

## CONTINUITY OF BRONZE AGE CULT AT OLYMPIA? THE EVIDENCE OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE AND EARLY IRON AGE POTTERY\*

From 1875 to 1881 German archaeologists excavated the well-known sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia in the western Peloponnese. From the very beginnings of the excavations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the early history of the cult at Olympia has been a focus of interest.

When the German excavators uncovered the centre of the sanctuary they revealed a black stratum in the area around the so-called Pelopion. In classical times the Pelopion was a temenos sacred to Pelops, the mythical founder of the Olympic games.<sup>1</sup> A stone enclosure, accessible through a gate in the south-west, surrounded the alleged burial mound of the mythical hero. The black stratum covered the area between the Pelopion and the Heraion and extended further east towards the Metroon.<sup>2</sup> In his pioneering work on the bronzes from Olympia, Adolf Furtwängler describes the black stratum as levels of thick ash containing fragments of cauldrons, tripod legs, jewellery and other metal artefacts and especially of figurines of bronze as well as of clay.<sup>3</sup> On the available evidence Furtwängler suggested that the black stratum represented the remains of votives and sacrifices coming from an altar and accordingly that the sanctuary of Olympia was established during Geometric times.<sup>4</sup>

Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer, who published the terracotta as well as the bronze figurines representing human figures and a variety of animals, mainly bulls and horses, suggested a tentative chronology, albeit one based only on stylistic analysis, for the earliest figurines starting in the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>5</sup> His conclusions seemed rather to confirm the view of Furtwängler, who had suggested a Geometric origin of the sanctuary.<sup>6</sup> Heilmeyer states clearly

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- \* I should like to express my sincere gratitude to Helmut Kyrieleis, who invited me to prepare the final publication of the Dark Age pottery coming from his excavations in Olympia. For discussions on the subject and bibliographical references I wish to thank Gabriele Albers (Würzburg), Anna Lucia D'Agata (Rome) and Michaela Zavadil (Vienna). Barbara Greiner (Athens) inked the drawings of the pottery, which were digitised for print by Nicola Math (Vienna). Finally, I am also glad to acknowledge the support of an APART fellowship of the Austrian Academy of Sciences thanks to which I was able to join the conference in Göteborg. Karen Hartnup checked the English of the manuscript.
- 1 On Pelops in Olympia see H. KYRIELEIS, "Zeus and Pelops in the East Pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia," in D. BUITRON-OLIVER (ed.), *The Interpretation of Architectural Sculpture in Greece and Rome (Studies in the History of Art 49, 1997)* 13-27.
  - 2 Cf. the summary provided by A. MALLWITZ, "Cult and Competition Locations at Olympia," in W.J. RASCHKE (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Olympics. The Olympics and Other Festivals in Antiquity* (1988) 79-109, esp. 81-83 fig. 6.2 with a map of the sanctuary, where a hatched area indicates the approximate extent of the black stratum.
  - 3 A. FURTWÄNGLER, *Olympia IV: Die Bronzen und übrigen kleineren Funde aus Olympia* (1890) 2-6, 28 pls. 10-34.
  - 4 FURTWÄNGLER (*supra* n. 3) 2-3; ID., "Die Bronzefunde aus Olympia und deren kunstgeschichtliche Bedeutung," *Abhandlungen der königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (1879) 7, 104 = ID., *Kleine Schriften* (1912) vol. 1, 339-421, esp. 342, 419.
  - 5 W.-D. HEILMEYER, *Frühe olympische Tonfiguren (Olympische Forschungen 7, 1972)* esp. 3-6 on the archaeological context, 10-12, 20, 89-90 on the chronology of the earliest figurines; ID., *Frühe olympische Bronzefiguren: Die Tiervotive (Olympische Forschungen 12, 1979)* 19-28 and *passim* on matters of chronology. The stylistic assessment of the figurines and the resulting chronology of the typology have been a matter of dispute. Heilmeyer's suggested 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. chronology of the earliest figurines has been generally regarded as too high: R.V. NICHOLLS, *JHS* 95 (1975) 289-290; H.-V. HERRMANN, *Bonner Jahrbücher* 182 (1982) 613-619; MALLWITZ (*supra* n. 2) 96.
  - 6 In this respect one has to consider that in Furtwängler's times the major periodic classification of Greek art was still under construction, and that a stylistic and chronological evaluation of what was to become Protogeometric would have been impossible at that point. In fact, it was Furtwängler himself, who first proposed the term "Geometric art." Cf. FURTWÄNGLER (*supra* n. 4).

that there was no evidence to bridge the gap which was apparent between the series of terracotta figurines from Olympia and those of Mycenaean workmanship.<sup>7</sup>

The opposing viewpoint, however, is asserted in the work of Wilhelm Dörpfeld, who maintained the view of a prehistoric origin of the sanctuary. In 1908 and 1929 he had discovered a group of EH-MH apsidal houses north and east of the Pelopion and thus proved the existence of a prehistoric settlement in the area of the later sanctuary. In 1929 Dörpfeld excavated in the Pelopion area and subsequently published the plan of a stone circuit of a tumulus in the centre of the Pelopion, which he thought to post-date the apsidal houses. He was convinced of the old age of the Pelops cult and suggested a Mycenaean date for this tumulus. Although he could not refer to Mycenaean sherds or the like, he supposed that the Pelopion mound formed the centre of a Mycenaean funeral cult and that Pelops was venerated here continuously into historical times.<sup>8</sup>

These fundamentally different ideas of Furtwängler and Dörpfeld concerning the early history of the cult at Olympia continued to determine the discussion on the subject. On the one hand Alfred Mallwitz critically commented on Dörpfeld's excavation reports and even doubted the very existence of the tumulus in the centre of the Pelopion.<sup>9</sup> He consequently argued against the possibility of a Mycenaean sanctuary at Olympia.

