brigands, freedom fighters during the [War of Independence](#), refugees during WW2 and irregular forces during the [Greek Civil War](#). Like many of the villages and towns in Greece, the people suffered terribly from the effects during and after the Civil War of which is till felt to this day. Image 24 Civil war veterans

AMENITIES.

Dining: Local establishments such as Dina's "White Springs" tavern serves traditional Greek meals upon request. Giannoula's restaurant adjacent to Dina's tavern has closed after operating for many years. Paul Filipopoulos and his wife Georgia operate a café/supermarket located in the upper level of the village. Additional fine dining can be found at nearby villages such as: Kastorio (Kastania) and Georgitsi. Sparta, the capital of the province Lakonia, located 17 kilometres via the new highway, also provides excellent dining facilities.

Accommodation: Accommodation is provided upon request via local sources. There are one-bedroom cottages, complete with all the amenities required. Other accommodation is available in nearby Kastori or Sparta, offering a mix of modern amenities and local charm. Sparta, provides first class accommodation for tourists and travellers.

Transportation: Pellana is accessible via a three-hour bus ride from Athens. Local taxis operated by the Dimos family provide convenient transportation within the region.

Bakery and Flour Mill. A family own business operated by the Dimos family. Pellana has one bakery and a flour mill which provides fresh bread. The mill which has been in operation for many years provides customers their daily bread. Deliveries are made every day of the week except for Sundays. The regions of North Laconia, Arcadia and some parts of Messenia are catered for. The delivery of bread to some of these isolated communities is the only contact they have with outside world.

Jewellery craftsmen. Within the confines of the village there are at least two well-known jewellery craftsman that cater for clients in Laconia. Their services are normally conducted by referrals.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT.

Signage and Infrastructure: Led by initiatives of the Pellana Association, the village has invested in improved signage and monument maintenance to enhance visitor experience and preserve its legacy.

Cultural Promotion: Local organizations have spearheaded projects such as the development of a museum in the old primary school to showcase Pellana's historical and cultural artifacts.

Irrigation. The water table has dropped remarkably low, given the introduction of modern irrigation methodologies. Prior to the introduction of household water access, the inhabitants of Pellana had access to wells within their reach. Some were part of the cottage itself. Their location however led to accidents and the water becoming contaminated by human waste seeping into the water table.

APPENDICES

Disclaimer: The opinions below are those of the respective authors and have been embedded within, to demonstrate support and further the knowledge towards supporting Pellana as the Administrative capital of ancient Lacedaemon.

APPENDIX 1 - PELLANA

The Administrative centre of prehistoric Laconia Theodoros G. Spyropoulos

Preamble: Theodoros G. Spyropoulos is a respected archaeologist and responsible for the excavations and archaeological findings at Pellana. He has written and lectured on Pellana that it is in fact the ancient administrative capital of Lacedaemonian. Today Pellana is a small, humble village in northern Laconia, some 30 km from Sparta half way along the ancient road from Sparta to Megalopolis. To the South and West, the site is dominated by the spectacular barrier of Mt. Taygetos, to the East it is open to a fertile and hollow plain, well-watered and irrigated by a chain of copious springs, the most famous of which, named Pellanis, is located at the site of Pellana, just to the S of the ancient acropolis, which lies to the E of the hill occupied by the modern village.

The strategic position of the site, controlling the passage from Laconia to the Megalopolis and Messenia, was recognised by the Spartans, who built there a tower, called Charakoma, the ruins of which are located to the S of the village. Pausanias, who made only one excursion towards Northern Laconia, after mentioning the tomb of Ladas, a renowned Olympic victor, notes 'Προϊόντι δέ ως επί την Μελλάναν χαρακόμα ἐστὶν ὁωμαζόμενον καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο Πελλάνα, πόλις το ἀρχαίον' (iii 21 2)

The passage through Pellana was safely guarded by the Spartans during the critical events which preceded the famous battle at Mantinea in 362 BC, and the site was used as the base of operations by King Agesilaus against Epameinondas. Xenophon calls the town Πελλήνη (*Hell.* VII 5 9), though the geographer Strabo speaks of a small Laconian village named, τὰ Πέλλανα πρὸς τὴν Μεγαλοπολίτιν νέυσον, i.e. lying towards megalopolis (viii 7.5).

Finally, Plutarch calls the town Πελλήνη (*Agis* 8). The identification of the hill called Palaeokastro with the ancient site and the acropolis of Pellana, is strengthened by the remains of a circuit wall, which surrounds the hill; parts of this wall are now visible on the SE side of the hill, and they are datable to fourth or early third century BC. The fields on and around Palaeokastro are covered today with innumerable shreds, dating from EH to Mediaeval times. The same hill was also inhabited in the Mycenaean period, as we shall see below.

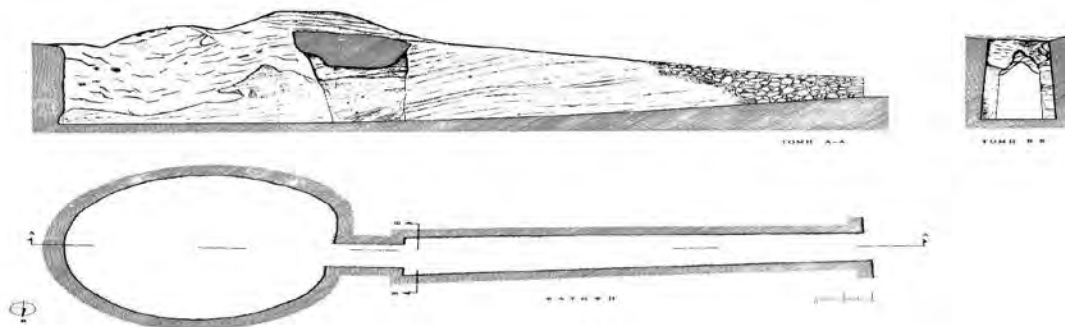


Fig 1

The gradual decline of the site has been well portrayed by the references of the ancient writers mentioned above. The last to consider it worthwhile visiting the place was Pausanias, after the middle of the second

century AD, who devoted some paragraphs to it recalling its earlier fame rather than stressing its contemporary importance. I refer to two passages in his text. The first refers to the sanctuary of Asklepios and the spring Pellanis.

The site of the spring is well – known, although it was encased some forty years ago in concrete, the beautiful plane trees were cut down, and many ancient finds were removed or destroyed during the construction of irrigation channels for the fields. The site of the sanctuary is still unknown, but we may assume that it lies somewhere on the hill of Palaeokastro. This assumption is based on the following reason. The Asklepieion was the main, if not the only sanctuary at Pellana, and it seems reasonable to look for it in the area of the Mycenaean palace, which is supposed to lie on the acropolis.

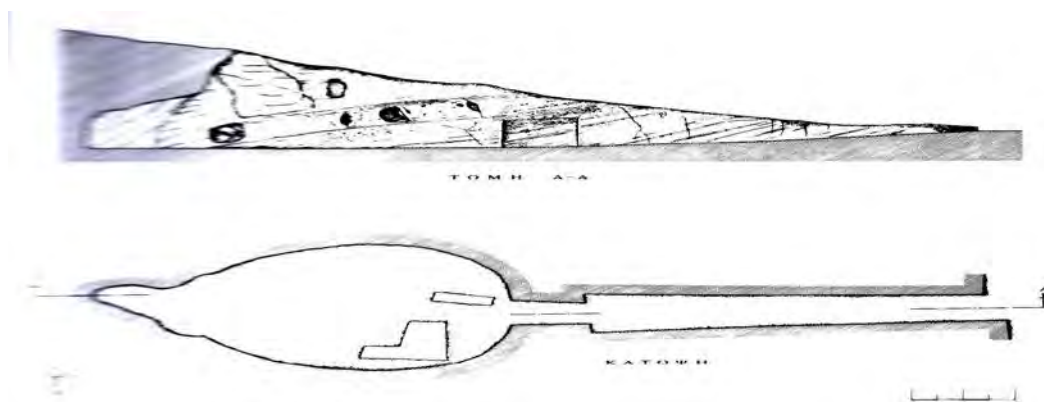


Fig 2

H. Waterhouse and R. Hope Simpson, in their important study of Prehistoric Laconia (1961: 125ff.), note three places with Mycenaean finds in the area of Pellana. The first is the cemetery of tholos tombs, the second the plateau of Tryporrachi, 400 m to the E, where some Mycenaean chamber tombs are still visible, and the third place is the hill of Palaeokastro itself. The first excavation at Pellana were conducted by the Ephor Konstantinos Rhomaïos and immediately after him by Ephor Theodoros Karachalios in 1926. At the site called Spelies (Caves) or Pelekete they cleared two chamber tombs, lying on the N bed of a torrent, which flows in front of the entrances to the tombs.

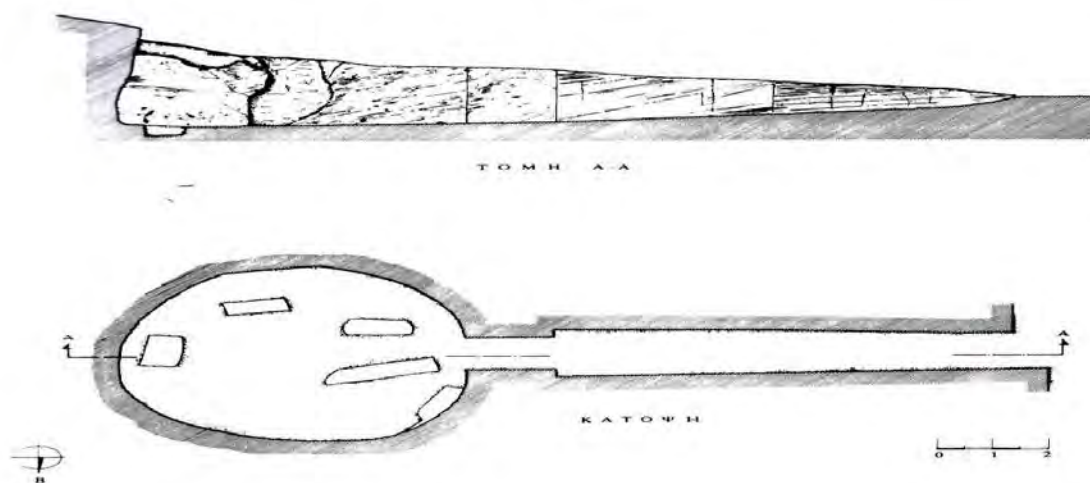
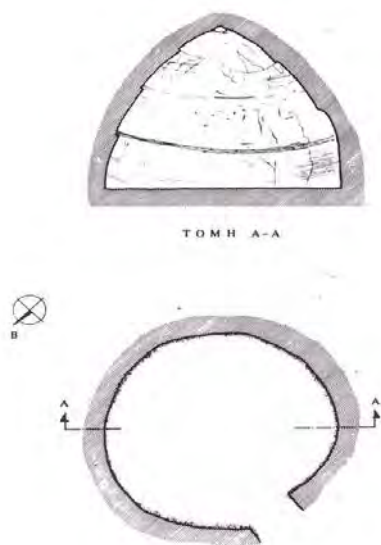


Fig 3

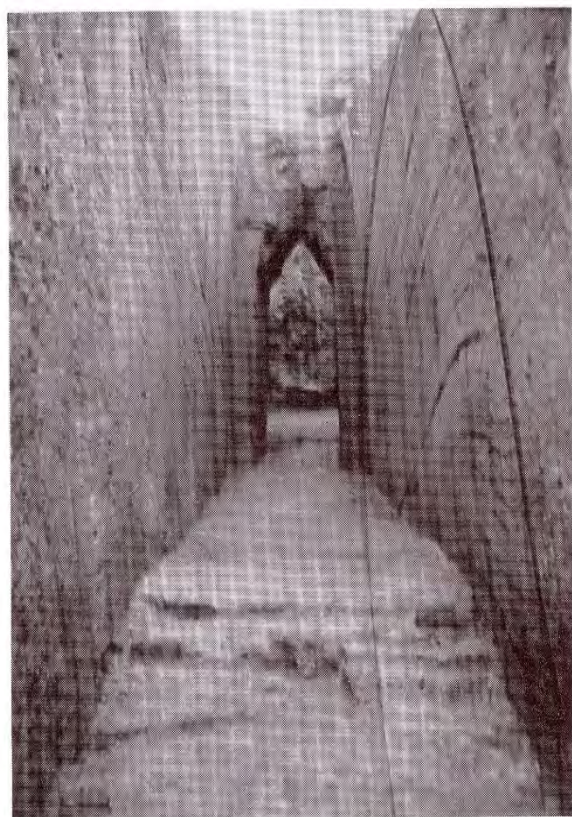
The first was almost empty except for some shreds of Mycenaean vases, the second was filled with rubble and contained four cist graves cut in the floor of the chamber. The graves had been plundered long before their excavation and contained only disordered skeletal remains, though some of the offerings were found dispersed around the floor.



The last as described by the excavator (see *A. Delt.* 10 (1926) par. 42) were mainly vases and fragments of vases, a female figurine, one seal stone of amber (with its device effaced), another seal of semi-precious stone (without and device) 25 small and round glass-beads of violet colour, several stone buttons of different colours and some other beads of various materials and colours.

The tomb measures: diameter of the tholos 6 m, height of the tholos 5 m, length of the entrance-massage (dromos) 4.50 m, depth of the dromos 2.50 m and the height of the stomion (entrance) 2.50 m. The tomb has a relieving triangle over its stomion. Fig 4.

Research into prehistoric Pellana was halted and only after 60 years was reopened by the author of this article. Our first excavation took place in the area of the Cemetery of the Tholos Tombs. Our trial trenches brought to light three rock-cut tholos tombs. The biggest lies in the middle, the other two are placed either side. All of them were found plundered and disturbed in ancient times, their roofs had collapsed and the two lateral tombs were found hardly damaged. The central one – the biggest in the whole cemetery – deserves special mention and description.

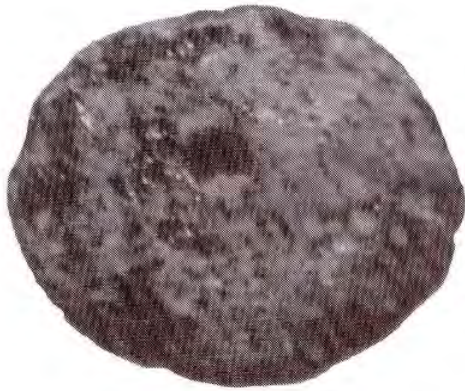


We may refer in some detail to the Great Tomb of Pellana, the excavation of which lasted several months. The long dromos leading to the Tomb is oriented from SW to NE. Its state of preservation is excellent.

Both walls of the dromos converge gradually upwards without, however, meeting, and this observation offers the first chronological indication for the construction of the tomb. It is well-known that the dromoi of the earlier tombs of this type (fifteenth and fourteenth century BC) have almost vertical walls, while, from the thirteenth century on, the walls of the dromos tend to converge and almost join one another at the top.

The maximum preserved height of the dromos near the entrance attains 5.60 m. The width of the dromos starts at 2.10 m and reaches 2.55 m by the entrance of the tomb. The length of the dromos is preserved to 12.70 m and is small when seen in comparison with the chamber of the tomb, which exceeds 10 m. This is because deep torrent cut into the hill out of which the tomb was excavated, thereby shortening the dromos. Fig 5.

Some very important finds of the early Mycenaean period were found in the dromos, among them a button made of amber. It is lens shaped and perforated; probably imported from the Baltic. At the inner end of the dromos there was found the monumental façade of the Tomb. Its stomion, set in the middle of the façade, forms a rectangular opening, sloping slightly at the top, where it is crowned by a relieving triangle.



The stonion leads to the chamber, where the burial of the dead took place, and was sealed with large stone, in dry-stone walling. The fact that the stones had been dismantled, when the tomb was excavated, suggested that the tomb had already been robbed.

In different parts of the tomb and more specifically by its entrance we found numerous objects of later date, among them figurines, animal bones and vases dating to the late Hellenistic and early Roman period, which testify to the use of the tomb in the later periods for cult purposes. Fig 6.

Among the exquisite finds in the tomb, we may mention two remarkable piriform jars. They are decorated with a marine landscape and seaweed and with rich ivy-leaves, tenderly drawn. Other finds such as alabastra, amber beads, fragments of gold foil and fine pottery shreds witness the original richness of the tomb. These brilliant finds present similarities with the well-known finds from Mycenae, Vapheio and Kakovatos in Trifilia, dated to around 1500 BC.



We have already mentioned that our investigations uncovered three tombs in the cemetery at the site known as Spelies or Pelekete. In addition to the Great Tomb two others of the same shape but of smaller size were placed to the left and to the right of it.

It is probable that these two smaller tombs belonged to members of the royal family in this theory is further supported by the fact that the graves of the 'ordinary' people were placed at a different site and more specifically on a slope called Tryporrachi, 400 m E of the cemetery for the royal family. During our first excavations we had the opportunity to dig one of the smaller tholos tombs, that to the left of the Great Tomb.

It proved to resemble the Great Tomb in shape and construction: dromos with vertical walls, tholos chamber, and a conical vault (not intact). It is generally admitted that this particular grave was used as a shelter during medieval times. By the entrance of the tomb, we found a small number of bronze coins struck during the reign of the Emperor Phokas (AD 602-610).

This is of great importance, considering that coins representing the Emperor Phokas in particular and more generally coins of the seventh century AD, are very rare in Greece, due to the Slavic invasions. On the floor of the tomb, in accordance with a well-known Mycenaean custom. Fig 7.



The contents of these cist graves provide chronological evidence for the construction of the tomb as well as for the surrounding Mycenaean cemetery. The finds, exclusively ceramic, date between 1350 – 1200 BC. Thus, this tomb was in use 1350 – 1200 BC, and we may reasonably conclude that the whole Mycenaean cemetery of Pellana was in constant use from 1500 – 1200 BC; this also applies to the Great Tomb. In the light of this, we are led to the conclusion that Pellana was an important Mycenaean centre in continuous use, a conclusion which will help our understanding of LBA society in Laconia, as reflected in the Homeric epics and the Linear B tablets. Pellana was then at its acme during the reigns of Tyndareus, Menelaos and Helen. Fig 8.



Fig 9.

