

THE MYCENAEAN SETTLEMENTS IN THE SPARTA PLAIN AND THE ANCIENT TRADITIONS

by RICHARD HOPE SIMPSON

INTRODUCTION

In this note I assess the main Mycenaean settlements discovered in and around the Sparta plain and also try to interpret the ancient testimonia related to them. It is both customary and correct to present the more definite (i.e. the archaeological) evidence first and *separately* in such cases, before any speculative attempts to assign ancient names to particular sites. For this reason my note is divided into two parts, the first confined to the (more objective) archaeological data, and the second consisting of arguments based on these data combined with indications derived from the ancient traditions. The interpretation of the latter is by nature more subjective, involving more diverse and complex factors, especially the historical and topographical, in addition to deductions from the ancient material found at the sites.

I. THE MYCENAEAN SITES AND THEIR SIZES: THE ROLE OF SURVEY

Excavations in the Sparta plain have been of small scale, except for those of the British School at Ancient Sparta and at the site of the Menelaion (the final report of H.W. Catling's excavations is in preparation)¹. For estimates of the sizes of most of the Mycenaean settlements in and around the plain we must therefore rely mainly on results obtained by survey. For the Menelaion and its vicinity, in addition to the preliminary excavation reports, we now have the data from the intensive Laconia Survey (*LS* i. 43, 51; *LS* ii. 289, 401-5), and for Kouphovouno the intensive site survey (Cavanagh, Mee and Renard 2004). There have been only limited excavations at the Amyklaion and at Vaphio-Palaiopyrgi. For these and for the site of Ayios Vasilios, the "extensive" survey by Waterhouse and Hope Simpson (*PL* i and ii) has now been supplemented by further investigation, especially by Banou (1996), who also discovered Mycenaean settlements on two hills near Skoura (Fig. 2, in left background), to north of which lay the small Mycenaean site and cemetery of Melathria (Cavanagh and Crouwel 1992).

Estimates derived from survey are by their nature provisional, since it is of course impossible to gauge the extent of a site solely on the basis of the distribution

¹ This article was completed in October 2008, before the publication of H.W. Catling, *Sparta: Menelaion I. The Bronze Age*. BSA Suppl. Vol. 45, London 2009, and before the announcement of the important recent finds at Ayios Vasilios, which include fragments of Linear B tablets. A. Vassilogamvrou and V.L. Aravantinos gave a preliminary account of the research at Ayios Vasilios in their lecture *Ayios Vasilios. Un nuovo centro palaziale miceneo nella valle dell'Eurota (Laconia)*, held in Rome (University of Rome-Sapienza) on December 9th 2009.

of the artefacts observed on its surface, let alone to establish the *density* of settlement within its (supposed) boundaries. But, even when only one or two persons are conducting a survey, and provided that the 'Visibility' of the surface is adequate (LS i. 47; cf. Hope Simpson 1984, 116), it may be possible to estimate approximately the dimensions of the 'spread' of these artefacts, using only tape measure, compass and pacing ('calibrating' the pace to approximately one metre). For example, the estimates by the University of Minnesota Expedition (UMME) in 1959 for two sites in the Pylos District were made using only such simple methods. The revised estimates for these same sites by the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project (PRAP) in 1992-1994 were made using more scientific means. For one site (Beylerbey) UMME gave c. 30,000 m² and PRAP gave c. 35,200 m². For the other (Ordines) UMME gave c. 20,000 m² and PRAP gave c. 21,000 m² (McDonald and Hope Simpson 1961, 242, 236; Davis *et al.* 1997, 423, 427; cf. Hope Simpson 2007, 113-14). These two sets of estimates show a remarkable degree of consensus, despite the differences in methodology and in the numbers of the participants involved (only two in 1959).

All such estimates are nevertheless subject to the other limitations inherent in surface survey, namely the constraints of differential 'Erosion', 'Burial of Sites' and 'Representation', i.e. "how well what is on the surface represents the archaeology of what is buried below" (LS i. 41, 47, cf. Hope Simpson 1985). As the leaders of the Laconia Survey comment, "The problem of representation can only be fully addressed by a programme of excavation" (LS i. 44). Often even minor excavation can yield substantial results in places where surface survey has provided little or no indication. For example, on Pseira, from a *total* examination in an area c. 10 m by c. 10 m behind the terrace wall at G 2 only *three* (Minoan) sherds were recovered. Subsequently a trench, only 4.0 m by 1.5 m, was excavated within this 100 m² area. A total of 312 Minoan sherds were found in the (sieved) soil from this trench. From this and other evidence from the trench (soil colours and consistencies and micromorphology) it was deduced that the Minoans had replenished this terrace with additional soil, probably from the middens of their settlement (Betancourt *et al.* 2005, 23-29, 251-4). At the Menelaion, among similar instances, the 1985 excavations, on a western terrace, c. 20 m below the level of the shrine, revealed well preserved Mycenaean walls, buried under a later accumulation, itself beneath a seventh century votive deposit (Catling 1986a, R.W.V. Catling 1986, 1992). From this it was deduced that Mycenaean buildings "... probably spread over the whole of this and the surrounding terraces." (R.W.V. Catling 1992, 57-58).