On the other hand, following the line of arguments of Dörpfeld, Hans-Volkmar Herrmann tried to provide the evidence for a Mycenaean or even earlier cult in Olympia by drawing attention to some Mycenaean sherds, which had been found in the area of the sanctuary. He again suggested that the Pelopion mound was the focus of a Mycenaean funeral cult dedicated to the hero Pelops.<sup>10</sup>

Here, a few words may appear appropriate to discuss the finds of Mycenaean pottery in the sanctuary. Fragments of Late Bronze Age pottery have been found on a very limited scale and in alluvial strata only. Findspots include the northern wall of the stadium, where it joins the south-eastern slopes of the Kronos hill.<sup>11</sup> In addition, a Mycenaean goblet was found in the fill of the terrace of the treasuries and may be dated to LH IIIA.<sup>12</sup> Further west excavations on the south-west slopes of the Kronos hill in the area of the later Prytaneion brought to light the worn stems of another couple of goblets.<sup>13</sup> The findspots of these few pottery fragments in alluvial strata indicate some sort of Mycenaean occupation at Olympia on or around the Kronos hill. On the basis of the available evidence the nature of this Late Bronze Age occupation in the area of the later sanctuary must remain obscure. The Kronos hill suffered intensive erosion during the course of centuries, and it is not to be expected that archaeological evidence is preserved on its top or upper slopes. Thus, the existence of a Mycenaean cult place on the Kronos hill can neither be totally excluded nor effectively substantiated, even in the light of a head of a Mycenaean figurine found in the northern wall of the stadium.<sup>14</sup>

7 HEILMEYER, *Tonfiguren* (*supra* n. 5) 8.

8 W. DÖRPFELD, *Alt-Olympia* (1935) vol. 1, 73-96 on the prehistoric settlement remains in the sanctuary, 118-124 on the prehistoric Pelopion, 279-289 arguing against the position taken by A. Furtwängler.

9 MALLWITZ (*supra* n. 2) 81-89; ID., *Olympia und seine Bauten* (1972) 134-137.

10 H.-V. HERRMANN, "Zur ältesten Geschichte von Olympia," *AM* 77 (1962) 3-34; ID., *Olympia: Heiligtum und Wettkampfstätte* (1972) 49-59 pl. 9e, f; ID., "Prähistorisches Olympia," in H. G. BUCHHOLZ, *Ägäische Bronzezeit* (1987) 426-436.

11 HERRMANN, "Zur ältesten Geschichte von Olympia" (*supra* n. 10) 24 n. 24, pl. 4.1-2; ID., in *Die Funde aus Olympia* (1980) 29 pl. 1.3-4. The illustrated pottery should be dated to LH IIA-III B. On closer scrutiny the upper part of the early Mycenaean alabastron (LH IIA) decorated with dots appears to be more likely an Archaic pyxis of local production. For the shape cf. a pyxis from an Archaic tomb context discovered at Makrýsia: *ArchDelt* 25 B1 (1970) pl. 172a. A comparable example has been found during the excavations of H. Kyrieleis in the area of the later Prytaneion. The final report of these excavations will appear in H. KYRIELEIS *et al.*, *XII Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia* (in press).

12 J. SCHILBACH, "Untersuchung der Schatzhausterrasse südlich des Schatzhauses der Sikyonier in Olympia," *AA* (1984) 225-236, esp. 226-227 n. 3 fig. 2 (K 2739): the goblet with monochrome paint on the exterior and interior can be dated to LH IIIA.

13 These pottery fragments come from the excavations of H. Kyrieleis in the area of the later Prytaneion in the north-west of the Altis.

14 HEILMEYER, *Tonfiguren* (*supra* n. 5) 8-9, pl. 2.2.

The Mycenaean pottery fragments must be viewed in the wider context of the discoveries of the Ephorate in Olympia from 1960 onwards. The Greek Archaeological Service excavated two groups of Mycenaean chamber tombs not far away from the sanctuary close to the building of the New Museum. The tombs were cut into the slopes of the hill adjacent to the Kronos hill to the north and testify to the existence of a Mycenaean settlement at Olympia in LH III A-B times. The location of this settlement has been supposed on one of the hills close to the sanctuary, because Mycenaean pottery came to light during excavations on the hill of Drouva, which lies across the Kladeos, and in the modern village of Olympia. Although most of these scattered finds remain unpublished, the pottery from the tombs make it seem likely that the Mycenaean settlement continued into LH IIIC Early (c. first half of 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C.).<sup>15</sup> It has to be stressed though that there is no evidence for continuous settlement into the later phases of LH IIIC or even into the Early Iron Age or any clear indication of Mycenaean cult activities. Thus, the available Mycenaean evidence was not sufficient to claim a Bronze Age tradition of the cult at Olympia.