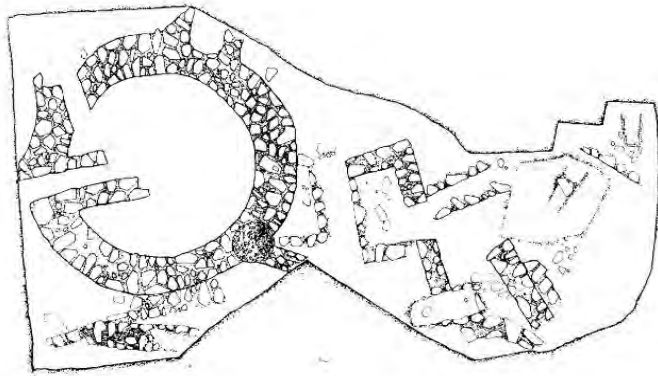


As far as the identity of the Great Tomb at Pellana is concerned, we note that it belongs to the same category of communal or family vaults as the chamber tombs and tumuli. These graves are very common in Greece from the Early Helladic periods onwards.

During the Middle Helladic period (1950 – 1580 BC) the prevailing type of grave is the cist tomb, though during the Mycenaean period (1580 – 1100 BC) the type of tomb with chamber and dromos reappears. The two main forms of family graves during the Mycenaean period are the tholos and chamber tomb.

The first type is usually constructed in stone slabs in the so-called corbelled technique (beehive tombs), whereas the other is always hewn out of the soft rock. It has generally been held that the tholos tombs represent the majestic funeral monuments destined for royal burials. Fig 10.

To this variety belong the megalithic monuments of mainland Greece, such as the famous tombs at Mycenae, at Orchomenos in Boeotia, in the Pylos region, the tomb at Kapakli near Volos, those at Marathon and at Vapheio in Laconia and so on. The chamber tombs on the other hand have been found in their thousands from Thessaly to Crete and Rhodes and they were the graves of the ordinary people. The tombs at Pellana belong to specific category or a variation of the above main types. They are cut out of rock like the chamber tombs, but their chambers take the beehive shape, like the tholos tombs.



The creator of this type of grave must have been well aware of the techniques used in the chamber and tholos tombs. In the tholoi the linear and the curved components of the tomb are successfully harmonized.

The dromos, the façade, the side walls of the stomion and the lintel are rectilinear and straight and wherever they join, they form right – angles, for example, at the junction with the dromos, behind the stomion, with the relevant parts of the beehive chamber FIG. 11.

These features are necessary in construction a normal tholos tomb, both from the technical and the static point of view, but when they occur in the rock – cut tholos tombs, like the tombs at Pellana, they are properly characterised as stylizations, which show the efforts of the craftsman to imitate, with the greatest possible accuracy, the shape and appearance of the normal tholos tombs (see Iakovidis 1966: 98ff.).



Fig 12.

Imitation is also shown in the cutting of a relieving triangle, which does not offer any significant relief for triangle, which does not offer any significant relief for the lintel above the stomion of the rock – cut tholos tombs. It is only a skeuomorph. On the other hand, the irregularity in the circumference of the chamber of the tomb is due to the nature of the monument. In the case of the Great Tomb at Pellana the diameter of the chamber from the stomion to the opposite side of the tomb is 0.60-0.80 m. shorter than the other diameter of the chamber, which runs from N to S.



The stomion in the normal tholos tombs is rectilinear, the side walls perpendicular and the lintel straight and linear; because of that the starting point of the dome lies much higher than on the opposite side of the chamber; the result is that, in section, the two arcs of the dome are not equal and the point of their intersection, at the apex, is nearer to the entrance of the tomb. If this were not the case static problems could arise, even the collapse of the structure's roof. Fig 13.

Therefore, the cavity which is encountered in the inner part of the roof of the Tombs at Pellana is not found in the very centre of the 'ideal' circle of the chamber but nearer to the entrance of the tomb. This cavity has no constructional significance for these rock – cut tholos tombs; on the other hand, it is an organic component of the normal tholos tombs, because their upper courses converge at an angle of 30° and then a big horizontal stone, (the so-called key-stone) closes the opening giving the shape of a shallow cavity.

The above proves that the rock – cut tholos tombs have adopted several constructional features from the stone – built tholos tombs. It is then possible that the craftsman who made the Great Tomb at Pellana were familiar with the technical specifications of the normal tholos tombs, some of which are contemporary or earlier. We can refer to Tholos Tomb I at Peristeria, to the two tombs at Koukounara, to one of the tombs at Koryfasion, to the tombs at Vapheio and at Kampos in Mani, to the tomb at Analipsis in Arcadia etc. The imitation of certain constructions elements found in the stone – built tholos tombs does not prove, however, that their rock – cut counterparts are of lesser monumentality and significance.



Fig 14.

The construction of a huge tholos tomb at Pellana during the LH IIb period, testifies to great expertise and technical virtuosity, of a kind not found in any other funeral monument of this type in the whole Greek mainland. Note, on the other hand, that the Royal Tomb of Mycenaean Thebes, the administrative and political centre of Boeotia, was also rock – cut, i.e. it was not made after the manner prevailing in other parts of Greece.

The tomb at Pellana is then a Royal Tomb, and Pellana was an administrative centre during the period. This period at Pellana, on the evidence of the finds from the Great Tomb and the other princely tombs beside it, extends from the LH II to the LH IIIc period, a chronological span of continuous habitation, which is encountered in other places in Laconia, even at the Menelaion itself.

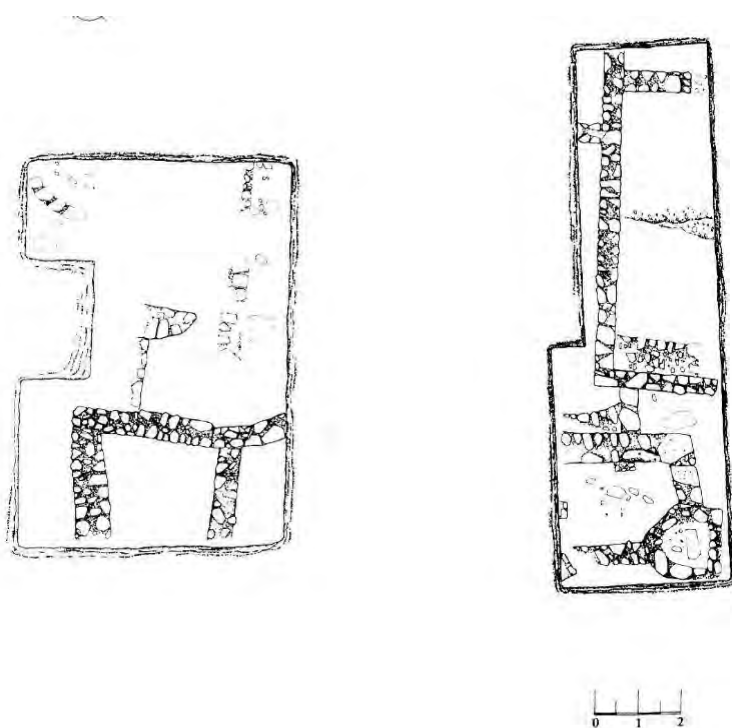


Some tombs of the same type have been excavated by Marinatos at Volimidia in Messenia, some 5 km N of the Palace of Nestor.

The smallest of those tombs has a diameter of 3.13 m and the largest, which has been characterised as monumental, has a diameter of 6.13 m. They are also dated in the LH II period (Marinatos 1952; 1953; 1954; *Das Altertum I* (1955): 141ff.). Fig 15.

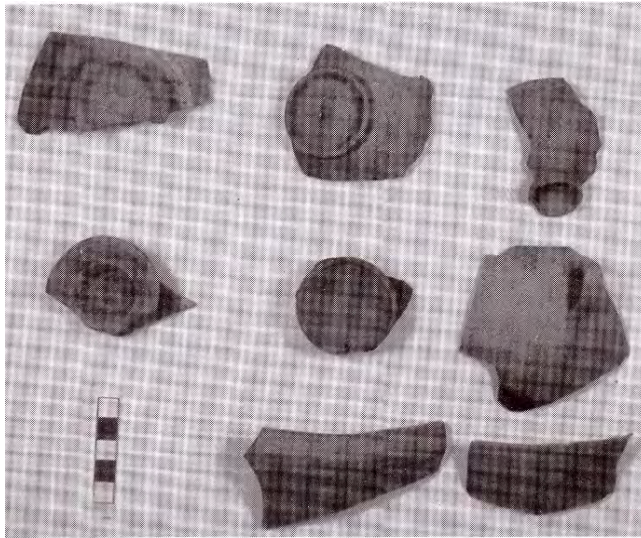
A similar tomb was found some years ago at Agradochori in Elis and has a diameter of c. 4 m (see Parlama 1971; Pelon 1976: 443, not 7). At the same time that Great Tomb at Pellana was made, another great tholos tomb was constructed at Vapheio in Laconia (see Tsountas 1889: p. 140-171; Vermeule 1964:90 ff. and 127 ff.). Two more similar tombs of the same date have been found in a wider area, at Kambos in Messenia and at Analipsis in Arcadia.

Without doubt this was a period of great prosperity and a climax in Mycenaean civilisation. During the thirteenth century BC, when the Mycenaean kingdoms in the Peloponnese were consolidated and their geographical borders were stabilised, as they are portrayed in *Iliad* ii, one of the princes of Laconia became the king (Wanax) of the whole territory. The most probable place for this to take place was Pellana, which presents, among other evidence, to be discussed below, continuous habitation and continuous funerary use of the great Tombs until the beginning of the twelfth century BC.



The prehistoric and the classical acropolis of Pellana was undoubtedly situated on the hill of Palaeokastro, which lies opposite and to the E of the modern village. My excavations at the site during the last 15 years have brought to light ruins of an extensive settlement of the Early and the Middle Bronze Age Periods.

On the summit of the acropolis only ruins of a spacious building were unearthed, which was destroyed by fire during the EH II Period. Everything above this layer was removed, probably during the Frankish occupation of the acropolis, to judge from a tower and other buildings erected over and amid the prehistoric ruins. Fig 16.



Whether there was a royal residence built on the top of the acropolis during the Middle Helladic or the Mycenaean period will remain a matter of speculation. On the next terrace down, just below the summit of the hill, where some signs of artificial terracing are visible, the stone crepis and the interior of tumulus was excavated; this contained burials of the EH II period, unfortunately without grave offerings. Next to it, however, a bothros was located, containing ashes and a couple of vases of the same period. The bothros was attached to the tumulus and contained the ashes from the sacrificial rites and the bowls for offerings to those buried under the tumulus. Fig 17.

A channel runs through the interior of the sepulchral monument and recalling the blood – channels in Tomb II at Dendra and other funerary monuments of Mycenaean and later date in Greece (Andronikos 1968: s.v. 'Blutrillen'). We have good reasons to believe that the tumulus at Pellana, the first to be found in Laconia, was not a single funeral monument. The size of the terrace suggests that more tumuli might have been erected there, a whole cemetery of tumuli, like that at Stavros in Lefkas (Dörpfeld 1927; *A. Delt.* 27 (1972) *Chr.* 211-6).



The place where the tumulus, or tumuli, at Pellana, were situated has a broad view over the whole plain, the beautiful mountain of Taygetos and the mountains of Arcadia. The tumulus occupies the best situation on the acropolis, just below the houses on the top of the hill, and undoubtedly contained the remains of the chieftains, who ruled over Pellana and perhaps over Laconia during the Early and Middle Bronze Aged Periods.

The siting of the tombs is another argument in favour of Pellana's special position and significance in the prehistoric civilisation of the whole area and argues for the primary role of the site and its development as an administrative centre in the later Mycenaean period as well. Fig 18.

The line of chieftainship remained probably unbroken until the Early Mycenaean Period, when the royal tholos tomb was constructed nearby and survived up to the end of the Mycenaean period. A small excavation on the second lower terrace of the acropolis to the S opposite the copious spring Pellanis, has brought to light part of a settlement of the Late Mycenaean period (LH IIIA to LH IIIB2/cl). Despite the very small area excavated the discovery of a Mycenaean settlement at Pellana becomes a very important element for the topography of the site and presages further valuable finds and results.

The last but not least, important find at Pellana is a monumental road, which starts at the foot of the acropolis to the E and ascends to the acropolis itself. It is one of the largest and best-preserved roads ever found in Mycenaean Greece and we have good reasons to believe that it led either to a royal residence or to some other important installation on the acropolis.

If we now turn to the epic tradition and more specifically to *Iliad* ii (581-7) we are informed that the following cities of Laconia took part in the expedition against Troy, under the leadership of Menelaos. Lacedaemon, Sparta, Pharos, Messe, Bryssea, Augeai, Amyklai, Helos, Laas, and Oitylos. The Homeric poems never refer to Sparta as the seat of King Menelaos, on the contrary the *Odyssey* (book iii) makes it clear that the palace of Tyndareus and Menelaos was in Lacedaemon, which, in both poems is characterised as 'κοίλη' and 'κητώεσσα' that is 'hollow' and 'with subterranean trenches.'

Pellana is, in our opinion, Mycenaean Lacedaemon, and the traditional epithets of κοίλη and κητώεσσα fit its geographical situation and its geological structure very well. Other Mycenaean sites in Laconia, which have been investigated or excavated have not yielded positive finds or indications for the identification or the discovery of a palatial centre of the fourteenth and the thirteenth centuries BC.



Only a few sites date to the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries BC. Twenty sites were inhabited during the fourteenth century BC, 39 in the thirteenth and 17 places in twelfth century BC (Hookes 1976: 60 ff.; Furumark 1972: 49).

Two of the sites seemed to hold most promise for the discovery of a Mycenaean palatial centre: the site of Menelaion and Palaeopyrgi near Vapheio, which is generally identified with the Homeric city of Pharos. Unfortunately, neither of these places supports the existence of a palace of the thirteenth century BC. The case consequently remains open and the palace of Tyndareus and Menelaos is still to be found. Fig 19.

The excavations at Pellana over the last 15 years have opened a new chapter and a new perspective on this question. We still do not have the palace there, but we can point to the impressive finds and to the royal administrative ideology, which underlines the chieftains' tumulus, the magnificent tholos tomb, the majestic road, and the undoubtedly royal residences which existed at Pellana –Lacedaemon during the prehistoric and Mycenaean periods of Laconia (Kilian, 1988; Wright 1987).

Notes: [Spyropoulos](#) discovered an alternative site for the palace of [Menelaus](#) at [Pellana](#) located 25 kilometers north of Sparta. The site itself is near a series of large Mycenaean chamber tombs. This has led Spyropoulos to believe that his excavations uncovered the lost [Homeric](#) capital of [Laconia](#). The palace itself is 32 meters by 14 meters and is dated to around 1200 BC. [Cyclopean](#) walls surround the palace and a wide road leads up to the entrance.

During Antiquity, the tombs were all plundered. However, the palace was unscathed since it yielded jewellery, wall paintings, pottery, and a plethora of [Linear B](#) tablets. Currently, there exists a major clash of interpretation between Spyropoulos and members of the [British School at Athens](#). The former believes that Pellana was the Mycenaean capital of Laconia and the latter believe that the Menelaion was the capital.

APPENDIX 2 - ANCIENT PELLANA

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English translation 2024

Prologue

The sole purpose and objective of this effort is to describe archaeological sites and mainly historical events that took place, not only in the area of Pellana, but also throughout northern Lacedaemon, from prehistoric times until the collapse of the Spartan state. Because these important events of the prehistoric and classical era influenced not only the life and development of the inhabitants of the Laconian land, but also of the entire Peloponnese in later historical times.

Undeniable and important is the contribution of ancient Pellana to the formation of Greek mythology with the gods and heroes of the region. The national heroes of the Laconian land Castor and Pollux, children of Tyndareus and Leda, were born and raised in the dense forests of ancient Pellana. Then they took part in the great campaigns of the mythical era and with their deeds and heroisms they dominated and worshipped the whole of Greece. But Tyndareus' daughters, Helen and Clytemnestra, also filled classical mythology with improbable and tragic stories.

The majestic royal Mycenaean tombs, which are older than Mycenae, the Acropolis of ancient Pellana (and other unexplored archaeological sites), these rare archaeological buildings that take a lot of effort and time to build, testify that ancient Pellana was a hegemonic center and the starting point of the Mycenaean era. Equally important later in classical times, the role of ancient Pellana in preserving the long history of the Spartan state. It was a stronghold and base of operations of the Spartans against the other Peloponnesian cities, so at the end of the classical era it found itself in the middle of two warring prolongations and turned into a field of conflict and looting, with disastrous results for the region.

PART ONE - THE SYMBOLISM OF ANCIENT PELLANA IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

Modern research on the life and origin of the first inhabitants of the Laconian land and ancient Greece in general in distant times, is covered by the darkness of prehistory. Because this distant era of many millennia that is lost in the mists of centuries has no written texts or other sources to present us about the historical chronology, life and racial composition of the first inhabitants of ancient Greece. However, the mythology and folk tradition that refers to this prehistory in some areas of Greece, seem to inform us about real historical events that took place in these distant times and especially about the first inhabitants of the Laconian land. Thus, this heroic era of ancient Greek mythology informs us that the first inhabitants of the Laconian land were the Leleges.

At the head of the genealogical tree of Sparta, Leleges and the first mythological king of Sparta, marries Naiad and Eurotas is born. The daughter of Eurotas Sparta marries the Lacedaemonian son of Taygetos and from this marriage is born our eponymous hero of the most ancient Laconian cities, Amyclae. The latter had two sons, Conortas and the protector of Apollo, but with the tragic end of Hyacinth's life. "And the children of Hyacinth, though a very young being, and the species was well understood by destiny before the father" (Paus. Lac.) About the tragic death of the beautiful young man, charming stories were created in classical times that moved not only ancient but also modern writers.

According to tradition, to which Pausanias refers, the heavy disc thrown by Apollo escaped from his hands and hit Hyacinth on the head. Apollo wept bitterly for the inglorious death of the beautiful young man, and in the earth that had been stained red by the blood of the old man, grew a deep red beautiful flower that made Hyacinth immortal. Finally, the son of Conortas was Perieris who had many sons: Hippocoon, killed by Hercules, Icarius, father of Penelope, Aphareus, Leucipus and Tyndareus. In particular, the last three along with their children play a primary role in ancient Greek mythology."