THE MAJOR MYCENAEAN SETTLEMENTS IN THE SPARTA PLAIN

The Menelaion

Since the final report of Catling's excavations will soon be published², comment here is confined to a few citations, from his preliminary reports (see Bibliography

² See n. 1

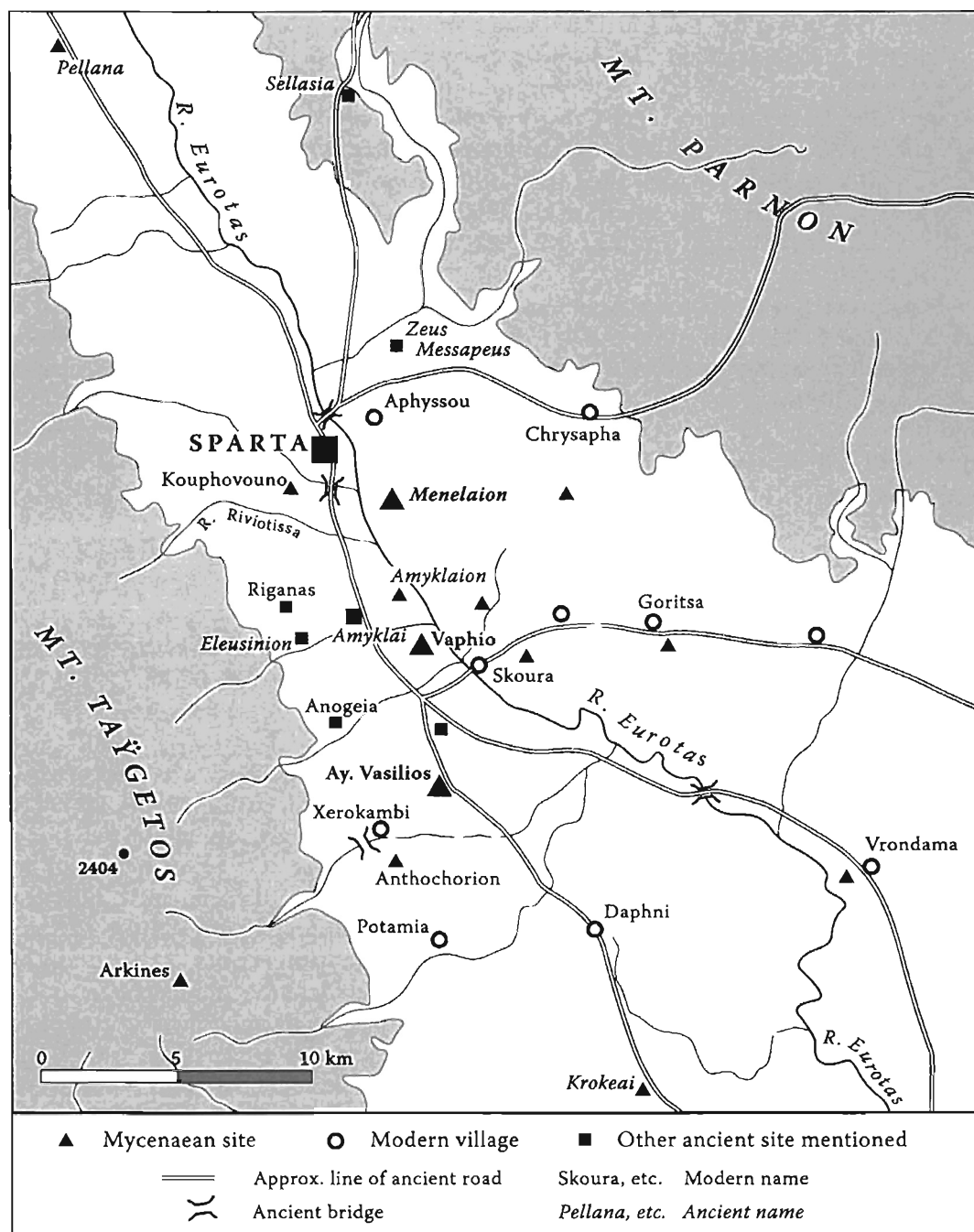


Fig. 1 – Sketch Map of the Eurotas Valley.

under H.W. Catling for 1974 to 1989) and from the summary by W. Cavanagh and J. Crouwel in chapter 4 of *The Laconia Survey* volume I. The Menelaion is there said to have been "... clearly an important administrative centre in LH IIIB2 as in earlier Mycenaean times" (*LS* i. 149). Catling is sure that this was the site of Mycenaean Sparta, "... in part because of the great size of the Mycenaean settlement there, partly because of the kinds of buildings we have found there, but chiefly because that was where the Spartans themselves, well over 2500 years ago, evidently believed it to have been." (Catling 1998, 26, citing Catling 1977a: plan and Catling 1974a, 1988).