Further excavations in the sanctuary were necessary to clarify the nature and chronology of the early cult at Olympia. These excavations started in 1986 under the direction of Helmut Kyrieleis and from 1987 onwards focused on the area of the classical Pelopion.<sup>16</sup> There they established the existence of a Bronze Age tumulus surrounded by a stone circuit. In this respect Dörpfeld was proved right. But this tumulus was found to be earlier than the group of apsidal houses and pithos burials, which all can be dated now to the EH III period. In this respect the objections of Mallwitz were reconfirmed. The tumulus which is not Mycenaean, but may be dated now to EH II instead, did not yield any burial, but was covered with slabs of white limestone.<sup>17</sup>

The excavations of Kyrieleis were also successful in revealing parts of the black stratum, which had been thoroughly examined but not entirely removed by the first excavators. Although the original composition was heavily confused and disturbed by the activities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was confirmed that this black stratum consisted of an accumulation of ash and animal bones, figurines, jewellery and other bronze objects. Pottery from this ashy layer was recorded for the first time. The archaeological context strongly suggests that we are dealing here with a mixed deposit of cultic offerings, votives and remains of sacrifices.

Moreover, below the stones of the classical wall surrounding the temenos of Pelops, small stretches of the original black stratum had been left untouched by the old excavations and had remained *in situ*. The black stratum started right below the course of stones and sat above sterile layers of sand and mud. It is important in the present context to note that there existed no stratigraphical connection with the Early Bronze Age buildings which were discovered by Dörpfeld.

A few blocks of the classical Pelopion enclosure were removed in order to investigate this last undisturbed section of the black stratum. It was confirmed that the layers of ashy earth did

- 15 Mycenaean Olympia: 13 Mycenaean chamber tombs altogether were discovered in the fields of Kalosaka and Zouni behind the building of the New Museum of Olympia; *BCH* 84 (1960) 720; *ArchDelt* 17 B (1961-62) 105-106, pl. 112; *ArchDelt* 20 B2 (1965) 209, pl. 228-231; *ArchDelt* 27 B1 (1972) 268-269; L. PARLAMA, "Μυκηναϊκά Ἡλείας," *ArchDelt* 29 A (1974) 25-58, esp. 27-32. Pottery from the Kalosaka tombs show that they continued into the LH IIIC period. Cf. P.A. MOUNTJOY, *Regional Mycenaean Decorated Pottery* (1999) 368, 378-391 nos. 30, 36-37, 39, 47, 49, 51, 57-59, 64, 67-68. Mycenaean pottery finds in the village of modern Olympia: *ArchDelt* 16 B (1960) 126 (railway station); *ArchDelt* 17 B (1961-62) 106 (hill Drouva, above ΣΠΑΠ Hotel); *BCH* 83 (1959) 655; *BCH* 85 (1961) 722. See E. PAPA-KONSTANTINOY, Στάδια εξέλιξης και οργάνωσης του χώρου, in *Proceedings of an International Symposium on the Olympic Games, 5-9 September 1988* (1992) 51-64, esp. 53, 58-60 with a map illustrating the topographical location of the various findspots in the area of Olympia.
- 16 H. KYRIELEIS, "Neue Ausgrabungen in Olympia," *Antike Welt* 21.3 (1990) 177-188, esp. 181, 187-188, ID., "Neue Ausgrabungen in Olympia," in *Proceedings of an International Symposium on the Olympic Games, 5-9 September 1988* (1992) 19-24. His final excavation report will be published in the series of the Olympische Forschungen; also ID., "Zu den Anfängen des Heiligtums von Olympia," in *XVth International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Amsterdam, July 12-17, 1998: Classical Archaeology Towards the Third Millennium. Reflections and Perspectives. Abstracts* (1998) 82-83.
- 17 The remains of the EH II-III periods from Olympia are currently studied by J. Rambach, who is also preparing the final publication of the prehistoric finds from the excavations at the Pelopion.

not consist of stratified deposits, but represent the accumulated remains of votive dump that was used as levelling material in the area around the Pelopion in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

Here, I am going to present the preliminary results of my study of the pottery, which was recovered from the black stratum.<sup>18</sup> As there are no stratified deposits available, the chronology of the pottery has to be established by means of a stylistic evaluation alone. The character and date of the pottery from this votive dump will shed some light on the questions of the nature and chronology of the early cult at Olympia.

The ceramic assemblage may be characterised as follows: small open vessel shapes predominate by far. I have not completed the statistical analysis of the pottery, but fragments of drinking vessels form by far the largest part of the whole pottery assemblage. The large variety of feet and bases includes ring feet and conical feet from low to medium and high in various sizes, and most of them show traces of interior monochrome painting (Pl. LXIVe-m). Conical feet with horizontal ridges seem to be a popular feature of the local drinking vessels (Pl. LXIVl-m).

Fragments of rims and body sherds indicate that these feet and bases belong to various forms of drinking vessels such as cups and kantharoi, which are characterised by their vertical handles (Pl. LXIVa-c), and the spectrum also includes skyphoi, which can show a reserved zone between the vertical handles (Pl. LXIVd).