One of the oldest Laconian cities associated with this heroic era of Greek mythology is ancient Pellana with the Tyndarides and the tragedian women Helen and Clytemnestra, children of Tyndareus and Leda. Tyndareus (Zeus of Taygetos), king of prehistoric Sparta, was exiled to ancient Pellana by his brother Hippocoon, according to the accounts of the traveller Pausanias (174 AD). "Tyndareus did not settle when Hippocoon and their children left Sparta" (Lac. III, 2, I).

Tradition says that Tyndareus married the daughter of the king of ancient Pellana (B.S.A vol. VI) and later in the dispute apparently over the sovereignty of the region and the reign of prehistoric Sparta, he was expelled by his brother Hippocoon and settled in ancient Pellana. The fact of the settlement of Tyndareus in ancient Pellana, which can be interpreted as his return to the place where he was born, testifies that this city existed before prehistoric Sparta and reinforces the information that the royal houses of Leleges, but certainly the dynasty of Tyndareus, had as its starting point northern Lacedaemon.

The dense forests and the many springs of the area, combined with the morphology of the soil, were excellent conditions of residence and maintenance (hunting – animal husbandry) for the first inhabitants of the Laconian land. Later, however, with the change of lifestyle (cultivation of the land), which expanded southwards to smoother areas, they modified and connected ancient Greek mythology with the new cities they created. Castor and Pollux, children of Tyndareus and Leda, were born and heroized first in the northern valley of Eurotas and then in classical times they were loved and deified throughout Greece.

The Acropolis of ancient Pellana (Palaeokastro) and the only majestic carved royal tomb in Greece, are ranked in the first row of Mycenaean monuments of Greece and testify to the dynasty and heroic personality of Tyndareus and Lera. However, those who played a leading role in ancient Greek mythology are Helen, wife of the king of Sparta Menelaus, Clytemnestra with the tragic end of her life, wife of Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, but mainly Castor and Polydeuces, who according to mythical tradition were children of Tyndareus and Lera (Hymn. Homer. LD, f5, Theocr. (KB) Helen with her beauty and pernicious attractions twice became the cause of her abduction by foreign conquerors.

First, Theseus, with the help of Peirithos, kidnapped her and led her to Afidnes in Attica and after his departure for Epirus abandoned her in a hideout under the protection of his mother Aethra. The news of Helen's abduction angers the brothers Castor and Pollux, who form a large army, invade Attica and at the suggestion of the inhabitants of Dhekelia discover the hideout, free their sister and return to Lacedaemon with Theseus' mother Aethra, whom they took prisoner (Herod Th. 73; Plut. Life of Thes. 31, 34; Pause. E19, 3).

Later, as the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, tradition says that she ascended Mount Parthenios from Paris and led to Troy, where it became the cause of the Trojan War, resulting in the writing of the famous mythological creation, the Homeric Epic (Iliad and Odyssey). The fact is, however, that after the Trojan War she reigned in Sparta with her husband Menelaus and the popular legend says that she visited her hometown of ancient Pellana and the baths of the crystal spring Pellanis.

Castor and Pollux, two of the heroes and deities of the Laconian land, whose worship was embraced even by the conquerors of the Peloponnese, Dorians, who in order to attribute high origin to the indigenous heroes are no longer called Tyndarides but Dioscuri, children of Zeus and Lera. Many myths deal in Calsian times with their birth and death in various regions of ancient Greece, accompanied by incredible stories and wonderful incidents. In the same night, Leda was romantically united first with her husband Tyndareus and then with the ruler of the sky Zeus, resulting in the birth of Castor who is the son of Tyndareus and Polydeuces of Zeus.

Castor due to paternity is mortal and will face old age and death, while Pollux is immortal and will live eternally on Mount Olympus near Athena and the God of war Ares. However, the brotherly love and devotion that was developed in antiquity forced Pollux to accept semi-immortality since the brother will also acquire it. So, the two brothers will live every other day, or in another version Pollux by day and Castor by night. The Sun who disappears every night on the horizon to give way to his brother star (Selene) is Pollux, who sacrifices himself for his brother Castor.

The two National heroes of the Laconian land take part in the great campaigns of the mythical era and with their wonderful victories and beautiful deeds they dominated and were worshipped throughout Greece. Today Pellana is comfortably connected with the Dioscuri and the terrible women and Clytemnestra, children of Tyndareus and Lera, who with their exploits filled classical mythology with heroism and incredible stories, but also because of its position located between Taygetus and Parnon, in the narrowest part of the valley of Eurotas that penetrates Arcadia, A one-way entrance to the Laconian land is of significant archaeological and historical interest.

A. Ancient Pellana, hegemonic center and starting point of the Mycenaean era

However, the science that investigates ancient Greek history has no documents or other sources to present for the origin and racial composition of the prehistoric population of Ancient Greece. The only material at its disposal comes from excavations that took place from time to time and mainly in the last century. The various archaeological findings testify that two historical events influenced the life of the oldest Mediterranean population, which had settled in the fertile valleys of Peloponnese and of course Euvrotas: a) The migration of Indo-Europeans (1900 BC) and b) The great migration of the Dorians (1200 BC)

The first contact of the wider Mediterranean population with the race of Indo-Europeans began around 1900 BC. The reason for their move is not known. However, probably persecuted by other tribes that settled in their area, or by the difficult climatic conditions that may have prevailed in this distant era in central Europe, they were forced to move to the east and south. However, the largest area of Greece is mountainous and barren, it is natural to seek for their settlement the few fertile valleys of Greece and especially of the Peloponnese. From this period, the oldest Mediterranean population of the Euvrotas valley was mixed by Indo-Europeans in the northern part of the Laconian land. The dense forests, the many springs and the rich vegetation of the area were an ideal place to settle and ensure a comfortable life for newcomers.

This mixing of the Indo-European duo with the older Mediterranean population of the Peloponnese formed a new rural population with new ways of cultivating the land (alert). The arts are perfected or new ones appear (loom) resulting in the development of the famous Mycenaean civilization (1600 - 1200 BC). From this period the Greeks build for eternity. Symbols of the new way of life are the ideals of the struggle and the handmade citadels for protection from invaders. Heavy stone fortifications made of rough boulders surround the tops of the hills and in the center of each citadel rises the royal complex.

The rich gold offerings in the tombs of the rulers that came to light with Schliemann's excavations in Mycenae and later in other cities of Greece (Vafiou, Orchomenos, Pellana, etc.) testify to the dominance of the Mycenaean cities in the trade of the Mediterranean and the Middle East and confirmed the existence of the world of this glorious era described later by Homer (800 BC). This miraculous flourishing of the Mycenaean civilization is due to the ironic and profound influence of the new racial element of the Indo-European race on the older Mediterranean population of ancient Greece and especially the Peloponnese in the 15th century BC.

This period of the Mycenaean civilization left it remains in Pellana, with the five carved chamber tombs (1500 BC) older than Mycenae (1300 BC) belonging to the rulers of the time. The acropolis of ancient Pellana (Palaeokastro) surrounded by rough boulders as well as the hill "Trouporachi" where there are traces of an ancient wall. These rare buildings, which require a lot of effort and time to build, show the martial spirit that prevailed in these distant times of prehistory in the area, but also justify the position of ancient Pellana as the hegemonic center and starting point of the Mycenaean era. It is no coincidence that the Atreides Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, and his brother Menelaus of Sparta, married Clytemnestra and Helen, daughters of Tyndareus and Leda. This heroic period was later praised (800 BC) by Homer with the two Homeric Epics (Iliad and Odyssey).

B. Resistance of Northern Lacedaemon to the Dorian invaders

In the great flourishing of the Mycenaean civilization (1600 – 1200 BC) the second great migration of the Dorians (1200 BC) had a negative effect. The causes of this migration are not known. But it seems that they were repeated in the first of the Indo-Europeans. The Dorians settled north of Greece, in the Pindus region, came under pressure from the Illyrians (from the coast of Hadrian) and forced them to move south. The most serious reason, however, is that the decline of the Mycenaean civilization and the weakening of the military power of the Achaeans during the long war against Troy (1184 BC) facilitated their movement to face and conquer new territories. Typical examples of the weakening of the military power of the Achaeans are that almost all the leaders who took part in the campaign against Troy, when they attempt to return to their homeland, will face the opposition of the new rulers of these regions.

A tragic example is Agamemnon who was murdered by Aegisthus and his wife Clytemnestra. After eight years, the son and avenger for the death of his father Orestes will kill his mother Clytemnestra and the murderer of his father Aegisthus. The tragic writers dealt with these events and in particular Aeschylus with his strongest work deals with Agamemnon, the "barilla of men" and leader of the campaign against Troy. But Odysseus after his return to Ithaca found in power the suitors of his wife Penelope, as well as Menelaus who was initially prevented from landing in Laconia and took power by force.

The Dorians a warlike tribe, after taking advantage of the above events and especially the beginning of the Iron Age, with the construction of the spear that made them strong and victorious in conflicts with the other tribes, invaded the Peloponnese, targeting the fertile valleys of Pamisos, Alpheus and Eurotas. Led by the warring Heraclides who served as mercenaries in the surrounding areas of Pindos, the Dorians first overthrew the power of the Aetolians and crossed without resistance into the Peloponnese. Then they split into three groups and simultaneously struck the Mycenaean-Achaean forts. One group led by the general leader of the whole campaign Temenos invades Argolidocorinthia, the second led by Cresphontes invades Messenia and the third group led by the children of Aristodemus, the most famous as tradition wants Heraclides, Eurysthenes and Proclus invades Laconia.

This attack of the Dorians – Herakleidon in Argolidocorinthia and Messenia is successful. On the contrary, difficulties were encountered by those who attempted to invade Laconia, the occupation of which will take many years. According to Spartan tradition, the unit invaded Laconia and faced the opposition of the local population in the northern part of the valley, in Laconian Tripolitania (Belemina – Aegis – Pellana). From this period, northern Lacedaemon and especially Pellana acquires historical importance due to the unique route of invasion of the Dorians in the Laconian land.

The fact that reinforces this information is that the Doric group that invaded Laconia with 2000 fighters and with a much larger civilian population (women and children and animals) following them, naturally avoided the difficult passages in the almost parallel and rugged mountain ranges of Taygetos and Parnona, resulting in clashes in the above areas being fierce and inevitable. The invasion of the Doric group (1125 BC) and others that followed later, caused a long unrest in the northern part of the valley where the reaction of the inhabitants of the area was harsh and long-lasting. This explains the delay in the occupation of the Laconian land and only after 850 BC can we talk about its final conquest.

Later, after the overthrow of the Doric garrisons in Argolidocorinthia and Messenia, the Doric group of Sparta was strengthened by the persecuted from these areas and remained the only Doric group in the Peloponnese that would establish the only genuine Doric state of Sparta. However, because it is in a hostile environment, with the only allies being the Aetolians of Ilia, for this reason it will soon evolve into a purely military state.

Then, in order to get rid of the cities that directly threatened them, they first subjugated Amyklai, one of the oldest Laconian cities of the Achaeans and during the reign of Labotas Sellasia. Much later, during the reigns of Archelaus and Charilaos (850 BC), in order to secure their rear in the subsequent operations to the south, but mainly the control of the only land entrance to the Laconian land, they turned north and occupied the northernmost part of the valley of Eurotas bordering Arcadia, Pellana and Aegyn. However, it seems that the city of Aegis did not tolerate the tutelage of Sparta and therefore, as before, continued to maintain friendly relations with the neighboring Arcadian cities.

The Spartans, suspecting that they were conspiring against them, destroyed and destroyed the city. Agesilaus and Archelaus was born, on this occasion the Lacedaemonians who held the city of the surrounding areas escaped Aegyn, suspecting that Egyptians were the Arcadians. Charilaos the king of the other house also congregated Archelao of Aegyn" (Paus. Lac.) However, the second king of Sparta (Achaean in origin), because he did not wish the enslavement of the city, disagreed with Archelaus and many of them he transferred to Sparta and settled them in the center of the city. Later, this tribe of the Aegids would play an important role, mainly social struggles that shook Sparta.

After these events, Aegis will cease to exist and the area will now be called by historians the Egyptian country, in the place of which the city of Karystos, which was celebrated for its excellent wine, will later be built. Karystos in Laconian of Aegis to Arcadia, since Karysteion wine Alkman found... Alkman who fired wine and blossomed osdonta fisin gar wine d' Oinoudiandin, or Denthin or Karystion or Weightitis' (Athenaeus).

C. Helot revolts in northern Lacedaemon

After the destruction and annihilation of the Egyptian city, ancient Pellana, from this period until the collapse of the Spartan state, will be the main vital space for the survival of the Spartans, but also will be used as a base and fortress against other enemy cities (Arcadia – Messenia – Argos etc.) Thus, the famous military state of Sparta was established (800 BC) and with the appearance of the laws of Lycurgus it was ruled by the five ephors who controlled and demanded responsibilities from the two kings who belong hereditarily to the families of Agiades and Euryontides. After the conquest of northern Lacedaemon by the Spartans, a part of the inhabitants of this area, mainly the locals who had reacted to the invasion of the Dorians in the Laconian land, turned into helots.

They were stripped of their ownership of the land, and now they cultivate on behalf of the conquerors. The rest, the majority of whom are Dorians, are now called perioic and, in opposition to the helots, have full political rights and friendly thoughts with the Spartans. Continuing their expansionist plans and after dominating the valley of Euvrotas, they turned to Messenia. Thus began the first Messenian war that lasted (20) twenty years (735 – 715 BC). During this period, ancient Pellana was used as a base against Messenian cities, resulting in the conquest of the Messinian land adding a greater number of helots.

The second (700 BC) and the third (464 BC). Messenian war that took part and cities of Northern Lacedaemon (Pellana – Belemina) against the Spartans? "And the helots of the Lacedaemonians, masters allied with the Messenians, and sometimes iconic, sometimes singular" (Diod.) was the cause of intense oppression of the helots of these areas, which was explained but to no avail (Thuc. I 101/03, Paus. IV 24).

The cause of the third Messenian war was the great earthquake (464 BC) that levelled Sparta. Plutarch describes it as the largest earthquake that took place in the region with the intention of revolting the helots. While Pausanias angered Poseidon for the murder, shortly before the earthquake, of the Lacedaemonians for sins they had committed "Some Lacedaemonians who had been condemned to death for a crime, took refuge as supplicants in Tenaro (these are apparently helots who were preparing a rebellion), but the ephors by force from the altar killed them".

The revolts of the helots, combined with the attacks of Arcadians and Argives, created an immediate danger of weakening the military power of the Spartans. For this reason, they took care of and cultivated the fear of the helots, established the so-called crypts, killing the most important helots who could rouse the people against them. Thucydides says that the Spartans lived on the rebellion tax of the helots. Thus, important members of the helot society of northern Lacedaemon were murdered, resulting in the entire region going into decline and regression to classical times.

D. Spartan fortress and base of operations or ancient Pellana

After the painful defeat of the Lacedaemonians in the battle of Leuctra (371 BC) by the excellent Theban general Epaminondas, the prestige and guardianship of the Spartans in the other Peloponnesian cities began to falter. From this period and in the events that followed the battle of Mantinea (362 BC), ancient Pellana was a fortress and base of operations of the Spartans, as historians of the time mention: "as Agesilaus was campaigning and being already in Pellene" (Xenophon). "From the ravine according to Pellene" (Plutarch) "Laconian village of Pellana to Megalopolitan nevon" (Strabo).

In the above crucial events and until the collapse of the Spartan state, ancient Pellana was under the greatest pressure and destructive fury of the invaders. Bloody clashes in the area between Arcadians and Lacedaemonians. "Arcadians, Lycomedes, generals, who had been handed over and surrendered to these chosen ones, being five hundred thousand, marched under Pellenes of Laconia, and the city was violently handcuffed, while the abandoned guards of the Lacedaemonians were extended, being more than three hundred, and the city enslaved and the country they departed, they returned to their homes, arriving at the aid of the Lacedaemonians" (Diodorus).

The complete destruction of ancient Pellana, described by Diodorus, took place in 368 BC, because the city (Pellana) was used by the Spartans as a base for attacks not only against them but also against the other Peloponnesian cities. General Lycomedes with 5000 elite Arcadians and Argives, passed secretly from Arcadia to the North valley of Euvrotas in order to destroy ancient Pellana. They surprised the garrison and residents with the known results. "The city is violently handcuffed... and the city enslaved and the country devoted." After the looting and destruction of ancient Pellana, help arrived from Sparta. He pursued the invaders and on the border of Arcadia – Laconia the deadly battle that followed was bloody with 10,000 Arcadians and Argives dead. "Arcadians fell in favour of the myriad Lacedaemonians d'none" (Diodorus).

The Arcadians panicked after this bloody battle with terrible losses and because they feared that the reprisals for the destruction of ancient Pellana would continue, they founded and fortified the Great City. "Forty of the so-called Mainalia and Parasian Arcadians" (Diodorus). This union of smaller Arcadian cities and the establishment of Megalopolis as the center of the Arcadians was the idea and work of the genius general Epaminondas and aimed at isolating the Spartans in Lacedaemon and limiting their influence on the other Peloponnesian cities.

After the establishment and fortification of Megalopolis, northern Lacedaemon found itself in the middle of two warring factions and became a leg of conflict and looting with disastrous results for the region. At the head of 25,000 infantry, two thousand horsemen and twenty-four elephants, King Pyrrhus of Epirus in 273 BC invades the Peloponnese and camps in Megalopolis the Spartans panicked about the presence in the camp of Pyrrhus Cleonymus who claimed from Areas the kingship of Sparta, so they sent a delegation to Megalopolis to learn Pyrrhus' intentions. He reassures them and tells them that his aim is to liberate the Peloponnese from the Macedonian Antigonos Gonatas and added that his wish is to send his children to Sparta to be educated according to Spartan customs. And while he was telling this to the Spartan delegation, his army had already invaded northern Lacedaemon and plundered everything in its path.