But Cavanagh and Crouwel are in doubt as to "whether there was any single place in central Laconia comparable to Pylos in LH IIIB Messenia" (*LS* i. 149). And, more specifically, there still remains the question of which site (if any) in the Eurotas valley was the main centre in LH IIIA2-B1. This was the period of the *floruit* of many other Mycenaean settlements, but a time when the Menelaion was apparently in decline, after the abandonment of the LH IIIA1 "Mansion II" and before the major expansion of the settlement in LH IIIB2, the time of "Mansion III" (alias "Dawkins' House") and other major structures (*LS* i. 148-50).

Vaphio-Palaiopyrgi (Figs. 2-3)

PL i. 76-8; *GAC*, 109 (C 4); *MG*, 101-3 (E 4) with fig. 9 and pl. 19c; *ADelt* 37 (1982), Chr. 112 (Spyropoulos 1982); *LS* i. 146, 148, 150; *LS* ii. 290-1 (GG93); Banou (1996), 34-36, and Plan 3.

The site lies near the centre of the Sparta plain. Its surface was thoroughly searched in autumn 1956 by the author and David French, subsequently Director of the British School at Ankara (he is seen here in Fig. 3). Mycenaean sherds were found to be spread over an area of about 200,000 m². But of course it can not be assumed that the whole of this area was once covered by Mycenaean buildings. Indeed we must continually remind ourselves that *all* estimates derived from surface investigation alone can only be hypothetical and provisional (*MG*, 3). The top of the Palaiopyrgi hill has been severely eroded, and elsewhere the site has been much degraded by cultivation, which has probably also dispersed ancient material onto ground beyond the original boundaries of the site. By 1956 there had been considerable disturbance (e.g. for the planting of the young olive trees seen in Fig. 3); and this disturbance had also much enhanced the 'visibility' of the surface. The observations made then may provide some clues toward determining the probable size of the area actually used for Mycenaean buildings, especially in the LH IIIA2 and LH IIIB1 periods, which are well represented by surface sherds. It was estimated that considerable depth of soil probably remained in parts of the southeast slope, where also "some sizeable round stones" were observed. It was surmised that there may have been buildings here and "on the spur which runs south-southeast from the 'tower' and in an olive grove to west of it." (*PL* i. 78). Subsequent trial excavations by Spyropoulos have only partly clarified the picture (Spyropoulos 1982, 112); and he has not published any plans of this excavation or any details of the finds. On the top of Palaiopyrgi he found only traces of late MH or early LH structures (cf. *MG* 101 for LH IIA sherds found earlier). But on the flat ground ("ἐπίπεδο") to east of



Fig. 2 – Vaphio: Palaiopyrgi from the north.



Fig. 3 – Vaphio: Palaiopyrgi from the southeast.

the summit and above the steep part of the hill slope, a large trial trench revealed some remains of ordinary houses (Spyropoulos 1982, pl. 60a and b, views), together with LH IIIA and LH IIIB pottery. He said that the remains had been much disturbed by cultivation and that no stratigraphy could be observed. Nevertheless, Spyropoulos' excavations have at least confirmed the existence of Mycenaean buildings here. Taken together, the surface investigations and the trial excavations suggest that most of the upper (and flatter) part of the hill, comprising an area about 400 m north to south by about 300 m, or c. 120,000 m², may have been at least partly covered by Mycenaean buildings (most of this area is visible in Fig. 3). But until more thorough and extensive excavations are undertaken, we have no means of estimating the *density* of Mycenaean settlement within this (supposed) area³.

Amyklai: Ayia Kyriaki (the Amyklaion)

AE 1892, 1-26 (Tsountas 1892); *JdI* 33 (1918), 107-245 (Fiechter 1918); *AM* 52 (1927), 1-85 (Buschor and von Massow 1927); *PL* i. 74-6; *GAC*, 108-9 (C 3); *MG*, 103 (E 5); Demakopoulou 1982; *ADelt* 36 (1981), Chr. 126-9 (Spyropoulos 1981); Calligas 1992; Cartledge 1992; *LS* i. 143, 145, 149-50; *LS* ii. 290 (GG88 and GG92); Banou (1996), 31-32, 82-85.