The pottery from the black stratum is highly fragmented and hardly one profile can be fully restored. This is partly due to the fact that the pottery had been dumped and used as levelling material in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and thus was exposed to the trampling feet of visitors for centuries, but on the other hand the shifting and dumping of the pottery in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century excavations has also contributed to its fragmentary nature. Parallels for the pottery at Olympia come from sites in the western Peloponnese and the Ionian Islands and help to establish a fuller picture of the vase types represented at the site of the sanctuary. Fragments of a particular type of kantharos from Olympia (Pl. LXVa-b) can be compared to complete examples of this vase shape from tomb contexts, which have been discovered in the neighbouring region. One such vase was found with a pithos burial at Salmone (Pl. LXVc) only some fourteen kilometres away from the sanctuary, but there are also other parallels from Samikon and Gryllos.<sup>19</sup> These parallels demonstrate that the drinking vessels from Olympia included vase shapes like the high footed kantharos. Comparable evidence comes also from the Polis Cave and the Aetos site on Ithaca, where high-footed kantharoi feature prominently among the Protogeometric vase shapes represented there.<sup>20</sup>

Ring feet and especially conical feet characterise drinking vessels of the Submycenaean and Protogeometric periods, and in fact I would suggest that the earliest pottery of the black stratum may be dated as early as the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Pl. LXIVe-m). On the other hand, the presence of flat based cups and kantharoi (Pl. LXIVn-o), which form the favourite drinking vessels of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., suggests that the cups and kantharoi represented in the black stratum cover the entire time span of development from the Submycenaean/early Protogeometric to the Late Geometric and early Archaic periods.

The very high percentage of drinking vessels is complemented by a far smaller number of other shapes like kraters and pouring vessels. A large sized krater has been reconstructed from fragments. It is decorated with what I believe to be a set of three concentric circles. The fringing of the circles has a Mycenaean tradition and the tangent linking the two sets of circles is reminiscent of Late Mycenaean spirals. I shall tentatively propose an early Protogeometric chronology for this piece of pottery.

18 The final excavation report of H. KYRIELEIS (*supra* n. 16) will also contain my contribution on the Early Iron Age pottery.

19 B. EDER, "Die Anfänge von Elis und Olympia: Zur Siedlungsgeschichte der Landschaft Elis am Übergang von der Spätbronze- zur Früheisenzeit," in *Forschungen in der Peloponnes. Akten des Symposions anlässlich der 100-Jahr-Feier des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts Athen*, Athen 5.-7. 3. 1998 (in press); EAD., *Die submykenischen und protogeometrischen Gräber von Elis* (in press).

20 Ithaca: S. BENTON, "Excavations at Ithaka, III: the Cave at Polis II," *BSA* 39 (1938-39) 1-51, esp. 11-12 pl. 6; W.D.E. COULSON, "The Protogeometric from Polis Reconsidered," *BSA* 86 (1991) 43-64, esp. 50-51 fig. 3, 54-56 fig. 6; CH. SOUYOUDZOGLOU-HAYWOOD, *The Ionian Islands in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age 3000-800 B.C.* (1999) 110-112 pls. 30, 35, 69, 70.

Closed vessels are rare. The assemblage contains some small to medium sized jugs (Pl. LXVd-f), larger closed vessels are mainly represented by bases (Pl. LXVg-j), which by analogy of more complete vases belong to pouring vessels such as oinochoes and jugs and medium-sized amphoras. Comparative pottery for this group of vases comes from tombs at Trypiti in the Alpheios valley.<sup>21</sup>

It appears highly likely that there is a difference between a sanctuary and a settlement assemblage, where large closed shapes are generally much more common. The Olympia Pelopion material compares well with similar assemblages from Early Iron Age sanctuary sites such as Isthmia<sup>22</sup> in the Korinthia and Kalapodi<sup>23</sup> in Central Greece. The pottery shapes thus indicate a bias towards drinking vessels and therefore may well be connected with ritual drinking and feasting in the course of religious festivities in the sanctuary. This tradition continued into the later phases of the sanctuary. Pottery associated with drinking and eating also forms the contents of the wells from the north wall of the stadium and in the south-east of the sanctuary, which date from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and later periods.<sup>24</sup> The existence of these wells finds its explanation in connection with a now larger number of people visiting the sanctuary, which is likely to have gained attraction by the establishment of the Olympic Games in the course of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>25</sup> Archaic kantharoi from these wells in Olympia are not only a very popular vase shape of the western Peloponnese, but represent the direct successors of the Protogeometric and Geometric kantharoi, which are the first witnesses of cult.

Moreover, the local background of the ceramic assemblage from Olympia illustrates that the sanctuary starts as rural cult place of regional importance. The early centre of the cult was probably the EH mound of the Pelopion, the top of which was still visible in the Early Iron Age. Although there are only a handful of Early Iron Age sites known from the immediate surroundings of Olympia, a few Submycenaean to Geometric vases from Salmone, Lastēika, Gryllos, Samikon and Trypiti suggest that the sanctuary did not exist in effective isolation, but functioned as a meeting point for the local population within the rather scattered pattern of Early Iron Age settlement in southern Elis.<sup>26</sup>

21 *ArchDelt* 37 B1 (1982) 135, Taf. 85β.

22 Comparable evidence comes from the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, where according to the pottery the earliest cult activity goes back to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C.: E. GEBHARD-F. HEMANS, University of Chicago Excavations at Isthmia 1989: I, *Hesperia* 61 (1992) 1-77, esp. 8-21; C. MORGAN, "The Evolution of a Sacral "Landscape": Isthmia, Perachora, and the Early Corinthian State," in *Placing the Gods* 105-142; EAD., "From Palace to Polis? Religious Developments on the Greek Mainland During the Bronze Age/Iron Age Transition," in *Religion and Power in the Ancient World, Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1993* (*Boreas* 24, 1996) 41-57, esp. 46-47; EAD., "Ritual and Society in the Early Iron Age Corinthia," in *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Archaeological Evidence, Proceedings of the Fourth International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, organized by the Swedish Institute at Athens, 22-24 October 1993* (*Skrifter utgivna av Svenska institutet i Athen*, 8°, XV, 1998) 73-90, esp. 77-79. The final publication by C. MORGAN, *Isthmia VIII: The Late Bronze Age Settlement and Early Iron Age Sanctuary* (1999) 152-155 table I.1, 321-326 offers now a detailed analysis of the available evidence at Isthmia.