The terrible war machine of Pyrrhus' elephants spread death and leveled everything in the entire northern valley. Meanwhile in Sparta, while Pyrrhus was plundering the northern valley of Eurotas, women, old men and children were digging tavros outside the city to block the movement of elephants. Shocking moments in the two days that the battle lasted. Women and old men fantasized the warriors and urged them to fight with courage and strength. "When dawn broke and while the enemies began to move, the women, giving their weapons to the young people and the trench, told them to defend and guard it, because it is a sweet thing to win before the eyes of their country, but also glorious to die at the hands of their mothers and wives after being killed worthy of Sparta" (Plut. Pyrrhus 2

At the head of Sparta's defence was the son of King Areas Acrotatus, whom Cleonymus' wife Helidonidas had fallen in love with. Pyrrhus' attempts to open a passage were unsuccessful. But too many on both sides fell into the trench and found death. Finally, Pyrrhus, unable to capture Sparta, returned to Megalopolis, and broke out with greater fury in the destruction and plunder of the entire northern valley of Eurotas. After this success of the Spartans, Acrotatus, bloodied, returned to the city and the crowd greeted him with cheers, shouting "Love, Extremity and have the Swallow" (Plut. Pyrrhus 28).

E. Participation of the inhabitants of ancient Pellana in the social struggles of Agis & Kleomeni

At the end of 245 BC Sparta was shaken by an internal crisis. The cause of the unrest was the concentration of land ownership and wealth in the hands of a few privileged citizens, the aristocracy and reaction. For the situation that had developed in the years of Agis D! In Sparta, Plutarch characteristically writes: "For the rich, expelling from their inheritances those who had rights, grew their fortunes unmovedly. So soon wealth was concentrated in a few and poverty fell in the city, so that as a result it had the enslavement of morale and the neglect of the good and with it envy and hatred against the rich. So more than seven hundred Spartans remained, and of them one hundred probably had land and lots.

The other mob sat in the city destitute and without political rights and without will and willingness, resisting external wars, while always waiting to find an opportunity to change and overturn the situation." After this situation, the citizens' demand for social reforms was intense. The 4500 lots were attempted to be distributed to the Spartans by Agis IV! and others, 15,000 in the inhabitants and helots of northern Lacedaemon, provoked the reaction of the oligarchy, as a result of which he was courted by the second king of Sparta, Leonidas, who represented them, and hanged (241 BC). In his reform plans for socialization, he was supported by the inhabitants of ancient Pellana, who were exiled after the execution of Saint IV! (Plut. Life of Agis and W.W.CAH VII 1928).

The same fate as Agis D! His grandmother Archidamia and his mother Agisistrata stood decisively by his side and supported his reform plans. Although they were the richest women of Laconia, they despised the luxurious and comfortable life and gave their fortunes for the social revolution to succeed and for Sparta to regain its old medal, bringing it out of the impasse it had fallen into. The death of Saint IV is conspiratorial and painful! and the two women described in great detail by Plutarch.

The forces of reaction led by the second king of Sparta, Leonidas, organized a conspiracy to exterminate the great reformer. So, one night, with the help of mercenaries from Tegea, they spread terror in Sparta and finally prevailed. Knowing Agis D! for their purposes, he took refuge as a suppliant in the sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos. After a few days he is deceitfully taken from there and taken to prison to be tried. Of course, in the trial that followed, he did not repent of his actions, saying that: "he did what every honest Spartan should do." After his conviction, no prison guard agrees to put the noose around his neck and one of them weeps over the evil fate of the reformer. Agis calmly puts the noose around his neck and says: "Stop crying, my man, so illegally when I die, I am superior to my murderers".

Meanwhile, his grandmother Archidamia and his mother Agisistrata have roused the people who, like a raging sea, rush to drown the chief conspirators and free Saint D! In the face of this danger, the chief conspirator Leonidas allows Archidamia and Agisistrata to enter the prison to make sure that Agis D! He is alive. He leads Archidamia first and before she can see the horrific sight of her, she too has already passed the noose around her neck and hanged her.

It is Agisistrata's turn after hanging the two corpses, kissing her dead son Agi, she monologues: "My child, your kindness, your mildness and your charity have destroyed you and us all." "May all this benefit Sparta." With this gruesome murder of the execution of St. D! of Archidamia and Agisistrata was also strangled the reform effort in which the inhabitants of ancient Pellana took an active part, resulting in many of them being exiled. (W.W.CAH VII 1928). From the vengeful fury of the counter-revolutionary conspirators only the wife of St. D! had been spared, the daughter of rich Gyli who Ayatida.

After the execution of Saint D! of both women, Leonidas remained master of the situation and the representative of the most reactionary faction, i.e. of the hundred families who held in their hands the entire economic life of Laconia. To bridge the gap created between the aristocracy of wealth and the Spartans, Leonidas forced his widow Agis IV! to marry his youngest son Cleomenes III. When Leonidas died in 235 BC, his son Cleomenes III took his place in the royal office. Under the tutelage of the progressive philosopher Sphaerus, the new king was informed about the reformist ideas of the murdered king Agis IV, believed in these principles and decided to apply them.

The purpose of Cleomenes III's social revolution, as Plutarch describes it, was to create a society of equal citizens, because he believed that all citizens are free and equal and have the same political rights. In order to achieve his goals, the first measure he had to take was the overthrow of the regime of the superintendents, that is, the seizure of power. After securing the support of the inhabitants and helots of northern Lacedaemon, he then arrested and killed the ephors (227 BC) and exiled the large landowners who opposed his reform plans.

The population of northern Lacedaemon, the majority of whom are helots, actively participated in this effort of Cleomenes III! because they would acquire property and equal political rights which they had had since the founding of the Spartan state by the Dorians. (G. DESANCTIS, QUESTION, POLITICHE E RIFORME SOCIALI, SCFITTI 1966). The success of the social revolution of Cleomenes III worried the Peloponnesian cities. The oppressed social strata are encouraged and move to overthrow the aristocratic Achaean League (Argos – Aigio – Megalopolis etc.).

From this period, northern Lacedaemon, and especially Belemina and Pellana, found themselves at the center of two warring factions. On the one hand, the Achaean League, i.e. the union of most Peloponnesian cities, representing aristocracy and wealth led by Aratus and on the other hand the ideologue and revolutionary Cleomenes III who believed that all citizens should have equal political rights and clergy.

Having consolidated his grip on power, Cleomenes III is now demonstrating his new military power in the Peloponnese. With his renewed army he crossed into northern Lacedaemon and reached Megalopolis without occupying it. The entire area on the border of Arcadia up to present-day Leontari is now controlled by Cleomenes III! He removes the power of the cities of the region (Belemina-Pellana, etc.) from the oligarchs and gives it to the popular strata, thus showing the meaning and content of his own social revolution in Spasti. The representative of the aristocracy and leader of the Achaean co-government, Aratos, although he saw that the interests of his class were threatened, did not react.

Fearing the previous humiliating defeats he had suffered at the hands of Cleomenes III, especially at the battle of Leuctra at Megalopolis (Laodicea), he did not react to these provocations because he knew the new army of Cleomenes III was much better than the previous one. All classes of Spartan society participated in the organization of the Spartan army. Plutarch writes about the virtues of the new army of Cleomenes III Unlike all other royal and Greek armies, only the Spartan was not followed by jesters, miracle makers, dancers and singers.

He was cleansed of debauchery and profanity or festivals of this kind." Now the pleasure and ideal of the new Spartan warrior is his passion for battle and victory. In all the conflicts between Cleomenes and Aratos (Laodicea – Megalopolis – Mantinea etc.) the latter suffered heavy and humiliating defeats. From this time of confrontations until today, this coward, who trembles in race, is characterized by the inhabitants of northern Lacedaemon with grass; "Aratos is done." A revolutionary climate throughout the Peloponnese was created by the victories of Cleomenes III against Aratus.

The popular masses oppressed by the aristocracy of the Achaean League are now optimistic and hope for their liberation from Cleomenes III. Victories of Cleomenes III at the last props of Aratus in the Achaean cities. To the prominent Achaean captives, he explains his plans and most of them are persuaded and agree to go to Aigio to persuade the Assembly of the Achaean League to accept the terms of Cleomenes III. And while the assembly had almost accepted the proposals of Cleomenes III, Aratus, in order to prevent such a decision, struggles desperately and manages to pass a resolution saying that the Assembly accepts in principle the proposals of Cleomenes III, but the final decision will be taken in Derne after a year at the autumn assembly of the Achaeans held towards Demeter.

After this decision, the war stopped and Cleomenes returned to Lacedaemon to prepare for the next meeting at Lerna. But the wily Aratos gained time by postponing the decision and is now moving behind the scenes. He comes to Megalopolis and convinces the Megalopolitan to ask for the help of the Macedonian Antigonos Doson. The great historian Polybius writes about the behind-the-scenes movements of Aratus. "Secretly, therefore, he (Aratus) consulted with the Megalopolitan Nicophanes and Kerkidan, who were paternal friends and capable people for such, and through them he gave the Megalopolitan the thought of sending an embassy to the Achaeans and telling them to call Antigonos for help."

Meanwhile, Aratus was trying to convince some representatives of the Achaean cities that they should not accept Cleomenes III's proposals because he intended to destroy his "beautiful world." wealth – and will force us all to eat barley bread like the Spartans. At the same time, he sent Nicophanes and Kerkidas secretly and without the approval of the Achaean League and asked for the help of the Macedonian Antigonos Dosana, telling him that if Cleomenes III prevails in the Peloponnese! He will declare war on this as well.

Before the assembly of Lerna, Artaos conspiratorially spread the word that Cleomenes III would kill all the representatives of the Achaean League as he did with the Ephors of Sparta. When he learned of these rumours, Cleomenes became angry and violently attacked him. Cleomenes, saying that these are insults and derision against him, turned back (Lacedaemon) after writing a letter to the Achaeans with many complaints and slanders against Aratus. And he (Aratus) wrote a letter against Cleomenes and so they exchanged insults and accusations among themselves, even going as far as their wives and marriages. (Plut. Aratus, p. 39).

Thus, Aratus with his evil plans won his game and thwarted the decision of the Assembly. Of the situation that had arisen after the annulment of the decision, Polybius writes "Then there was a movement among the Achaeans for the council at Lerna, and the cities were preparing to apostatize, because the peoples were waiting for the distribution of land and the abolition of debts, and the officials of many cities were fed up with Aratus and some were even angry against him because he was bringing the Macedonians to the Peloponnese" (Cleom. Par.17)

The humiliating conditions set by Antigonus to come to the Peloponnese were accepted by Aratus. They provided for the complete subjugation of the Achaean League to the Macedonians. Among the terms of the agreement are. To recognize Antigonus as the supreme military and political figure, whose decisions should be executed by the Achaean cities without objection. To establish a priesthood in all the Achaean cities and to perform sacrifices and ceremonies for the new god Antigonos Doson. So now Cleomenes is confronted with two camps, Aratus and Antigonos.

The ensuing battle at Argos (224 BC) defeats Cleomenes and is forced to retreat to Lacedaemon. When Antigonos arrived in Megalopolis, decisive and terrible clashes broke out on the border between Arcadia and Laconia. The Megalopolitan with the army of Antigonos reconquer the areas (Belemina – Egypt) that the Spartans had annexed since the 80th century BC. Once again, the northern Lacedaemon, a field of conflict and turmoil, was transformed into a vast cemetery. From this period until the battle of Sellasia the clash of two worlds in the region.

The domination of aristocracy and wealth if Antigonos Doson wins and the social revolution started by the helots and now represented by the king of Sparta Cleomenes III. When Antigonos leaves Megalopolis for Aigio, Cleomenes, after gathering information about the life of the city and the habits of the garrison, assigns Pantea the most dangerous mission, the capture of Megalopolis. With speed he starts at night and with a few men from Pellana, reaches Megalopolis, neutralizes a part of the garrison and enters the city. Confusion and panic ensued among the residents because no one knew what was happening. Behind Pantea followed, Cleomenes also entered the city and placed it under his control. Characteristic is the dialogue of Lysandridas, a prominent political figure, with Cleomenes described by Plutarch.

"King of the Lacedaemonians, you can attain greater glory than you have hitherto achieved by doing a work more beautiful and more royal," replied Cleomenes. "What do you say, Lysandris, are you asking me to give you the city again?" and Lysandridas "This is exactly what I say, and I advise you not to destroy such a city, but to fill it with loyal and stable friends, giving back to the Megalopolitan their homeland and saving so many people."

Cleomenes accepted Lysandridas' proposals, telling him; "It is hard to believe such things, but let that which is for us more glorious than beneficial prevail." Meanwhile, Antigonus in Aegina regroups his army and fights decisive battles at Tegea, Orchomenos and Mantinea. Soon these cities would come into his possession (233 BC). However, the final and decisive clash of the two rivals will take place in 222 BC in Sellasia. The choice of the venue of the confrontation was made by Cleomenes, because he knew that this place is a natural fortress and suitable for defence.

According to Polybius, Cleomenes fortified the two hills Evan and Olympus which dominate the entrance of Sellasia. Cleomenes' brother Euclid with the inhabitants and helots of northern Lacedaemon fortified himself at Evan and Cleomenes with the Spartans at Mount Olympus. Polybius writes of the preparation of Cleomenes: "Cleomenes expects the raid on the land with other contributions to secure guards and trenches and trees of epikopai. And he, according to Sellasia, called after the force, encamped all their existing armies in two myriad."

When Antigonus arrived in Sellasia, he immediately noticed not only the natural fortification of the site, but also the wonderful faction of Cleomenes. He had not omitted any measures for both attack and defence. The whole army could take part in every move, so invading from that place was difficult. That is why he (Antigonus) did not dare to make an exit." (Polybius).

Faced on the one hand Macedonians, Thessalians, Boeotians, Acarnanians, Epirotes, Achaeans and Megalopolitan with thirty thousand (30,000) troops and headed by Antigonus Doson and on the other hand Cleomenes with twenty thousand (20,000) Lacedaemonians. The opponents remained in their positions for several days with only a few skirmishes aimed at finding the opponent's weak point before making the frontal attack. During the many days of skirmishes, Antigonus secretly advanced a part of it (ilyrios) into the deep ravine of the Gorgylos torrent that flows into the river Oionas.

This move of Antigonus according to Plutarch (Cleomenes 28) is due to betrayal of the Spartan Damoteli, who was responsible for the enemy's movements. Damoteli had contact with the enemy and was paid to cover this move of Antigonus, which was the basis of his victory. Cleomenes' brother Euclid fights desperately and is killed, while the part of the Macedonian phalanx that had penetrated the Gorgylos torrent creates a breach in the lines of Kleomenes III and pains him on Mount Olympus.

The battle lasted until nightfall, and of the twenty thousand that Cleomenes had lined up, only a few hundred escaped. Plutarch says that six thousand (6,000) helots and inhabitants of northern Lacedaemon, who with the social revolution of Cleomenes III had gained equal political rights with the Spartans, were also killed. Antigonus entered Sparta as a victor, whose territory was trodden for the first time in its long history by a conqueror, while Cleomenes III with a few men will flee to Egypt. The clash of the two worlds ended with the battle of Sellasia (222 BC) and with the painful defeat of the Spartans came the end of the classical world and the social revolution of Cleomenes III.

The revolutionary ideologue and visionary Cleomenes III, led by the inhabitants and helots, fought for a society with free citizens, without discrimination, with equal political rights and to get out of the crisis and the impasse that had fallen at the end of classical times, not only Sparta but the entire Peloponnese. However, the representative of the aristocracy and wealth, Aratos, with the help of the Macedonian Antigonus Doson, in the battle of Sellasia stopped this effort of Cleomenes and became the cause of new adventures for Greece in the coming years with the invasion of foreign conquerors.

Ancient Pellana and northern Lacedaemon in general, from the time of the Doric invasion of Laconia and until the collapse of the Spartan state, during about a millennium (1200 – 222 BC), is in a long period of turmoil and adventures, resulting in the region experiencing decline and regression. Fortress and base of Spartans is ancient Pellana with fierce conflicts in the area. For this reason, Sparta remained the only superior city in classical times. Finally, the role of northern Lacedaemon in the consolidation and preservation of the long history and prosperity of the Spartan state (800 – 222 BC) is decisive and historic.

On the contrary, during the Mycenaean era (1600 – 1200 BC), ancient Pellana experienced the great flourishing of the Mycenaean civilization. The majestic carved royal tombs recently discovered show the period of prosperity of ancient Pellana in Mycenaean times. However, the systematic excavation that may one day take place in the area will show that the cradle of the Mycenaean civilization is northern Lacedaemon. Here in the area of ancient Pellana, Gods, demigods and heroes were born in prehistoric times who would play a primary role in shaping ancient Greek mythology later in classical times.

The morphology of the soil of northern Lacedaemon, combined with the large forests, the many springs and the rich vegetation, made the area an ideal place of settlement and maintenance (hunting – livestock – feeding) of the first inhabitants of Laconian. For the above reasons there is no doubt that the royal house of Leleges starts from northern Lacedaemon. Later, with the change of lifestyle, that is, when they began to cultivate the land, they settled in the area of Sparta where they modified the Greek mythology and connected it with the new cities they created.

PART TWO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Over a long period of more than two millennia, ancient Pellana, built in the northernmost and narrowest part of the valley of Euvrotas, played a leading role in the great flourishing of the Mycenaean civilization (1600 – 1200 BC) but also in the creation later (800 BC) of Lorian Sparta was used by the Spartans as a stronghold and base against other Peloponnesian cities. The rare architectural buildings of two millennia, temples, citadels, monuments etc. in all their magnificence until the collapse of the Spartan state.

These masterpieces of the Mycenaean and classical era, received the first disasters with the invasion of Laconian by Arcadians, Argives, Pyrrhus, Antigonus Doson, etc. However, they suffered total destruction with the raids of foreign conquerors, mainly the Goths (395 – 396 BC) These Germanic tribes razed everything in their path, looted and burned these magnificent monuments of antiquity. "And first Corinth is captured, then Argos and always the passages between it and Lacedaemon and last, and this Spati becomes a prey to the barbarians" (Zosimus, Paparrigopoulos).

The destructive fury of the invaders was helped in this period by the spread of Christianity because they believed that they were places of idolatry and hindered peoples. However, the cultural development and this existence of a people is rooted in the folk tradition and heritage of its ancestors and since no systematic excavation has been done so far, they would try to describe below the most distant archaeological sites and events associated with these archaeological monuments of northern Lacedaemon.

The information that the traveller from Asia Minor Pausanias gives us about ancient Pellana when he visited it in 174 AD is incomplete. The Lydian traveller did not refer to all the historical monuments that still exist today, because the city during this period is not inhabited and it is natural that his information about all archaeological sites is impossible. Pausanias, after describing the sights he saw in Sparta, travels north and follows the "military highway" Sparta – Megalopolis, which is located along and on the right bank of the river Eurotas.

About the sights he will encounter on his way to Pellana, he writes: "And the statue of Aedou, thirty stadia away from the city of Ikarian, was raised and was poetic. So, Pausanias tells us that at a distance of about six kilometers from Sparta he saw the statue of Aidos dedicated by Icarius, brother of Tyndareus, Penelope's father. Icarius, having failed to persuade Odysseus to settle in Lacedaemon, begged his daughter Penelope not to follow him when he left for Ithaca.

Odysseus then told Penelope to follow him if she wanted of her own volition or to remain with her father in Lacedaemon. But Penelope, without answering Odysseus, covered her face with shame and followed him. For this attitude of Penelope, her father Icarius erected in this part of the avenue where the events took place the statue of Aedos. Pausanias, walking north, continues. And from this stage twenty of Euvrotas the stream of the nearest road becomes and Lada becomes a tomb. Kamnon Ekomezeto and by convention the last of the grave was in favour of the Avenue."

Twenty stadia (1 stadia. = 185m) after the statue of Aidos and next to the river Eurotas, on the Avenue is the tomb of Lada. The Olympic champion Ladas, who excelled all his contemporaries in running (dolihon), apparently after his victory in Olympia fell ill and was transferred to Lacedaemon at this point of the road where his grave died. Pausanias has already reached the location "fournoi" where the extensions of the mountain ranges of Taygetos and Parnon join and leave a small opening in the valley through which the current of the river Euvrotas passes towards Sparta.

Legend has it that Leleges' son Eurotas cut off at this point the rock that blocked the flow of the river and thus gave way to the stagnant waters of the northern valley and that is why the river got its name. "This water that stagnated in the field canal came down to the sea" (Paus.) The location "Fougni" took its name from the two caves carved into the rock, which may be the tomb of Lada. The archaeologist Leake in 1808 passed by this place and observed remains of worked boulders with polygonal shapes placed, as he says, there to contain the current of the river, thus protecting the avenue.

However, the archaeologist is probably wrong and these boulders were used to block part of the flow of the river that they transported for water supply to ancient Sparta. Continuing his route, Pausanias north and just before reaching ancient Pellana writes: "A product as a trench under Pellana was nameless, and after that Pellana was an ancient city". Pausanias does not give us more information about the "trench". It is certain, however, that this point is very close and south of ancient Pellana and on the route from the area "Lampadami" to the hill of Psylithorachi.

Undoubtedly it is a moat or dam above the road that was used by the Spartans as a fortress in the period when attacks on Laconian were frequent. "Thou hast invaded the land (Lacedaemon) and secured guards and Trenches" (Polybius). It must be linked to the invasion of Pyrrhus in Laconian and the siege of ancient Sparta (237 BC) It was built by the Spartans to block the movement of Pyrrhus' elephants, when a terrible for that time war machine levelled everything in the world.

"Tyndareus and Phasin joined the Hippocoon and the children from Sparta". Later for this act Hippocoon was punished by Hercules and so Tyndareus returned to the reign of Sparta. "Entha Hercules justly punished the Hippocoones". Pausanias goes on to say that the most sights he saw were the sanctuary of Asclepius and the Pellanida spring that owes its name to a girl named Pellanida, who according to tradition drowned in her famous spring in antiquity and that the girl's handkerchief came out in another spring called Lageia (vivari). And the sight worthy of Asclepius and the sanctuary and the spring of Pellanida.

In this way, the water was supplied to the virgin, and the cover appeared to be the head of another spring Lagia; Pausanias saw and wrote the above in his Laconian about ancient Pellana when he visited it in 174 AD, but he did not refer to other more important archaeological monuments (Mycenaean tombs, Acropolis, etc.). The English archaeologist Leake when he came to Pellana in 1808 writes: "Here there are ruins of a wall of a Greek city that at its peak had more than 5000 inhabitants and dominated the whole beautiful and verdant plain between Taygetos and Parnon of about 100 thousand acres".

A. Sanctuary of Asclepius

The modern Pellana, built on a hill formed by the extensions of Taygetos, is a great position and covers not only the area but also the entire plain of the northern valley of Euvrotas. Southeast of the village and a few meters from the Rassias castle was the sanctuary of Asclepius.

The columns of the classical and Roman era still exist today a few meters south of the sanctuary (photo No. 1) justify the testimony of Pausanias who mentions in his Laconian that the most sights he saw when he visited ancient Pellana (174 AD) were the sanctuary of Asclepius and the Pellanida pool, which according to tradition these sanctuaries of antiquity are built near cities and cool springs. Asclepius, son of Appolon and Koroni, according to mythology, heals and relieves pain for patients, who before entering the sanctuary undergo the cleansing of the body at the Sacred Spring.

The main areas and buildings of the Asclepieion of antiquity are, the propylaea, the temple or the sanctuary, the stadium and the theatre where gymnastic competitions and theatrical performances are held for the entertainment of patients. The configuration of the area south of the temple justifies the existence, the existence of a stadium and a theatre that complemented these buildings of antiquity. About 300 Asclepieion existed in ancient Greece, testifying to the importance given to this institution by the ancient Greeks who visited them by the thousands. The method of treatment is mainly done by psychological stimulation and mysterious submission of sleep. The most important and perfect of all is the Asclepieion of Epidaurus, but not the oldest. The excavation that took place in 1883 at the Asclepieion of Epidaurus found two large slabs with inscriptions curing diseases, one mentions 20 ways and the other 23 (INSCRIPTONE GREECE, IV 12). In the first with the 20 inscriptions and the second way of treatment is related to a resident of ancient Pellana.

The ancient text reads as follows: "Kora (girl), ithmonika Pellanis arrived at the jaron for generation, and when she fell asleep, she saw, she gave, she asked God for a pregnant koran (girl), of the fourth Asklepiion she was pregnant with you and what was wrong and what else was caused, and that those who do these things did not eat or be chastised. A pregnant woman has been pregnant for three years, and she has compared God supplicants for interest. And when she fell asleep, she saw that she had asked God for all these things that she asked and asked for, and for the sake of interest we gave to him, and what was possible of him, even though he had done so, so to speak, as a priest, and this is what they do.

And after this I went out of the sanctuary as far as the jar was made of koran (girl)." Translating this ancient text, he tells us that Ithmoniki from Pellana came to the Sanctuary (of Epidyros) and begged God (Asclepius) to stay with him and he told her that this would happen and whatever else she wanted to ask for. Ithmoniki replied that she did not need anything else. She was pregnant for three years and returned to the sanctuary to ask God to give birth.

Then God appeared again and asked her if she did not perform what He told her since she was already pregnant and after she left the sanctuary, she gave birth to a girl. The explanation given to this fact that a woman of ancient Pellana visited the Asclepieion of Epidaurus and not of Pellana testifies that the Asclepieion of Pellana was one of the oldest that over time ceased to operate, because in the meantime other modern sanctuaries were created and adapted to the needs of the time. Another explanation given is that the Asclepieion of Epidaurus was perfected and specialized in pregnancy issues.

B. Mycenaean tombs

North of the village and at a distance of about one kilometre, at Pelekiti the Mycenaean cemetery with the five carved tombs of vaulted shape. There are two others that remain unexplored, one located northwest of the hill of Trouporachi and the other on the left of the road between the village and Pelekiti (Sc. B.S.A. 1961, 125 – 128). The first two investigated by the ephors of antiquities Romeos and Karachalios in 1926 were collected. However, Mycenaean vases were found with representations of octopus, seal stones and mainly seals made of amber.

The A.D. 1926 par. 41 – 44 states: "A road 4.50 meters long and an entrance depth of 2.50 meters, the entrance 2.50 meters high with pilasters carefully worked and then a relief triangle at the crown, as well as in the vaulted tombs. The chamber, about 6 meters in diameter and 5 meters high, contained 4 pits with bones of the dead in disorder, vases and small finds such as: A clay female figurine, some stone knobs (flywheels), a ring with a representation of a house, an electrum seal and votives of glass mass.

(BSA. 1961 125 -128, JHS 1927, 257). In his book K. Spyropoulos "Prehistory of the Peloponnese" p. 535 mentions a table of finds., "4 tombs, 12 ceramics, engraved stone and 1 electo". The other three tombs at Pelekiti that were recently investigated (1981-82) by the Application of Antiquities of Sparta Th. Spyropoulos were also found to be in ruins. (Pics. No. 4, 5, 6) In fact, one of the largest in Greece, whose volume and magnificence places it in the first row of Mycenaean monuments of ancient Greece, testifies to the heroic era of the Mycenaean era, Tyndareus and Leda.

This majestic royal tomb, 10.10 meters in diameter, is flanked on the right and at an equal distance by two identical, but smaller in size tombs that apparently also belong to rulers and members of the royal family. In all three of these tombs, although courtyard, valuable golden utensils, two large decorated amphorae, alabastra, gold leaf, beads and pottery fragments were found.

The majestic tombs and the acropolis of ancient Pellana, these important monuments of antiquity, show that in the long period of prehistory the area played a Sudean role in the great flourishing of the Mycenaean civilization. The testimony of Pausanias that the king of Sparta, Tyndareus, settled here when he was expelled by his brother Hippocoon, confirms that ancient Pellana was the hegemonic center and the starting point of the evolution of the heroic era of the Mycenaean world.

Castor and Pollux, children of Tyndareus and Leda, were born and raised in northern Lacedaemon and with their heroism and deeds were later loved throughout Greece. The goddess Hera, when she was still an infant, wanted to kill them, but Zeus caught up with her, who took the children and gave them to Hermes to hide them and raise them in the dense forests of ancient Pellana: "This even though Agamas in song is nourished in their fall, but Hermine is the commissant in Pellana" (Paus.). But also, the heroines of the Homeric epic Helen and Clytemnestra, as well as Philonoe and Timandra, daughters of Tyndareus, married rulers of the time and filled the first two, Greek mythology with tragic stories in classical times.

C. The acropolis of ancient Pellana

In today's Palaeokastro there are traces of a Mycenaean settlement on the northeast side of the hill and at the top the remains of the Greek Acropolis. From a surface survey made in 1937 and 1957, a spear head (made of iron) and pieces of handmade vessels were found. The acropolis, built on the top of the hill, is surrounded by rough boulders for protection from invaders. Here the rulers of prehistoric times together with the rulers of the region deliberate and make decisions or host leaders of other friendly cities.

The entrance is located south of the acropolis, at the base of which you can see chipped square boulders as with those of the entrance to the palace of Mycenae (Lion Gate). The city around the Acropolis, mainly on the northeastern side, extends to the sites of "Pelekiti", "Trouporachi" and "Hatzeika", but without excluding other settlements that were created later and the Spartan garrisons that controlled the military road Sparta to Megalopolis were installed.

The selected locations for this purpose in which settlements were created are "Psilithrorachi", "Agiannis", "Agios Prokopios" etc. where the scattered archaeological remains, mainly pottery in these areas, show that they are important archaeological sites. An important archaeological find or broken column that was accidentally discovered recently on the kerbs of Psilithrorachi and specifically at the site "Banrakes", in the estate of Pen. Baki that abuts the road to Pardali. (photo No. 8)

This column was buried a few centimetres below the ground and was brought to the surface by an agricultural machine (tractor) by the cultivator of the estate K. Glekas. In this elevated but flat area of the estate there is a buried ancient temple and, on the right, and left of the road at this point traces of an ancient wall testify that this site is an ancient archaeological site.

The Trouporachi hill has hardly aroused the interest of archaeologists. However, there are indications that this flat area of about 150 acres is an important archaeological site. According to information from the British School of Archaeology (B.S.A.), in this area there are traces of an ancient wall and perhaps a cemetery of the Mycenaean era and on the northwest side of the hill a chamber tomb like those of Pelekiti (ref. B.S.A.) The rough boulders scattered by the landslides on the eastern side of the hill resemble "Pelasgian walls". These walls protected primitive peoples (indigenous) when they began to unite in groups abandoning caves, creating groups and settlements on hills that they fortified for protection from invaders.

D. Texts and inscriptions

Written texts or inscriptions in the archaeological sites do not exist today, because no systematic excavation has been done so far in the area of Pellana. However, oral testimonies of older residents say that there was a plaque with the inscription "FLEIASIOI EN POLEMO" and it is interpreted with the following historical facts; In the middle of the 6th century BC, Sparta signed separate treaties of alliance with many cities of the Peloponnese Tegea, Mantinia, Corinth etc. the "Peloponnesian League".

However, the superiority of the Spartan military power over the other allied cities made Sparta a hegemonic power that obliged the allies to follow it in their campaigns against other enemy cities. This hegemony of Sparta after the Peloponnesian League forced many cities to join the League, among them Fleiountas, a city north of the Peloponnese in the region of Corinth.

Upon joining the alliance, he promised the Phliasians to accept the return of their oligarchic exiles who, after their expulsion by Fleiountas, had fled to Sparta and Pellana. (ERNST MEGER, RE XX 1941 f 284, BALOQH POLITICAL REFUGEEES IN ANCIENT GREECE p. 66). During the years of the exile of the Phliasians in ancient Pellana, it seems that they were obliged to follow the inhabitants in the campaigns against the other enemy cities, with the result that some of them were killed and in order to honour them, the inhabitants of ancient Pellana, wrote on a marble slab placed on the tombs of the dead "FLEIASIOI EN POLEMO".

Newer inscription that I accidentally found in the place? "Palialona" (Home of and birthplace of Peter Adamis) and today is in the archaeological museum of Sparta mentions the name of a deceased. This tombstone with the inscription "FIVRON" (Greek – "ΦΙΒΡΩΝ" – Fibres in English) is important for the topography of the area and dates back to the 5th century BC. There is information that in this area where the column was found there is a cemetery of the classical era with many pit tombs, the flat tomb stones of which were used by the inhabitants many years ago to construct threshing floors.

PART THREE - ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND CITIES OF NORTHERN LACEDAEMON

On the route of the valley of Euvrotas, Pausanias, apart from ancient Pellana and Belemina, did not mention other important cities and archaeological sites, remains of relics that still exist today north of Pellana and up to the pennines of Eurotas. The region of Laconian Tripolitania (Pellana – Aegion – Belemina) includes the areas of Skiritida with the city of Oion, Egypt with Aegion, Maleatida with Malea, Kromitis with Cromon and Belminatida with Belemina. Pausanias does not mention most of the cities of these areas because during this period when he visited northern Lacedaemon (174 AD) they were completely destroyed.

However, they are mentioned by earlier ancient historical writers such as Alcman of Karystos, Xenophon of Malea and Kromos and Thucydides of Lefktro. Confusion and disagreements about the positions of these cities by historians and archaeologists who have studied with the area. However, most people agree on the areas of Skiritida and Belminatida with the cities of Oion and Belemina respectively. There is no doubt that the area of Skiritida, this oldest area of Oiatida with the city of Oion, is located northeast of Belemnites and near the current village of Kollines (Leake).

A special military corps consisted of about six hundred Skirites who took part in all the campaigns of the Spartans, who always occupied the left part of the faction in battle and ahead of the king when the army was on the march. "And the horn of the horn of Skiritai they became forever the only Lacedaemonians over wise men they have" (Thucydides). "None of him (king) precedes him except Skiritai..." (Xenophon) Pausanias describes very graphically in his Laconian the location of ancient Belemina: "Pellana one hundred stadia Belemina, even ardesthai pefyken, that was passing through Eurotas, the kennel provided abundant springs".

Also, in his Arcadian he writes: "The road to Lacedaemon from a great city, on the Alpheus stages three near enters.... and the fifty stages of his Hermaeus at Belemina were abstained." This important city of antiquity is located on the border of Arcadia – Laconia and in the narrowest part of the valley of Euvrotas, at the very point where the parallel mountain ranges of Taygetos and Parnon almost join and leave a small opening to Arcadia.

The location of the city on the southeast side of Chelmos Mountain up to the area of Agia Irini. When Leake visited this area, he writes: "in the place where Eurotas flows to the south and at the confluence of a flowing stream into Eurotas. I see Saint Irene at the site of Belemina, one hundred stadia from Pellana as Pausanias mentions" and continues: "Behind Saint Irene there are ancient traces of a Greek fortress on the top of Chelmos is a fortress of the same ancient city.". This fortress mentioned by Leake is the Athenaeum fortified by King Cleomenes III of Sparta! to protect the city and the northern valley of Eros from the raids of the Archaic League (Argeion-Megalopolitans, etc.) "The ephors Pembousin Cleomenes occupied the Athenaeum about Belvinan.

The embolism of the Laconian was the village and then to Megalopolitan it was disputed. And understanding this and walling Cleomenes." (Plut. Cleom) However, the Megalopolitan with the leader of the Achaean Sympolitotia Aratos believed that Belemina and Athenaeum belong to the area of Megalopolis and that it was wrongly fortified by Cleomenes III. They (the Archaic League) considered Cleomenes to be audacious in rebuilding the so-called Athenaeum in the Megalopolitan country.... (Polybius)."

The strategic position of Belemina was claimed by the opponents Aratus and Cleomenes for their own different reasons. Cleomenes III in order to protect the city and to prevent the entry of the Arcadians into northern Lacedaemon, where during this period predatory attacks were frequent, while the Megalopolitan with Aratus saw that with the fortification of the city (Athenaeus) their invasion of Laconian was impossible and that the threat to the abandonment of Megalopolis by Cleomenes III was immediate. The areas of Kromitis with the city of Cromon and Maleatida with Malean mentioned by Xenophon there is no exact information about the locations of these cities.

However, it is possible that the area of Kromitida with the city of Kromon or Kromos according to Pausanias is located northwest of Belemina, in the area of "Giannika" and up to the current village of Nichori. Pausanias, after describing the archaeological sites of ancient Pellana and on his way north, followed the military highway Sparta – Megalopolis located next to and on the right bank of the river Euvrotas. For this reason, as I mentioned above, he did not refer to important archaeological sites that still exist today north of Pellana up to the springs of Euvrotas, which I will mention later.

About three kilometers north of Pellana, at the source "Kefalovrisa" there are carved marbles of large size (2 X 0.70 X 0.50) in the ground that indicate that in this area of the spring there was an important archaeological building, perhaps baths or a temple of the classical era. (photo No 12) Testimonies of the inhabitants of the area report that many years ago a marble hand of a man was accidentally found in this location, apparently cut from a statue that decorated the area of this ancient building.