23 The Early Iron Age pottery from the sanctuary at Kalapodi in the region of Phocis appears to represent a similar pattern of vase shapes: I wish to thank Richard Catling, who is working on the Early Iron Age pottery from the site, for discussions on this topic. I may quote from his personal communication: "The Kalapodi material seems to correspond in general terms with yours at Olympia. Cups and skyphoi predominate, the remainder comprising oinochoes/jugs, medium-sized amphoras, craters and a large range of handmade shapes (cooking pots, amphoras, pithoi). (...) It is clear that there is a marked difference between this and the Lefkandi PG building assemblage where large closed shapes (amphoras and hydrias) were much more plentiful." For preliminary reports on the Early Iron Age pottery from Kalapodi see A. NITSCHKE, "Protogeometrische und subprotogeometrische Keramik aus dem Heiligtum von Kalapodi," *AA* (1987) 35-49; cf. also R. FELSCH, *AA* (1980) 47-54.

24 On the Archaic pottery from the wells W. GAUER, *Die Tongefäße aus den Brunnen unterm Stadion-Nordwall und im Südost-Gebiet* (*Olympische Forschungen* 8, 1975) 164-172 pls. 33-34; J. SCHILBACH, "Die Tongefäße aus den Brunnen 98-129 im Südostgebiet," in A. MALLWITZ *et al.*, *XI. Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia: Frühjahr 1977 bis Herbst 1981* (1999) 285-322.

25 Cf. MALLWITZ (*supra* n. 2) 96-100; ID., "Brunnen und Wettkampfpflätze," in A. MALLWITZ *et al.*, *XI. Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia: Frühjahr 1977 bis Herbst 1981* (1999) 186-199.

26 Cf. *supra* n. 19.

At this point I cannot go into the details of the Submycenaean/early Protogeometric chronology that I suggest for the earliest pieces of pottery coming from the black stratum. However, the evidence of this pottery supports a late eleventh-century B.C. date for the beginning of the cult at Olympia, and, in this respect, rather confirms the chronology proposed by Heilmeyer on the basis of his sequence of terracotta figurines.<sup>27</sup> It also matches with the evidence of a few objects of bronze jewellery including fibulae, pins and fingerings, the earliest of which can be dated to the Submycenaean and Protogeometric periods.<sup>28</sup> In the present context it is important to stress that the votive dump of the black stratum does not contain remains of Late Bronze Age cult. In fact, there is no evidence for Late Bronze Age religious activity at the site of the later sanctuary prior to the second half of the eleventh century B.C.

However, the excavations of Helmut Kyrieleis brought to light the bowls of two large sized kylikes. These may be dated stylistically to the Submycenaean period, that is around the second half of the eleventh century B.C. They are exceptionally large with a diameter of about 25 cm and thus cannot have been just ordinary drinking vessels (Pl. LXVIa-b).

The kylix has long been connected with Mycenaean ritual and cult. The kylix is a typical Mycenaean vase shape with a long life span of several centuries. It was one of the most common drinking vessels of the Late Bronze Age, at least on the Mycenaean mainland.<sup>29</sup> I do not dispute the widespread profane use of the kylix, but in the present context I follow Robin Hägg and others in stressing that the kylix was an important ritual vessel as well.<sup>30</sup>

This is not the place to review the complete evidence for the ritual use of the kylix in the Mycenaean world and it suffices here to refer to illustrations like the Campstool Fresco from Knossos,<sup>31</sup> which is dated to LM IIIA and has been interpreted as a ceremonial drinking scene. This illustration is related to the fragments of wall paintings from the Pylos megaron illustrating seated men probably engaged in drinking or toasting.<sup>32</sup> In addition a LH IIIC amphora from Tiryns pictures a seated figure on a throne grasping a kylix, which has been interpreted by K. Kilian as the illustration of a goddess.<sup>33</sup> The hand of an almost life sized figurine comes from the sanctuary of Amyklai in Laconia and may well represent the statue of a female deity. It carries a winding snake and holds a kylix.<sup>34</sup> All these illustrations and representations reflect the symbolic function of the kylix in drinking rituals which are connected either with social-political ceremonies or with cultic activity, although it is not always easy or necessary to draw a line between these cases.<sup>35</sup>

27 Cf. *supra* n. 5.

28 H. PHILIPP, *Bronzeschmuck aus Olympia (Olympische Forschungen 13, 1981)* 23, 34-36, 139-141, 261-263, pls. 1, 26, 42, 59; thereafter HERRMANN, "Prähistorisches Olympia" (*supra* n. 10) 435 fig. 113 d-q.

29 For the situation on Crete cf. A.L. D'AGATA, "Hidden Wars: Minoans and Mycenaeans at Hagia Triada in the LM III Period. The Evidence from Pottery," in *POLEMOS* 47-55, esp. 51-54.