Marble of the same size and dimensions as those of the spring, is located fifty meters to the right of the road, about two hundred meters before the spring "Kefalovrisa". Southeast of the spring and specifically in the estate of T. Kamberris and the surrounding areas there are traces of an ancient wall that testify that the area of "Kefalovrisa" was inhabited in ancient times (photo No 13).

At a short distance north of "Kefalovrisa" in the area of "Chlevena" and at the "Marmaro" spring, chipped marble blocks are located on the ground and in the area around the spring that give the impression of a studied water supply system of the area. (photo No 14) Clay pipes, pottery, pottery and other archaeological findings have been found from time to time in the area and east of the spring "Marmaro" where the small valley "Kakkavos" begins to form, many potteries and columns of white marble that still exist in this area.

A few meters north of the church "Zoodochos Pigi" in the small ravine of the area "Legeni" there is a spring whose water comes out of carved stone placed in an ancient wall. (photo No 15) Recently, in the area and specifically in the "Klampatsaris" tomb, pit tombs of the classical era were found and looted.

At a short distance east of "Legeni" and west of the bridge of the river Euvrotas are the "Holy Rocks", whose name has not been interpreted until today. (photo No. 16) It is very probable, however, and it is not excluded that this location of the rocks in antiquity was a pagan place, named "Holy Rocks" from the city of the region Aegis. Hilltops, sacred groves and caves were the places of worship of the prehistoric population of ancient Greece. Later, however, with the prevalence of Christianity, their name was changed from "Aigio" to "Holy Rocks" because they believed that these pagan places prevented the Christianisation of peoples.

These important archaeological sites in the areas of "Kefalovrisa", "Chlevena", "Legeni" and the small valley "Kakkavos" have not been of concern to modern historical writers etc., who without proof or even evidence try to justify the location of an ancient city, always relying on ancient historians who, however, place these cities in areas and not in specific places. Thus, most modern historical writers, etc., place Aegyn, this most important prehistoric city of the Egyptian country, at the foot of Mount Taygetus and in various locations from the area of Georgitsi to Leontari.

However, the historical facts and especially the above important archaeological remains of the area of "Kefalovrisa" and "Chlevena" show that here was the prehistoric city of Aegis and the historic Karystos with the "Karysteion wine". This prehistoric city of the Egyptian country after the creation of the Spartan state by the Dorians was destroyed by the king of Sparta Archelaus. Agesilaus was born Archelaus, for this reason the Lacedaemonians who held the city of the perioicic, escaped Aegyn, suspecting that they were Egyptians, the Arcadians." (Paused.)

After this event, the city will cease to exist and, in its place, will be created later in historical times the city of Karystos, whose soil morphology justified the production of the excellent "Karysteian wine" Karystos in the Laconian place of Aegis to Arcadian since Karysteion wine Alkman said "(Athenaeus - Athenian)". These very important archaeological sites, as well as the historical events that took place before and after the creation of the Spartan state, combined with the morphology of the terrain, show that this densely populated area of the northern valley of Eurotas in distant times, was the beginning of the settlement of the first inhabitants of Laconian.

Ancient Pellana with the Dioscuri and the tragic women Helen and Clytemnestra, children of Tyndareus and Leda, played a leading role in shaping ancient Greek mythology. The majestic royal Mycenaean tombs (the most important of Mycenae), as well as the acropolis of ancient Pellana, these rare archaeological buildings that require a lot of effort and time to build, testify that ancient Pellana was a hegemonic center and the starting point of the Mycenaean era. Finally, later in classical times, ancient Pellana, as a base and fortress of the Spartans, played an important role in preserving the long history of Doric Sparta. END



Map – Spartan territory

Note: Thanasis Smirnios (Deceased) was the time of writing he was public servant. He wrote a book on the subject of Pellana according his local knowledge of the village. He was born and raised in Pellana and therefore able to obtain local knowledge. His contribution toward enhancing the subject matter of Pellana being a major Mycenaean Administrative Centre is invaluable and the subject of much debate at the local level.

APPENDIX 3 - THE PALACE OF MENELAOS CONTROVERSY - M VARVITSIOTIS I - 2008

Mr. Ioannis M. Varvitsiotis a Member of Parliament and President of the Institute for Democracy Konstantinos Karamanlis in 2008 criticised the Minister of culture of the poor handling of the excavations at Pellana.

Mr. Ioannis M. Varvitsiotis said that Archaeology. The palace of Menelaos strongly separates, albeit cautiously, the comments of archaeologists on the findings of Professor Theodoros Spyropoulos I. M. VARVITSIOTIS The royal tomb of Mycenaean Lacedaemon. The largest vaulted, carved tomb of all Mycenaean Greece. View of the entrance from the inside of the cabinet. Bears Lion, Griffin and Olive Techno grams In March 2002

In March 2002, Professor of Archaeology and Honorary Ephor of Antiquities of Sparta, Theodore G. Spyropoulos, announced the discovery of the Mycenaean palace of Menelaus and Helen in the Homeric city of Lacedaemon, near the present-day city of Pellana, at a distance of 25 km. NW of Sparta, and near the bed of Euvrotas.

This announcement met with the reservation – the silent disapproval I would say – of archaeological circles in Greece. However, it is surprising that, while the KAS (Central Archaeological Council) in full composition visited the excavations on 20.5.2002, it has since maintained "silence at the edges of the tomb", despite its obligation by law to issue an opinion. The opponents, however, do not openly "fight" Spyropoulos' discovery, but with whispers and behind the scenes try to mock it.

Controversies and prejudices. I am not an archaeologist, nor have I studied to judge Spyropoulos' discoveries. But I have love for my place – I come from the area – and I have a special interest in the findings of the excavation. So, I know that this discovery has received positive feedback from the international community. And I also know that rivalries and petty rivalries flourish in Greece. Didn't this happen to Manolis Andronikos with the discovery of Philip's tomb?

It became the subject of intense controversy and it took a lot of time and great personal effort to remove the reservations – and not only – expressed by the majority of his fellow artists. However, it is historically confirmed that Menelaus was a real person, he was a king, and therefore had a palace worthy of him. It is even obvious that the palace should have been built in the capital of the state. But what was the capital of Menelaus' state?

Spyropoulos claims that the capital was Lacedaemon, which he located in the area of Pellana, at the eastern foot of Mount Taygetos and specifically on the hill of Palaeokastro. However, opponents – and there are many – argue that Lacedaemon was a region and not a city. Spyropoulos, in support of his view, quotes Homer in both the Iliad and the Odyssey, from whom he concludes that Lacedaemon was a city. More specifically in the Iliad: Homer lists several place names, apparently cities of Menelaus' kingdom, that participated in the campaign. The place names mentioned are linked together by simplistic conjunctions (te, and, ede) that are known to connect similar things. Several cities are mentioned in this village, including Lacedaemon. The relevant passage in the Iliad is translated as follows:

They were the ones who had the hollow and cetacean Lacedaemon, and the Lighthouses and Sparta and the Middle with the many pigeons, who were obsessed with both Vrysies and the pleasant Avgeia, those who also had Amykles and Elos the coastal city, and those who had La and lived around Oitylos their leader was the thunderous Menelaus with 60 ships.

But also, in the Odyssey the description Homer gives us is enlightening. Odysseus' son, Telemachus, secretly leaves Ithaca on a small sailboat and after 3 days arrives at Pylos. He worries about his father and goes to ask King Nestor about his fate. He does not know why he left Troy early and sends him to interrogate Menelaus in Lacedaemon, which apparently, according to Spyropoulos, is referred to as polis. Then the poet describes that when Telemachus arrived at Menelaus' palace, the latter married his son to a daughter from Sparta. If Menelaus' palace had been in Sparta, Spyropoulos points out that Homer would not have written that Menelaus' bride was from Sparta.

Discourse and rebuttals. Of course, there will be scientific opposition to this view of Spyropoulos. So, should the scientific community organize a public debate so that we ignorant people can also be enlightened? The Archaeological Society, this authoritative and serious scientific society, which I hope has now regained its composure after its internal problems, which unfortunately arose as a result of the unfortunate actions of the Minister of Culture, can, I think, take the initiative in this direction.

But regardless of what belongs to the sphere of scientific analysis, it is a fact that the English School of Archaeology since 1830 was looking for the palace of Menelaus in Mycenaean Sparta, i.e. on the hill of Kokkinorachi, where there was a sanctuary of Menelaus and Helen, founded around 700 BC. no cyclopean walls, no villa with sanctuaries and storehouses, none of those that characterize a Mycenaean center, even a palace similar to Atreides Menelaus.

But all this was found near today's Pellana, which according to Spyropoulos, citing Homer, is the Homeric Lacedaemon – which was the capital of Menelaus. I was fortunate enough to be guided by Spyropoulos to the place where he systematically dug for 22 years as curator of antiquities of Arcadia and Laconia.

The findings of the excavations. The palace of Menelaus in Lacedaemon is, according to the excavator, one of the largest in the Mycenaean world. Its total area is 6,000 square meters, since it was a complex of residences (palace), worship (sanctuary), state administration, with archives, warehouses and workshops. Many of them are waiting for their full disclosure.

For the first time in Laconia, a cyclopean wall with a central gate was revealed. It was demolished in ancient times, but its foundations were well saved. It is estimated that it will reach or exceed in extent the length of the cyclopean walls of Mycenae and Tiryns. As there, the cyclopean wall of Lacedaemon also surrounds the spring, for water supply in case of siege. The spring is called Pellanis and in Roman times it supplied Sparta with its rich waters!

But a glorious palace is accompanied by similar royal tombs. And indeed, the royal tombs in Pelekiti were discovered and are the largest and majestic vaulted tombs carved into the rock in the whole of Mycenaean Greece!! Chamber tombs of citizens were found on the hills east and north of the palace, while under the palace was found the Mycenaean city of Lacedaemon. Thus, according to Spyropoulos, the chapter of the Mycenaean center of Laconia and the palace of Menelaus and Helen always closes!

However, if we accept that the argument of those who doubt that the palace discovered by Spyropoulos is the palace of Menelaus is valid, they must explain to whom the huge ruins discovered belong. It is the least they should do to protect their own scientific authority. However, what the Minister of Culture must do is to give T. Spyropoulos the necessary means to continue his excavation work. The continuation of the excavations of the palaces in Lacedaemon is not only a scientific but also a national matter. Translated in to English December 2024. Mr. Ioannis M. Varvitsiotis is a Member of Parliament and President of the Institute for Democracy "Konstantinos Karamanlis".



APPENDIX 4 - PELLANA IS LACEDAEMON - NICHOLAS BAKIS - 2017.

Preamble: Nicholas Bakis in *Pellana is Lacedaemon*, presents a compelling narrative positioning Pellana as a historically significant settlement within the Mycenaean and Spartan contexts. By synthesizing archaeological discoveries and ancient literary accounts, Bakis illustrates Pellana's role as a center of cultural and political activity, particularly in Mycenaean and early Greek history.

Archaeologists tell us that the ancient city of Pellana, located on the border between Lacedaemon and Arcadia, was one of the first six settlements inhabited by Greeks in the Peloponnese. According to ancient sources, there were three settlements in this area in Mycenaean times. They were Pellana (Πελλάνα); Belemina (Βελεμίνη), to the south of the present-day village of Loganikos; and Aegyptis or Egys (Αίγυς), whose ruins can be seen north of the bridge over the river Euvrotas (Ευρώτας) between Pellana and Kollina (Κολλίνες) at Spantidou's Water (Πηγές του Σπαντίδου). In Homer's time these three cities were the Tripolis [three cities] of Laconia (Λακωνική Τριπολίτιδα).

The well-known Public Way (Δημοσία Οδός) that linked Megalopolis (Μεγαλόπολη) with Sparta and then Mystras (Μυστράς) and other places used to go through Pellana and was in constant use from ancient times until the advent of the motor car. Parts of this road can still be seen at the place local residents still refer to as the Public Way (Δημοσιά). Going on towards the Village Square, you pass the White Spring (Άσπρη Βρύση) in the spot called Bezestenia (Μπεζεσθένια). In antiquity it was also called the Cold Spring (Κρύα Βρύση).

This White Spring is none other than the renowned Pellania Spring (Πελλανία Πηγή) described by traveller and writer Pausanias (Παυσανίας) in his *Laconica* (Λακωνικά) journal as being 'a sight worth seeing' (άξιον θέας). Tradition has it that a young woman, perhaps a princess called Pellania, went to this spring one day to collect some water. She slipped and fell in. Her body was never found, but parts of her clothing resurfaced a couple of miles beyond the village at Langea Spring (Λαγγεία Πηγή), now called Zoros Spring near the village Koniditsa (Κονιδίτσα).

Pausanias also describes the Sanctuary of Asclepius (Ιερό του Ασκληπιού) as being well worth seeing. Parts of its columns can still be seen today. The Mycenaean Necropolis, of great acclaim, is to the north-east of the village. The most recent excavations seem to indicate that this undoubtedly royal Tholos tomb (Βασιλικός Θολωτός Τάφος), the largest in Greece, is either that of King Menelaus (Μενέλαος) or that of King Tyndareus (Τυνδάρως). It is said that King Tyndareus of Sparta was exiled to Pellana with his wife Leda (Λύδα), their sons, the Dioscuri (Διόσκουροι = sons of Zeus) Castor (Κάστορ) and Pollux (Πολυδεύκης), and their daughters, the ill-starred Helen (Ωραία Ελένη) of Homer's *Epic* (Ομηρικό Έπος), Clytemnestra (Κλυταιμνήστρα), Philonoe (Φιλονόη), Timandra (Τιμάνδρα) and Phoebe (Φοίβη). Helen's devastating beauty led to her being abducted on two separate occasions.

Tradition has it that Theseus (Θυσέας) was the first to abduct her. He took her and Peirithius by force from the Sanctuary of Artemis where she was dancing. He confined her in Aphidnon Castle under the watchful eye of his mother, Aethra. Her second kidnapper was the illustrious Paris, Prince of Troy, known to us from the *ILIAD*.

The Royal Tomb at Pellana. Recent excavations at Pellana have revealed something truly amazing. A very large tomb has been discovered at Pelekyti (Πελεκυτή), approximately 700 metres north-west of the present-day village. This discovery could very well overturn accepted suppositions about the topography and political map of Laconia in Mycenaean times and prompt a total rethink. Archaeologist Theodoros Karahalios (Θεόδωρος Καραχάλιος) excavated this area in 1920 and discovered two moderately sized tombs and a number of urns. Towards the end of the twentieth century, in 1980 to be precise, Theodoros Spyropoulos (Θεόδωρος Σπυρόπουλος), then director of the 5th Ephorate of Classical Antiquities (5η Εφορία Προϊστορικών και Κλασικών Αρχαιοτήτων), conducted a systematic excavation of the area and discovered three more tombs

adjacent to those already known. One of the newly-discovered tombs is a most significant monument in every respect.

This tomb is hewn out of the bedrock. A grand passage, also hewn out of the bedrock, leads into the huge, circular chamber rising into a dome or Tholos. So, this is a genuine rock-hewn Tholos tomb, also known as a beehive tomb. This Royal tomb of Pellana is ten metres, five centimetres in diameter and is the largest Mycenaean tomb discovered to date. Only a few tombs of this shape have been discovered elsewhere in Greece, among them those at Palaeokastro in Gortynia (Παλαιόκαστρο Γορτυνίας), Volimidia in Messene (Βολιμίδια Μεσσηνίας) and on the island of Cephalonia (Κεφαλονιά). The largest of the previously known Tholos tombs was that at Volimidia in Messene with a diameter of six metres, thirteen centimetres and even that was regarded as a significant example of the type.

It takes a lot of sound engineering to construct a rock-hewn tomb. It also takes a lot of experience in construction, many years of work and a lot of construction apparatus. All this points to the Pellana tomb as having been that of a particularly powerful, wealthy figure so our minds should go to nothing less than a strong leader or monarch. The large, official tombs of Mycenaean leaders contained enough treasure to astound ordinary people, who thought they were treasuries, and they have gone down in folklore as the Treasury of Atreus (Θησαυρός του Ατρέως) or the Treasury of Minos (Θησαυρός του Μίνως) and so on.

The treasure that lay hidden in these tombs was such a temptation to grave robbers that no royal tomb has ever been discovered intact. Unfortunately, the Pellana tomb was no exception to this rule and was plundered even in antiquity. Yet two large amphorae were found in a niche that escaped the notice of the thieves. They are in what is known as the palatial style and have admirable designs with themes from plant and marine life (ivy and coral).

There were also two alabaster artefacts, some gold objects, beads made of Baltic amber and a particularly significant piece of meteoric iron (see Sparta Archaeological Museum). Small pieces of gold and pottery shards were found scattered around the disturbed tomb. It is most interesting to note that this tomb was known in historical times and later inhabitants of the area regarded it as a sacred monument and made various devotional offerings to their ancestors there.

It seems that most of these offerings were perishable (probably things like cakes, elixirs, wine and honey) and all that remains is the glasses, bottles and grain baskets that held them. Statuettes and decorated lamps were also found. It should perhaps be pointed out that Pausanias does not mention having seen any of the royal tombs when his travels took him to Pellana.

Remembrance of former glory and worship of ancestors testify to the historical continuity and racial unity of this nation and became a tradition that was still alive at the time of Pausanias (2nd century AD). The local people told him that when King Tyndareus was exiled from Sparta by his brother Hippocoon (Ιπποκόονας), he took his family and went to Pellana where he lived and reigned. Nicholas Bakis s Freelance Journalist & Photographer.



Image 26 King Tyndareus of Pellana

APPENDIX 5 - An ongoing brief history of Pellana - Peter Adamis – 2012

Peter Adamis is a freelance journalist, born in Pellana and raised in Australia. In his An Ongoing Brief History of Pellana Peter Adamis provides an extensive overview of the historical, archaeological, and cultural significance of Pellana, a small village in the Peloponnese region of Greece. Below is a condensed summary and analysis of the key points covered.:

An Ongoing Brief History of Pellana weaves together historical, archaeological, and cultural narratives to spotlight the enduring legacy of Pellana. The article serves as a reminder of the complexities involved in heritage preservation and the need for collective action to ensure that Pellana's history is not lost to time. The article provides a rich tapestry of stories, from its role in Mycenaean Greece to its modern transformations, leaving readers with a deep appreciation for this often-overlooked site in Greek history.

1. Introduction and Methodology

The article blends data from various sources, including scholarly works, anecdotal evidence, and observations collected by the author over several decades. Adamis acknowledges the limitations and inconsistencies in the source material, but his effort aims to portray Pellana's significance as an ancient and modern settlement.

2. Historical Overview

Ancient Pellana

- **Location and Geography:** Pellana is situated north of modern Sparta, bordered by the Taygetos mountain range and fertile valleys. Its strategic position made it a frontier checkpoint and a potential military garrison for Sparta.
- **Cultural and Historical Layers:** Archaeological evidence suggests that Pellana was occupied by multiple groups, including the Leleges, Pelasgians, Mycenaeans, Dorians, and later invaders such as the Gauls, Romans, and Slavs.
- **Mycenaean Era and Trojan War:** The town was potentially a significant center during the Mycenaean era, possibly serving as the residence of King Menelaus and Queen Helen. Pellana also hosted a sanctuary of Asklepios, likened to a proto-hospital.

Dorian Influence and Spartan Connections

- **Dorian Integration:** The Dorians established Pellana as part of their Spartan network, building fortifications to secure Sparta's northern approaches. The town became a Perioic community,

composed of non-Spartiate free citizens who contributed to the Spartan military while managing local affairs autonomously.

- Helots and perioicic: Pellana was also home to helots, enslaved populations under Spartan rule. These communities maintained a distinct role in the social and military fabric of the Spartan state.

3. Archaeological and Cultural Insights

Artifacts and Discoveries

- Artifacts from Pellana, once used as toys or discarded, are now valued for their archaeological significance. However, many items are dispersed globally, and tracking their origins remains challenging.



- Excavations led by Spyropoulos have revealed that Pellana's historical significance rivals that of Mycenae, yet the lack of funding and local disputes over heritage management hinder broader recognition and exhibition.

Historical Figures and Events

- Pellana was a refuge for figures like King Tyndareus and the mythical lawgiver Lycurgus, suggesting its historical and strategic importance as a sanctuary during times of political upheaval.

4. The Decline of Ancient Pellana

- By the Roman and Byzantine periods, Pellana, like much of Greece, faced depopulation and invasions by barbarian tribes such as the Heruli and Slavs.
- Despite intermittent recoveries during the Byzantine era, the region's prominence diminished significantly due to geopolitical changes, including Slavic settlements and shifting imperial priorities. Image 27 Mycenaean warriors

5. Modern Pellana

- Revival and Renaming: Modern Pellana, previously known as Kalyvia of Georgitsi, was renamed following archaeological findings connecting it to its ancient past.
- Infrastructure and Changes: Modernization has brought electricity, piped water, and improved infrastructure. However, contamination of the natural water supply has raised concerns about sustainable development.

6. Themes of Identity and Preservation

The challenges in preserving Pellana's heritage:

- Local rivalries and professional disputes hinder efforts to highlight its significance.

- Limited resources and inadequate recognition from authorities contribute to the underdevelopment of Pellana as a historical and tourist destination.
- A call for collaboration among local, national, and international stakeholders is a recurring theme in the article.

An Ongoing Brief History of Pellana weaves together historical, archaeological, and cultural narratives to spotlight the enduring legacy of Pellana. The article serves as a reminder of the complexities involved in heritage preservation and the need for collective action to ensure that Pellana's history is not lost to time. The article provides a rich tapestry of stories, from its role in Mycenaean Greece to its modern transformations, leaving readers with a deep appreciation for this often-overlooked site in Greek history.

APPENDIX 6 - A land fit for heroes - John Ezard - 2003 - The Guardian

John Ezard's account in The Guardian (February 2003) brought renewed attention to Pellana as a site of significant Mycenaean heritage. His observations highlighted several key features that underscore the site's importance in the study of Bronze Age Greece:

1. **Architectural Features.** Ezard noted the presence of a *megaron*, a hallmark of Mycenaean palace architecture, which included an audience hall complete with a throne. He described it as "far bigger than the Menelaion," the palace traditionally associated with King Menelaus and Helen of Troy near Sparta. The site also featured a thick perimeter wall, indicative of a fortified settlement, along with evidence of workshops and storerooms, which are characteristic of complex Mycenaean palace economies.
2. **Cultural and Religious Significance.** The discovery of dedications to Helen of Troy at the site suggests a deep cultural connection between Pellana and the mythological narratives surrounding the Trojan War. Such artifacts reinforce the association of the site with Homeric legends and its potential as a center of worship or reverence in later periods.
3. **Linear B Tablet.** Ezard noted a tablet lying exposed on the perimeter wall, bearing a character that resembled the symbol for an olive tree in Linear B. This is particularly significant, as Linear B was the script used by the Mycenaeans and was deciphered only in the mid-20th century. The inscription potentially ties the site to the administrative practices of Mycenaean palatial centres, where olive oil was a critical economic resource.
4. **Archaeological Validation.** Ezard's observations were later confirmed by archaeologists, adding to the credibility of Pellana as a major Mycenaean site. The combination of architectural elements, artifacts, and inscriptions aligns with what one would expect from a key administrative and cultural hub of the Mycenaean civilization. Ezard's reporting brought widespread attention to Pellana and its potential to challenge or complement the established narrative that places the Menelaion at the heart of Mycenaean Sparta. By documenting these features and linking them to broader Mycenaean culture, his account underscored Pellana's critical role in understanding the region's prehistoric past.



Image 28 Achaean warriors

APPENDIX 7 - THE POLIS AS AN URBAN CENTRE AND AS A POLITICAL COMMUNITY – Mogens Herman Hansen - 1996

Distribution of Poleis. We can assume that the seventeen securely attested archaic and classical *poleis* in Laconia (1-10, 12-17, and 28 Sellasia)- while they remained Spartan -were perioicic in those periods, leaving aside for the moment what that means. For all except 13 Chen we have an exact or approximate location.

Of the other sixteen, eleven are coastal including all those ten that are explicitly attested as *poleis* in contemporary evidence. Only five are inland all being situated in the north and all except 17 Pellana at a considerable distance from Sparta. The distribution of classical *poleis* in Laconia thus tends to confirm Hampl 's notion of a vacuum around Sparta.



Hellenistic expansion 11th – 6th Century BCE

APPENDIX 8 - CATALOGUE OF KNOWN EXAMPLES OF STELAI – PAUL CHRISTENSEN

1. Pellana - stele of limestone with pediment, fragmentary - .22 x .39 x .13.
2. Pellana (in secondary use in fill of road) stele, broken on bottom - .25 x .28 – Soukleris 2012
3. Pellana low, rectangular plinth of grey marble from base of grave monument with clamp cutting on top left side indicating presence of at least one adjoining block and indications on top surface that it originally supported superimposed block - .132 x .735 x .715 m. found on ancient site of Palaeokastro Pellana in Hellenistic level.- Zavvou 1999
4. Pellana Stele of white marble with pediment, complete except at foot - .25 x .32 x .05 m - found between Γεωγραφισιάννα Καλύβια and Χανί near road to Leonidaion - Tod and Wace 1906,



Image 29 Pellana via satellite

APPENDIX 9 - REFERENCES TO PELLANA BY ANCIENT AUTHORS AND TRAVELLERS

Author, Title	Text	Date
Author, Title	Text	Date
Pindar, Olympian Odes	§7.75 with him, and the duly ordered contests [85] of the Boeotians, and Pellana and Aegina, where he was six times victor. And in Megara the	-1000

Author, Title	Text	Date
Pindar, Olympian Odes	§9.75 to look at, at the festival of Lycaean Zeus, and when at Pellana he carried off as his prize a warm remedy against chilly winds.	-1000
Pindar, Olympian Odes	§13.75 by the royal Lycaean altar that rules over the Arcadians, and by Pellana, and Sicyon, and Megara, the beautifully enclosed precinct of the Aeacidae,	-1000
Pindar, Nemean Odes	§10.25 of Cleonae. And from Sicyon they returned with silver wine-goblets, and from Pellana with soft wool cloaks around their shoulders. [45] But it is impossible	-1000
Orphic Argonautica	§152 One of the sons of Neleus, Periclymenus, came forth from far off Pellene and well-watered Lipaxus, leaving behind the wealthy citadel and mountain-reared Colona. From	-1000
Nonnus, Dionysiaca	§37.136 a habitant of the fruitful land of Achaia, he has learnt of Pellene, where men wage a shivery contest for the welcome prize of	-1000
Eusebius, Chronography	§74 Ischyrus of Himera, stadion race. 67th Olympiad [512 BCE] — Phanas of Pellene, stadion race. Phanas was the first to win all three races,	-520
Xenophon, Hellenica	§7.4.17 when they were departing from the Elean territory, they learned that the Pelleneans were in Elis, and after making an exceedingly long march by night	-365
Xenophon, Hellenika	§7.4.17 by night seized their town of Olurus; for by this time the Pelleneans had come back again to their alliance with the Lacedemonians.	-365
Xenophon, Hellenika	§7.4.18 Now when the Pelleneans learned the news in regard to Olurus, they in their turn made	-365
Xenophon, Hellenika	§7.4.18 roundabout march and as best they could get into their own city, Pellene. And after this they carried on war not only with the	-365
Priests of Asclepius, Epidaurus Cure Inscriptions	§2 A three-years' pregnancy. Ithmonice of Pellene came to the sanctuary for offspring. When she had fallen asleep, she	-350
Strabo, Geography	§8.4.5 and Pharae and Pedasus. As for Enope, some say that it is Pellana, others that it is some place near Cardamyle, and others that	-1

Author, Title	Text	Date
Strabo, Geography	§8.7.5 as prizes at the games; it lies between Aegium and Pellene. But Pellana is different from these two; it is a Laconian place, and its	-1
Pliny the Elder, Natural History 1-11	§4.10.1 derives its name), Megalopolis, Gortyna, Bucolium, Carnion, Parrhasia, Thelpusa, Melaenae, Heraea, Pylae, Pallene, Agrae, Epium, Cynaethae, Lepreon of Arcadia, Parthenium, Alea, Methydrium, Enispe, Macistum,	-1
Pausanias, Description of Greece	§3.1.4 him to retire in fear; the Lacedemonians say that he went to Pellana, but a Messenian legend about him is that he fled to	-1
Pausanias, Description of Greece	§3.21.2 Farther on in the direction of Pellana is what is called Characoma (Trench); and after it Pellana, which in	-1
Pausanias, Description of Greece	§3.21.2 direction of Pellana is what is called Characoma (Trench); and after it Pellana, which in the olden time was a city. They say that	-1
Pausanias, Description of Greece	§3.21.3 A hundred stades away from Pellana is the place called Belemina. It is naturally the best watered region	-1
Pausanias, Description of Greece	§3.26.2 up in Pephnus, but that it was Hermes who took them to Pellana.	-1
Pausanias, Description of Greece	§6.8.5 won the men's and previously the boys' wrestling-match; Philip, an Azanian from Pellana, who beat the boys at boxing, and Critodamus from Cleitor, who	-1
Greek Anthology Books 1-6	§6.195 ARCHIAS To Athene of Troy Miccus of Pallene suspended the deep-toned trumpet of the War-God which formerly he sounded by	-1
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§2.525 they should be attacked. Some mercenaries of Nabis moved against them from Pellana, (a town on the Eurotas, about ten miles above Sparta) and	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.014 wall ends. The wall seems to intimate the site of the ancient Pellana, where Pausanias notices only a temple of Aesculapius and two fountains,	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.015 road, which here passes very near to the river Eurotas. Proceeding towards Pellana occurs the place called Characoma, and then Pellana, formerly a city. One	

Author, Title	Text	Date
Author, Title	Text	Date
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.015 river Eurotas. Proceeding towards Pellana occurs the place called Characoma, and then Pellana, formerly a city. One hundred stades beyond the latter is Belemina.	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.015 Unfortunately, he does not inform us at what distance beyond this point Pellana stood,	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.016 on which bank stood Belemina, the next place named by him after Pellana, though it was certainly on the left. In the absence of	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.016 the fountains answering to those which he mentions, are strong presumptions that Pellana occupied that position. At 1.37 we move again: — our road now	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.019 bordered on the. Megalopolitis and of which one of the cities was Pellana. The other two were probably Aegys and Belemina. We enter some	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.021 distance we have travelled from the remains of Pellana agreeing very well with the 100 stades which Pausanias places between the	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.027 into the valley of the upper Eurotas, and conduct to Sparta by Pellana. There was indeed a branch of the last-mentioned route which descended	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.028 like those from the Cromitis and from Messenia, to the pass of Pellana. Towards the Tegeatice and Thyreatis, the routes after crossing, in the	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.028 Thus Sellasia was an outwork of Sparta towards the Tegeatis and Argolis, Pellana towards the Megalopolitis and Messenia. There was an important district in the	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.029 easiest, and would present little difficulty when not defended at Belemina and Pellana, it seems evidently to have been the route of the Eleians.	1806
Col. William Leake, Travels in the Morea (v.1-3)	§3.077 had moved out of Sparta, and had advanced as far as Pellana, on the upper Eurotas, he made a sudden march to Sparta,	

Source: <https://topostext.org/place/372223PPel>



Greece 1832 - 1947

APPENDIX 10 – POST GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE



Image 30 Overhead view of Pellana

Preamble. The post-independence era for Pellana and its surrounding villages was characterized by resilience amidst adversity. From becoming a bustling stopover for trade to facing the harsh realities of war and conflict, the people of Pellana demonstrated a remarkable ability to withstand the challenges of time. Their story is one of survival, adaptation, and the enduring connection to their heritage, as descendants continue to visit the land of their ancestors.

Post-Independence Overview of Pellana and Northern Villages in Laconia. The life of the Pellaniotes and other northern villages in Laconia underwent significant changes following Greece's War of Independence and subsequent historical events. This overview highlights key aspects of their experiences from the post-independence era through the tumultuous periods of the 20th century.



1. **Post-War of Independence.** After Greece gained independence, Pellana became a vital stopover for pilgrims and merchants traveling between Tripoli and Sparta. The village attracted mountain clans from nearby Georgitsi, who established small communities in the area.

However, the newly sovereign nation faced economic challenges, and crime rates surged. With no standing army to enforce law and order, brigandage became prevalent, leading to cattle rustling, theft, and violence against those without clan protection.

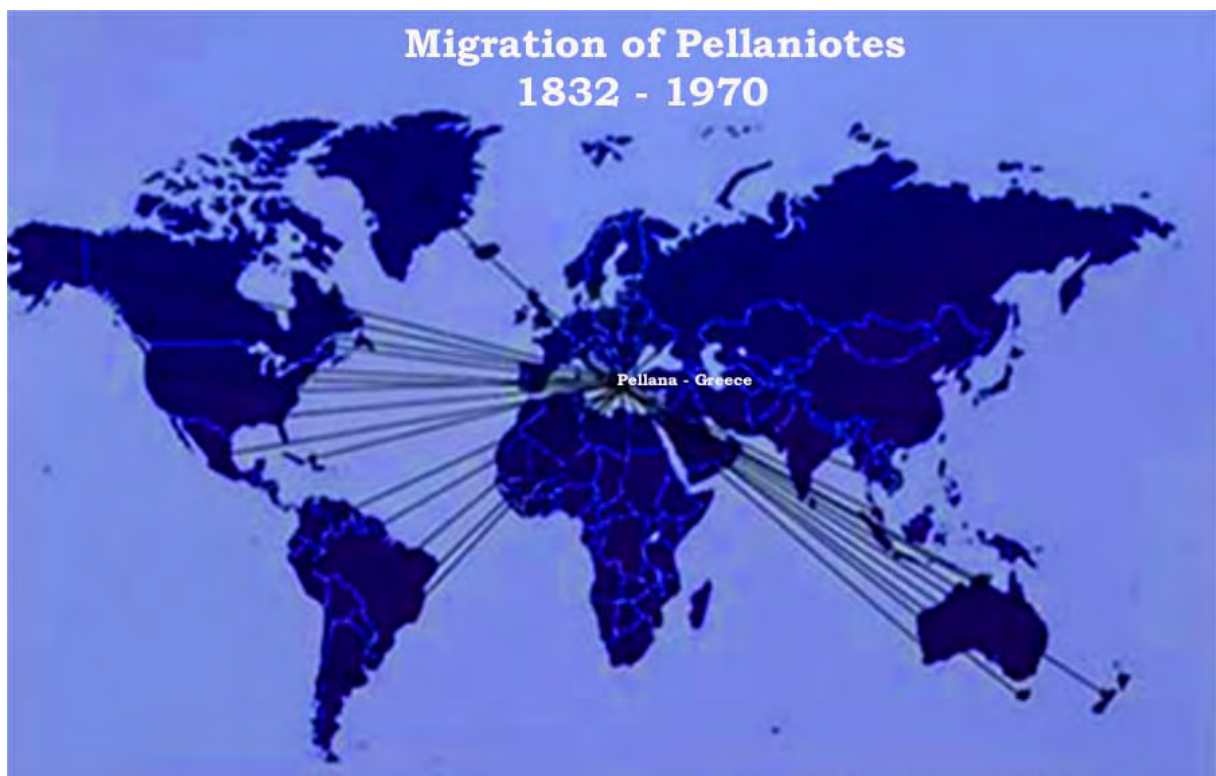
2. **Klephtes and Community Life.** During this period of instability, a local Klephte chieftain known as "Kalfa" emerged, operating from Alevrou at the base of the Taygetos mountain range. He gathered a following and engaged in cattle rustling and thievery to support his clan. An inn was established at the base of the Palaeokastro to accommodate merchants and pilgrims, featuring comfortable rooms, a courtyard for cattle, a well, and an olive orchard. This inn became a central hub for trade and communication in the region. Image 31 Klephte

3. **Dark History and Lawlessness.** The Vrisi (spring) area, where ancient ruins were discovered, became a vital staging post for travellers. Numerous inns catered to the influx of visitors, facilitating the exchange of

information. However, this era was marked by lawlessness, as evidenced by the discovery of skeletal remains of at least thirty individuals in shallow graves during modern excavations. These remains indicated violent deaths, reflecting the turmoil of the time. Villagers often took it upon themselves to act as guards, protecting their homes from potential threats, resulting in a climate of fear and distrust until a police force could restore order.