30 R. HÄGG, "The Role of Libations in Mycenaean Ceremony and Cult," in *Celebrations* 177-184, esp. 183: "... the kylix may in fact have been the most common Mycenaean libation vessel, thus used in both divine cults and funerary ritual (cf. the broken kylikes found in the dromoi and doorways of chamber tombs). Kylikes are numerous in well-established Mycenaean sanctuaries, perhaps the most common of all pottery shapes." M.L. GALATY, *Nestor's Wine Cups: Investigating Ceramic Manufacture and Exchange in a Late Bronze Age 'Mycenaean' State* (1999) 28-32.

31 Cf. E. MANTZOURANI, "Notes on the Depiction of Various Types of Vases and Vessels in Aegean Wall-painting," in *Klados. Essays in Honour of J.N. Coldstream (BullInstClSt Suppl. 63, 1995)* 122-141, esp. 127 no. 10, 135.

32 L. MCCALLUM, *Decorative Program in the Mycenaean Palace of Pylos: the Megaron Frescoes* (1987) 90-91, 130-132, 199 pl. X. Cf. M. LANG, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia, vol. II: the Frescoes* (1969) 80-81 pls. 28, 125-126, A.

33 K. KILIAN, "Zur Darstellung eines Wagenrennens in mykenischer Zeit," *AM* 95 (1980) 21-31, esp. 26-31.

34 K. DEMAKOPOULOU, *Το μυκηναϊκό ιερό στο Αμυκλαίο και η YE IIIΓ περίοδος στη Λακωνία* (1982) 54-56 pl. 26.68.

35 Banquets and communal drinking played an important role in Mycenaean society. Cf. J.C. WRIGHT, "Empty Cups and Empty Jugs: the Social Role of Wine in Minoan and Mycenaean Societies," in P. MCGOVERN-S.J. FLEMING-S.H. KATZ (eds), *The Origins and Ancient History of Wine* (1995) 287-309; P. REHAK, "Enthroned Figures in Aegean Art and the Function of the Mycenaean Megaron," in *Ruler* 95-118; R. HÄGG, "The Religion of the Mycenaeans Twenty-Four Years after the 1967 Mycenological Congress in Rome," in *Atti e memorie del secondo congresso internazionale di micenologia, Roma-Napoli, 14-20 ottobre 1991 (Incunabula Graeca 98.2, 1996)* 599-612, esp. 607. J.T. KILLEN, "Thebes Sealings, Knossos Tablets, and

The representation of a woman holding a kylix on a larnax from Tanagra<sup>36</sup> relates the kylix and also the ritual of toasting with Mycenaean burial customs. In fact, shattered kylikes have been found in the dromoi and doorways of Mycenaean chamber and tholos tombs suggesting that drinking rituals were part of funerary ceremonies.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, the kylix had a safe place in the inventory of Mycenaean sanctuaries. For example, kylikes have been found at Mycenae in the Cult Centre and in the sanctuary store behind the Room with the Fresco.<sup>38</sup> The recent publication of the material from the Mycenaean sanctuary of Aphaia on Aigina also illustrates the importance of the kylix in Mycenaean cult practice.<sup>39</sup> In his discussion of cult activity in the Argolid, K. Kilian referred to various kylikes from two Mycenaean cult places,<sup>40</sup> and other examples may be added to this list.<sup>41</sup> On the available evidence one can conclude that the kylix was used during religious ceremonies for the consumption of wine as well as for pouring libations. LH IIIC kylikes from sanctuary contexts at Tiryns, Asine and from the temple at Ag. Irini on Keos prove that this tradition did survive the fall of the palaces and continued into LH IIIC.<sup>42</sup> The same is true for the use of the kylix in Mycenaean funerary ritual, which is also testified to in tomb contexts for the post-palatial period.<sup>43</sup>

In the regions of the Mycenaean periphery the kylix survived the end of the Mycenaean Age. In particular, the regions of the western Peloponnese and the Ionian Islands have produced examples of kylikes, which may be dated to the Early Iron Age. Apart from Olympia,

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- Mycenaean State Banquets," *BullInstClSt* 39 (1994) 67-84, esp. 71; G. SÄFLUND, "Sacrificial Banquets in the 'Palace of Nestor'" *OpAth* 13 (1980) 237-246; C.W. SHELMEERDINE, "Review of Aegean Prehistory VI: The Palatial Bronze Age of the Southern and Central Greek Mainland," *AJA* 101 (1997) 537-585, esp. 578-580.
- 36 Tomb 36 of Tanagra: *PraktArchEt* (1973) 121 pl. 10b; thereafter W. CAVANAGH and C. MEE, "Mourning Before and after the Dark Age," in *Klados. Essays in Honour of J. N. Coldstream (BullInstClSt Suppl. 63, 1995)* 45-61, esp. 49 fig. 9 no. 48. See also A. KANTÁ, *The Late Minoan III Period in Crete: a Survey of Sites, Pottery and their Distribution* (1979) 150 fig. 63.1 for a Cretan larnax with the illustration of a figure raising a kylix.
- 37 Kylikes found in the dromoi or doorways of Mycenaean tombs e.g. at Armenoi/Crete: *Minoans and Mycenaeans – Flavours of their Time, Catalogue of the Exhibition, National Archaeological Museum at Athens 1999* (1999) 174-175, 248-249 nos. 226-228; at Kokla/Argolid: K. DEMAKOPOULOU, "Burial Ritual in the Tholos Tomb at Kokla," in *Celebrations* 111-123, 121-122 figs. 22-23 with additional references.
- 38 *Minoans and Mycenaeans – Flavours of their Time* (supra n. 37) 189-191, 154-155 nos. 136-139; see now A.D. MOORE-W.D. TAYLOUR, "The Temple Complex," in *Well Built Mycenae, the Helleno-British Excavations Within the Citadel of Mycenae, 1959-1969*, Fasc. 10 (1999) 32-33, 84, figs. 10-12.
- 39 K. PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS, *The Sanctuary of Aphaia on Aigina in the Bronze Age* (1998) 97, 132-133.
- 40 K. KILIAN, "Patterns in the Cult Activity in the Mycenaean Argolid: Haghia Triada (Klenies), the Profitis Elias Cave (Haghios Hadrianos) and the Citadel of Tiryns," in *Celebrations* 185-197, esp. 189 fig. 4a, 4b, 190, 193.
- 41 Cf. references in G. ALBERS, *Spätmykenische Stadtheiligtümer. Systematische Analyse und vergleichende Auswertung der archäologischen Befunde* (1994) 148 with n. 751 table 10; PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (supra n. 39) 186 chart 2b; HÄGG (supra n. 35) 609-610.
- 42 K. KILIAN, *AA* (1979) 393; 421 fig. 41, 1-3; ID., "Zeugnisse mykenischer Kultausbübung in Tiryns," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 49-58, esp. 53, 56; R. HÄGG, "The House Sanctuary at Asine Revisited," *ibidem* 91-94, esp. 92-93 fig. 2 P4; M.E. CASKEY, "Ayia Irini, Kea: the Terracotta Statues and the Cult in the Temple," *ibidem* 127-135, esp. 128, 130 fig. 4, 134. See also M. JACOB-FELSCH, "Die spätmykenische bis frühprotogeometrische Keramik," in R.C.S. FELSCH (ed.), *Kalapodi. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen im Heiligtum der Artemis und des Apollon von Hyampolis*, vol. I (1996) 1-213, esp. 103.
- 43 Pace W. CAVANAGH, "Innovation, Conservatism and Variation in Mycenaean Funerary Ritual," in K. BRANIGAN (ed.), *Cemetery and Society in the Aegean Bronze Age (Sheffield Studies in Aegean Archaeology, 1, 1998)* 103-114, esp. 111. Cf. e.g. sherds from open shapes such as kraters, kylikes, deep bowls, stemmed and conical bowls, which are reported from the dromos fill in Krini tomb 3 by L. PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI, "A Mycenaean Warrior's Tomb at Krini near Patras," *BSA* 89 (1994) 171-211, esp. 198-199, and are dated to LH IIIA2/B until LH IIIC early-middle. In chamber tomb 5 of the cemetery of Ag. Triada in northern Elis fragments of kylikes and kraters of LH IIIA-C date were found near the entrance, and a LH IIIC middle krater with the illustration of a prothesis scene comes from the dromos of the same tomb. They testify toritual drinking connected with funerary ceremonies in LH IIIC. CH. SCHOINAS, "Εικονιστική παράσταση σε όστρακα κρατήρα από Αγία Τριάδα Ηλείας," in *Η Περιφέρεια του Μυκηναϊκού Κόσμου: Α' Διεθνές Διεπιστημονικό Συμπόσιο, Λαμία 25-29 Σεπτεμβρίου 1994* (1999) 257-262, esp. 262; O. VIKATOU, "Το μυκηναϊκό νεκροταφείο της Αγίας Τριάδας Ν. Ηλείας," *ibidem* 237-255. The dromos of chamber tomb K2 from Pylos-Pisaskion contained finds of kylikes and kraters of LH IIIC middle-late; cf. W.D. TAYLOUR, in *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia III* (1973) 226, 229-230 figs. 289-290.

ridge stemmed kylikes of LH IIIC Late to Protogeometric date have been identified in Thessaly,<sup>44</sup> Ithaca,<sup>45</sup> Messenia,<sup>46</sup> Laconia,<sup>47</sup> Argolis<sup>48</sup> and Crete,<sup>49</sup> regions which entertained contacts and networks of exchange during the last phase of the Greek Bronze Age.<sup>50</sup> The Polis Cave on Ithaca has provided us with a well known series of large and medium-sized kylikes of Submycenaean and Protogeometric date, which all show ribbed stems; and it may be no coincidence that the Polis Cave makes a good case for an early Iron Age cult site as well.<sup>51</sup>

Similar examples come now from the sanctuary of Olympia and demonstrate the persistence of the kylix into Early Iron Age cult (Pl. LXVIc-h). On the evidence of the kylikes from Olympia and from the Polis Cave on Ithaca I argue for the continuity of the religious symbolism and ritual function connected with the shape of the kylix from the Mycenaean era into the Early Iron Age. The large size of some of the kylikes stresses the symbolic nature of the drinking and libation vessel used during religious rituals. Although the sanctuary at Olympia does not offer the case in point for continuity of Bronze Age cult, it shows that the Early Iron Age Cult owed something to a Bronze Age tradition.

In conclusion, the evidence for cult activity in Olympia from the late 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. onwards links the cult place with other Greek mainland sanctuaries, notably with Isthmia, Amyklai and Kalapodi,<sup>52</sup> just to name some of the more prominent cases.<sup>53</sup> Despite their rather early beginnings and their Bronze Age background, in neither case does the cult go back to the palatial Bronze Age of mainland Greece.