4. **World War II.** At the outbreak of World War II, Greece maintained a neutral stance until it was invaded by Mussolini's troops. The famous phrase "OXI" (NO) became emblematic of Greek resistance. Men from Pellana were called up to fight in the mountains of Albania, initially achieving success against the invaders. However, the situation deteriorated with the subsequent Nazi invasion, leading to surrender after intense fighting. Despite poverty, Pellana and surrounding mountain villages did not experience the same level of starvation as larger cities, but life remained challenging.

5. **Greek Civil War.** Following the end of World War II, Greece fell into a devastating Civil War that pitted families and communities against one another. The conflict fractured relationships, with fathers against sons, mothers against daughters, and neighbours turned foes. Political ideologies led to violence and mistrust, resulting in burned houses, assassinations, and a climate of fear. In some areas, however, representatives from opposing sides managed to negotiate on neutral ground, demonstrating that not all communities succumbed to hatred.



Migration routes of Pellaniotes

6. **Post-Civil War Recovery.** With the cessation of hostilities, a fragile peace emerged, allowing relationships to slowly mend. Marriages and baptisms became more common, and families began to rebuild their lives. However, the legacies of World War II and the Civil War had taken a toll, prompting many to seek better opportunities abroad. A significant number left for countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, and later Germany in search of employment. While many intended to return, a sizable portion chose to remain in their adopted countries, finding improved living conditions.

APPENDIX 11 - OBSERVATIONS & ORAL STORIES

Background. Pellana's resilience is a testament to its rich cultural heritage and the enduring connections among its residents. While facing challenges such as looting, population decline, and the destruction of artifacts, the village continues to embody the spirit of its past. By fostering a sense of community and preserving its historical treasures, Pellana stands as a beacon of resilience, reminding us of the importance of cultural continuity in the face of adversity.

The Resilience of Pellana: An Overview. Pellana, a village steeped in history, has managed to endure the ravages of time despite facing numerous challenges. This resilience is reflected in its rich folklore, the genetic continuity of its inhabitants, and the ongoing efforts to preserve its historical treasures. Below is an overview of the factors contributing to Pellana's resilience and the issues it faces.

1. Cultural Heritage and Folklore. Pellana is rich in local stories, folklore, and myths that weave a tapestry of history unique to its community. These oral traditions help maintain a sense of identity among residents, preserving the village's cultural heritage over generations. The stories not only recount the village's past but also reflect the values and experiences of its people, fostering a strong community bond.

2. Genetic Continuity. Recent DNA studies have shown that the modern Greek population, including those in Pellana, shares a genetic lineage with the Mycenaeans, despite the numerous invasions and migrations that have occurred throughout history. This genetic continuity highlights the ability of the Greek people to absorb and integrate new settlers while retaining their ancestral roots, signifying a remarkable resilience in their cultural identity.

3. Archaeological Richness and Looting. Pellana is often viewed as a treasure trove of ancient artifacts. However, the village has suffered from looting and the destruction of its historical sites. Over the centuries, valuable items such as pottery, inscriptions, and architectural remnants have been taken or discarded, leading to significant losses of cultural heritage. Despite these challenges, recent enforcement of archaeological laws has helped curb vandalism, allowing for the potential rediscovery of the village's ancient treasures.

4. Destruction of Ancient Artifacts. The rampant looting and destruction of artifacts have been particularly evident in instances where ancient ruins were dismantled and discarded. Examples include the disposal of marble statues and inscriptions during construction projects in nearby Sparta, reflecting a broader trend of neglecting the preservation of historical sites. This loss not only erases tangible connections to the past but also diminishes the cultural narrative of the village.

5. Population Decline. Post-World War II and the Greek Civil War, Pellana has experienced a significant decline in population. Many young families migrate to urban areas in search of better opportunities, resulting in an aging demographic. The closure of local schools and taverns signifies a deterioration of community life, as these establishments are central to social interaction and cultural exchange. While modern amenities have been introduced, the allure of village life is diminished by the challenges of isolation and limited resources.

6. Community Resilience. Despite these challenges, the spirit of Pellana remains strong. The village continues to uphold its traditions and values, with some residents returning after years away. Efforts to promote local culture, preserve archaeological sites, and maintain community ties are crucial for the village's future. The tavern, a symbol of social interaction, remains a focal point for community engagement, ensuring that conversations and shared experiences continue to thrive.

Oral stories. This page is left intentionally blank. It is important to note that this is a Living Resource Document (LRD) and Oral stories will be included at the second round of publishing.

APPENDIX 12 – THE FIELDS OF PELLANA

The image below is a hand drawn schematic diagram of describing the various field allocations within the Pellana region. The diagram obviously is no longer current as the government has now digitised and registered the fields. The diagram however, provides a good example of the complexities of ownership.



Image 32 Pellana Fields today

APPENDIX 13 - GREEK GOVERNMENT BLOCKED DISCOVERY OF THE 'MYTHICAL' CITY OF LACEDAEMON

Ancient Origins 21 September, 2013 John Black - [Dr John (Ioannis) Syrigos]

In the ancient Greek epic poem the 'Iliad', once believed to be the story of myth and legend, Homer spoke of ten cities. Today, the names of those cities can be seen in towns and villages around Greece and archaeology has already confirmed the real existence of a number of the cities including the mythical Troy. However, there is one city in with there is a curious lack of reference or knowledge anywhere in Greece – the ancient city of Lacedaemon.

Amazingly, archaeologists discovered what they believe to be the city of Lacedaemon in 2007, but any and all attempts to excavate the incredible site which thankfully has been documented by photographs, has been blocked by the Greek government. The ancient city of Lacedaemon, a city older than the renowned Mycenae, has baffled historians and archaeologists for decades, since it is rarely spoken of and it appeared its legacy had disappeared completely.

The name of the city was given by the king of Laconia, named after Lacedaemon, the son of God Zeus and the Pleiad Taygete. His son was king Amyclas of Sparta. According to the legends, Lacedaemon could be found at the foothills of mount Taygetos (named after the name of Lacedaemon's mother, the Pleiad Taygete). The area around Taygetos is an ancient one and according to ancient historian Pausanias, the first kings were settled there, all of them with direct origins from the Gods.

A few years ago, Dr Theodoros Spyropoulos, who was the manager of the government body responsible for archaeological excavations in Greece, and his team, managed to find archaeological evidence in the current city of Pellana which pointed to their discovery being the mythical city of Lacedaemon. The evidence included an ancient multi-level round royal tomb covered in solid stone, the largest in the world with artefacts, suggesting that it may have been the royal tomb of the Greek King Menelaus responsible for the Trojan War, and of his wife Helen of Troy. Furthermore, gigantic human bones belonging to humans of a height between 2 and 2.5 meters were discovered.

In the surrounding area Cyclopean walls, royal building that was suggested to belong to King Menelaus, as well as plenty of artefacts were discovered, similar to those discovered in Mycenae, Troy and other cities of the Mycenaean Era. Of particular significance was the discovery of ancient Greek writing dating back to an era in which it was not thought that ancient Greek writing existed. The implication of such a finding is that the Greek language could not have originated from the Phoenician language, as currently believed, but that the reverse would have to be true.

Such a discovery has the potential to completely change the history books and perhaps this is why, shortly after the discovery, the government authorities covered the tomb under layers of soiled, effectively burying all evidence of this ancient place. At the time, the excuse given was that it was being covered to protect it until they would take up further excavations the following year. Well, that was 6 years ago and it appears clear that the government had no intention of resuming the excavations which would lead to an uncomfortable rewriting of history in which mythological events are proven to have really taken place.

Fortunately, videos and evidence of the area exist proving that the excavations took place and documenting some of the findings. Dr Spyropoulos is a distinguished researcher and archaeologist and was one of the two archaeologists who discovered the well-preserved ancient city of Akrotiri on the island of Santorini in 1967. Why was such an important discovery hidden by the Greek government? What was it that made them so uncomfortable that they did not want to continue the excavations? The Ancient Origins team intends to find out and we will report back with further news in due course.

John Black. Dr John (Ioannis) Syrigos initially began writing on Ancient Origins under the pen name John Black. He is both a co-owner and co-founder of Ancient Origins. John is a computer & electrical engineer with a PhD in Artificial Intelligence

REFLECTIONS AND A CASE STUDY FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While the debate over Pellana's identification as Homeric Lacedaemon persists, its monumental tombs, palatial features, and mythological resonance remain crucial for exploring the intricate connections between history, legend, and identity in ancient Laconia. Its geographical advantages, strategic location, and associations with legendary figures solidify its importance in understanding both Laconian life and the broader Greek world.

Pellana, one of the probable inland perioicic *poleis*, exemplifies the dual identity of these settlements. Strategically located and agriculturally viable, Pellana likely served as a regional center for local administration and resource management. Its proximity to Sparta positioned it as both a dependent and a partner in the Spartan hegemony. Communities like Pellana illustrate how dependent *poleis* contributed to and were shaped by the larger Spartan framework. By integrating archaeological, epigraphic, and textual sources, scholars can continue to unravel the intricate socio-political tapestry of Laconia and beyond. This evolving understanding challenges older paradigms, paving the way for a richer historical interpretation. The following are some prospects for future research

Integration of Archaeological and Textual Evidence. The interplay between literary sources (Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon) and material culture promises further insights into the perioicic. Advances in GIS technology and regional surveys could refine our understanding of settlement patterns and interconnectivity.

Focus on Inland Settlements. Coastal perioicic *poleis* are better documented due to their trade significance and epigraphic evidence. Inland sites like Pellana warrant deeper exploration to balance the historical narrative and clarify their economic and military roles.

Revisiting Spartan Hegemony. Ongoing studies challenge the notion of Sparta as a rigid, centralized power. Instead, a more dynamic model of interaction with perioicic neighbours emerges, highlighting mutual dependencies and localized autonomy.

Today, modern Pellana bridges its ancient legacy with contemporary life. With preserved Mycenaean tombs, emerging tourism infrastructure, and vibrant cultural traditions, it serves as a living link to Greece's storied past. As ongoing research sheds further light on its role in antiquity, Pellana stands poised to become a vital destination for those seeking to unravel the complexities of ancient and modern Laconia.

As the author, I have tried not to be biased in my views and opinions, however it is evident through ought that I favour Pellana (my birthplace) as the ancient Homeric and Mycenaean Administrative hub of Lacedaemon. For those errant errors on my part, I seek forgiveness.

This work is merely a gathering of numerous threads that I have been able to gather to weave, hopefully an interesting but compelling reading for those interested in learning, I am not an archaeologist and hardly on the same level as an academic or scholar. I merely an observer of history and visitor to this world of ours we share. May future scholars extract whatever they may feel is necessary to enhance the ancient site of Pellana.

Peter Adamis
Independent Freelance Journalist
4 December 2024

REFERENCES AND LINKS.

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[Helen of Troy](#)
[Menelaus](#)
[History as a guide](#)
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[Archaeology and material culture](#)
[Modern technologies and science in Archaeology](#)
[Mycenean burial practices](#)
[Symbols Hieroglyphics and Inscriptions](#)
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[Hellenistic period](#)
[Brief history of artificial intelligence - AI](#)
[Hellenistic Mycenaean King - Chief or Wanax](#)
[Menelaion at Sparta](#)
[Pellana ancient Mycenean city](#)
[Pellana and ancient tombs](#)
[Pellana a village in Laconia](#)
[Pellana – Ancient references](#)
[Pellana - The Administrative capital of Lacedaemon](#)
[Early Helladic period](#)
[Hellenistic era](#)
[Chamber tombs](#)
[Tyndareus](#)
[Peloponnesian politics: 371-361 B.C](#)
[New study 2018 – Collapse of the Mycenean empire](#)
[Brigands and Brigadiers](#)

INDEX

ALPHABETICAL INDEX FOR THE DOCUMENT ON PELLANA

NOTE: The resource work being a living document, the Index will be continually updated to reflect current and future additions.

A

Achaean Cities	21, 5, 90,
Arcadia	12, 34, 46, 50, 61, 62, 71, 78, 86, 87, 89, 90, 97, 100
Archaeology of Mediterranean Prehistory	57
Athens	47, 53, 60, 63
American Journal of Archaeological Institute	47
Ancient Pellana	48, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97

B

Byzantine Period	46,
------------------	-----

C

Chelmos	53, 97,
Crossing the River	45

D

Dimini.	60, 61,
---------	---------

E

Economic Framework.	42
---------------------	----

F

G

H

Helots.	67, 86, 87,
Homeric Geography	49, 65

I

Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis	49
Identifying Periopic Poleis	52

J

K

L	Laconia.	10, 11, 13, 19, 37, 38, 44, 45, 47, 49, 51, 52, 55, 60, 63, 66, 67, 71, 89, 90, 112, 115
	Late Helladic III C	55,
M	Menelaion	13, 15, 32, 54, 55, 61, 63, 79, 81, 105
	Messenia	40, 49, 50, 51, 71, 79, 85, 86
N		
P	Pellana.	7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 21, 25, 30, 31, 35, 37, 48, 72, 73, 82, 83, 87, 94, 96, 99, 101, 103, 104, 110, 115
	Pilgrims and Pilgrimage	46
R		
	Regional Diversity.	61
S	Social Dynamics	68
	Sparta	10
	Spartan Dominance	43, 50
T		
	Transformations in the Fourth Century	43
U		
	Urban Centres	23, 37, 44, 64
W		
X		
Y		
Z		

AUTHOR



Peter Adamis. Peter is a retired Australian ex-military serviceman of 30 years' experience who upon leaving the Armed Forces was employed in a private capacity within the management industry at the organisational, environmental & occupational & training levels. He has been a manager, trainer, adviser and consultant in the welfare, business and community sectors and an Independent Freelance Journalist.

Peter Adamis was born in Pellana, (a small village near Sparta Lakonia, Greece on the 28 March 1950. His parents and young brother Philip migrated to Fremantle West Australia in 1954. In 1955, twins Kon and Helen were born in Perth. In 1956 the parents Vasili and Kaliopi decided to relocate to Melbourne to maximise employment opportunities and create a stable family environment. He is married to Yovanna and had four sons from a previous marriage, David – William, Paul – Arthur Phillip, Matthew – Allan – Norman and Mark Daniel Adamis.

He is an avid supporter of Pellana his place of birth by bringing attention to the ancient Ruins of the town and its connection to King Tyndareus, and Homer of the Iliad and Ulysses. He enjoys researching the ancient world with emphasis on the Mycenaeans and the Sea Peoples, Australian community cultures and their impact on Australian society. Currently researching material for two books, "An ordinary Bloke" and "HANZAC". Peter has written in excess of 500 articles on domestic and international issues and on controversial subjects that affect Australian society.

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Image 33 Pellaniotes who assisted with the excavations

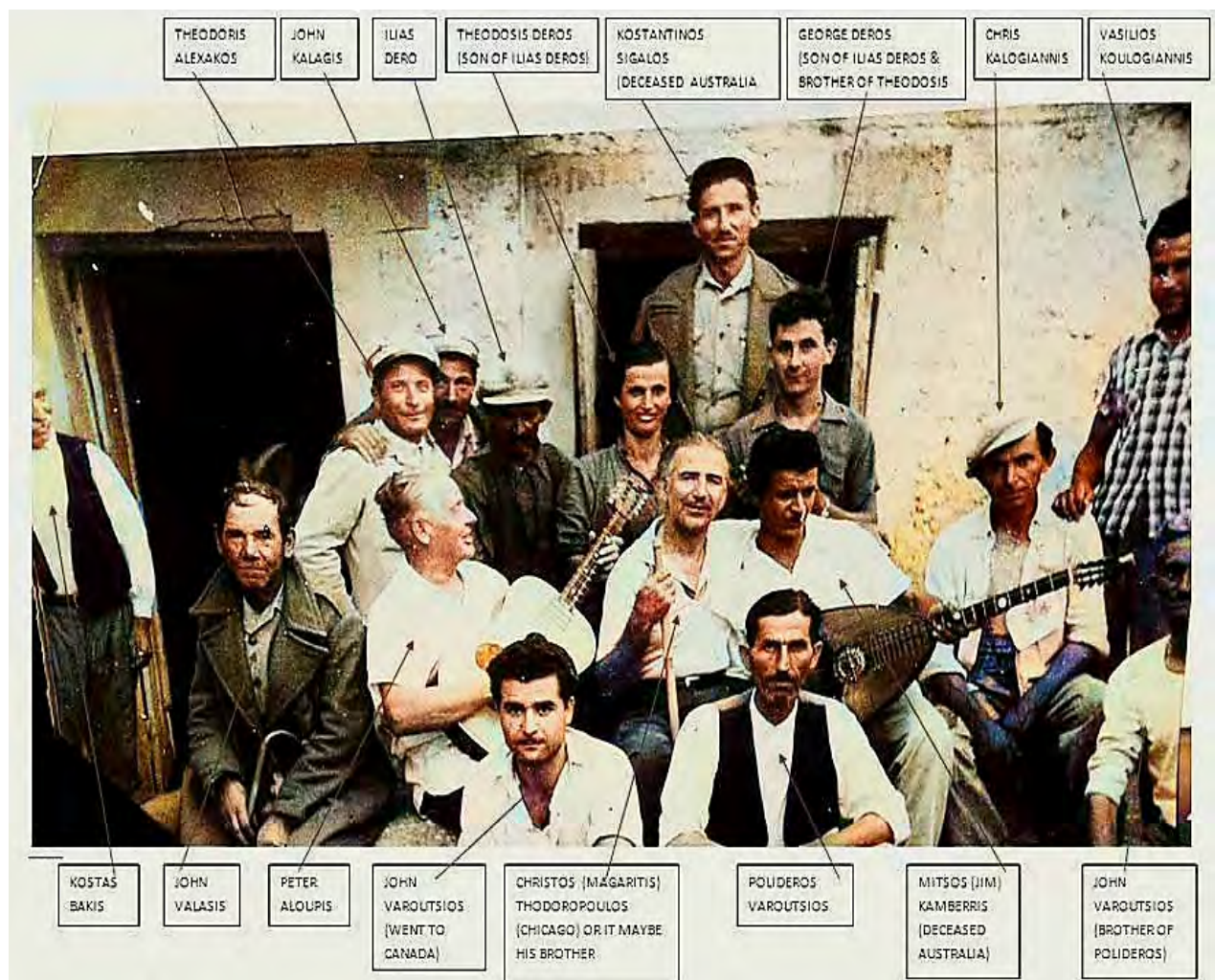


Image 34 Pellaniotes of a bygone era



Image 35 - Mycenaean warriors and farmers (Benaki museum)