Birgitta EDER

- 44 MOUNTJOY (*supra* n. 15) 853-857 figs. 346, 348 nos. 124-127, 153.
- 45 Aetos/Ithaca: W.A. HEURTLEY-H.L. LORIMER, "Excavations in Ithaca, I. LH III - Protogeometric Cairns at Aetós," *BSA* 33 (1932-33) 22-65, esp. 38-39 fig. 8. For the evidence from the Polis Cave see *infra* n. 51.
- 46 Nichoria/Messenia: W.D.E. COULSON, in *Excavations at Nichoria in Southwest Greece III: Dark Age and Byzantine Occupation* (1983) 69-70, 82-83, 94.
- 47 Amyklai/Laconia: DEMAKOPOULOU (*supra* n. 34) 71-72, pl. 52 nos. 20-23; W.D.E. COULSON, "The Dark Age Pottery of Sparta," *BSA* 80 (1985) 29-84, esp. 58-59 fig. 11, nos. 354-358.
- 48 Tiryns/Argolis: C. PODZUWEIT, "Bericht zur spätmykenischen Keramik – Ausgrabungen in Tiryns 1981: Die Phasen SH IIIC Fortgeschritten bis Spät," *AA* (1983) 377, 393 fig. 13.4.
- 49 Crete: A. FURUMARK, *Mycenaean Pottery I. Analysis and Classification* (*Skrifter utgivna av svenska institutet i Athen*, 4, XX:1, 1972) 63 mentions examples of ribbed kylix stems from Crete and Cyprus. E. BORGNA, "Circolazione della ceramica nello scambio cerimoniale tra mondo miceneo palaziale e Creta tardominoica: la prospettiva di Festòs nel TM III," in *Ἐπὶ πόντον πλαζόμενοι, Simposio italiano di studi Egei dedicato a Luigi Bernabò Brea e Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, Roma, 18-20 febbraio 1998* (1999) esp. 200 fig. 2.
- 50 B. EDER, "Patterns of Contact and Communication Between the Regions South and North of the Corinthian Gulf in LH IIIC," in *Η Περιφέρεια του Μυκηναϊκού Κόσμου: Β' Διεθνές Διεπιστημονικό Συμπόσιο, Λαμία, 26-30 Σεπτεμβρίου 1999* (in press); cf. also EAD., "Late Bronze Swords from Ancient Elis," in *POLEMOS* 443-448.
- 51 See BENTON (*supra* n. 20) 13-14 pl. 8; EAD., "Second Thoughts on 'Mycenaean' Pottery in Ithaca," *BSA* 44 (1949) 307-312, esp. 309-311; COULSON (*supra* n. 20) 47-49 fig. 2, 53-54 fig. 5; SOUYOUDZOGLOU-HAYWOOD (*supra* n. 20) 109-111 pls. 27, 28, 66b; P.A. MOUNTJOY, "Regional Mycenaean pottery," *BSA* 85 (1990) 246-270, esp. 263 fig. 20. In fact, if one considers size, one kylix from Ithaca (S 216) compares well with the two large sized kylikes from Olympia.
- 52 Cf. MORGAN, "From Palace to Polis?" (*supra* n. 22); EAD., *Isthmia VIII* (*supra* n. 22) 295-298, 369-397. On the case of Amyklai in Laconia cf. B. EDER, *Argolis, Lakonien, Messenien vom Ende der mykenischen Palastzeit bis zur Einwanderung der Dorier* (1998) 97-107, 127-130, 136-138, who suggests that the Late Bronze Age cult of a female deity was superseded by the cult of Hyakinthos in the Early Iron Age; EAD., "Continuity and Change in Dark Age Laconia: the Case of Amyklai and Sparta," paper presented at the *International Conference "Lighten Our Darkness: Cultural Transformation at the Beginning of the First Millennium B.C. – From the Alps to Anatolia," organised by the University of Birmingham and the British School at Athens, Birmingham 6-9 January 2000*.
- 53 CH. SOURVINOU-INWOOD, "Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space: Fragments of a Discourse," in N. MARINATOS and R. HÄGG (eds), *Greek Sanctuaries – New Approaches* (1998) 1-17, esp. 5-7 stresses the fact that there exists a number of Dark Age cult places, shrines and sanctuaries of various size serving a variety of social and political needs. I am in general agreement with her view "that early Greek sanctuaries developed out of the sanctuaries of the Dark Ages through a continuous process of development and change without rupture" (11). Cf. also C. MORGAN, "The Origins of Pan-Hellenism," *ibidem* 18-44, esp. 19.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Early Iron Age Pottery from the area of the Pelopion in Olympia  
and one kantharos from Salmone (scale 1:2)

Pl. LXIVa-c	Rim and body fragments of kantharoi.
Pl. LXIVd	Rim and body fragments of skyphos.
Pl. LXIVe-m	Conical feet of small open vessels.
Pl. LXIVn-o	Flat based kantharoi.
Pl. LXVa-b	Fragments of kantharoi with reserved zone at mid-belly.
Pl. LXVc	Kantharos from Salmone.
Pl. LXVd	Small sized jug.
Pl. LXVe-f	Body fragments of medium sized jugs.
Pl. LXVg-j	Bases of jugs/oinochoes.
Pl. LXVIa-b	Bowls of kylikes.
Pl. LXVIc-h	Ridged stems of kylikes.