Only about 2 km north of Vaphio: Palaipyrgi is the chapel of Ayia Kyriaki (Fig. 4), the site of the Amyklaion, the sanctuary of Apollo Amyklaios. This appears to have had Mycenaean antecedents, indicated by remains of wheel-made statuettes of bulls, and other animal figurines and elaborate Psi figurines (Coulson 1985; Calligas 1992). It is still not certain that there was an actual Mycenaean shrine here. The excavations now being conducted by Delivorrias will no doubt provide further clarification, although the site has been much disturbed and the stratigraphy is confused. Accordingly, there have been diverse interpretations. Dickinson believes that a hill sanctuary was established here, probably in LH IIIB2, and associated with the large scale habitation of the Menelaion site at this time (Dickinson 1992, 113 with n. 31, citing Demakopoulou 1982, chapter 1), but "without any kind of major structure" (Dickinson 2006, 225). Morgan estimates that the initial phase of cult activity at the Amyklaion spanned the LH IIIC period (Morgan 1999, 382-4, 390). Calligas, on the other hand, inclines to the view that the Mycenaean finds at the Amyklaion site were brought there "...in antiquity from elsewhere" (Calligas 1992, 39). The basis for Calligas' argument here appears to have been the (erroneous) assumption that there was no Mycenaean *settlement* at Ayia Kyriaki. But Mycenaean habitation here had already been indicated by a spread of LH surface sherds, on the southeast slope of the hill and along the ridge to the west, over an area estimated

³ Bintliff, 387, may indeed be correct in maintaining that "...it is unlikely that the lower slopes of the Vaphio ridges were built up with houses." But the reason he adduces, namely that the marl soil on these slopes would be too valuable (for growing crops) to be given up to buildings, is not realistic, since Mycenaean populations (and houses) would have been too small for this to matter (cf. *LS* i. 147-8).



Fig. 4 – The Amyklaion from the south.



Fig. 5 – Ayios Vasilios from the north.

as c. 200 m east to west by c. 120 m, i.e. c. 24,000 m² (PL i. 74-6 with fig. 3, sketch plan). Further confirmation has been provided by Spyropoulos' excavations. On the southwest flank of the Ayia Kyriaki hill he discovered walls, from 0.60 m to 1.20 m thick, of Mycenaean houses, of two building phases, LH IIIA and LH IIIB, with abundant pottery of good quality, including kylikes, pithoi and skyphoi, and LH III figurines (Spyropoulos 1981, pl. 60d. Pl. 60c shows some of the walls). At Spilakia, on the plateau c. 500 m southwest of Ayia Kyriaki, Spyropoulos excavated three chamber tombs, which also contained rich ceramic finds of the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods, including stirrup jars, piriform jars and alabastra (Spyropoulos 1981, figs. 2-4, sketch plans and elevations, with some of the pots shown schematically, and pl. 60a and b, views of dromoi and blocking walls). The finds are not further described, and the report is not accompanied by any map or by any plans of the settlement walls uncovered.

Discussion

Since the Amyklai and Vaphio Mycenaean settlements were only c. 2 km apart, they may have formed a single community. And Banou (1996, 76-78 and Plan 3) has reported signs of further chamber tombs (probable) in various groups *between* the two settlements. The *floruit* of both appears to have been in the LH IIIA and LH IIIB periods, and LH IIIA2 and LH IIIB1 are well represented at Palaiopyrgi. At the Menelaion, on the other hand, material of these periods is scarce (LS i. 149-50). It follows that, if there was an administration centre in the Sparta plain at this time, it must have been elsewhere. The district of Vaphio and Amyklai, with significant Mycenaean remains of the period in question and situated in the middle of the plain, would seem to be the most likely location; but a case could also be made for Ayios Vasilios (below), especially if it had circuit walls at the time⁴.

Ayios Vasilios

PL, i. 79-81, with sketch map, fig. 5; GAC, 110 (C 7); MG, 103 (E 7); LS i. 145-6, 150; LS ii. 291-2 (GG101); MFHDC 47; Banou 1996, 37-39 with Plan 6 and Abb. 19-24, 63-70, 75

Ayios Vasilios (Fig. 5) is the hill above, and to south of, the junction of the modern Sparta-Gythion road with the branch road to Xerokambi, and close to the line of the ancient road from Sparta to Gytheion (LS i. 152, Ill. 5.1). In 1956 LH III sherds, including several LH IIIB1, were numerous and widespread on the chapel hill and on part of the adjoining plateau on the southwest. These already marked

⁴ Spyropoulos (1982 and 1998) advocated Pellana as "the administrative centre of prehistoric Laconia", on the basis of the large and impressive rock-cut Mycenaean chamber tombs there. These are an interesting substitute for built tholos tombs and they make good use of the unusual large outcrops of soft rock here. But the scant traces of Mycenaean settlement on the hill of Palaiokastro at Pellanes are *not* impressive, and, since Pellana is c. 18 km distant from the Sparta plain, it would not have been a suitable location for such an "administrative centre".

this site as “second only to Palaiopyrgi in the Spartan plain” (PL i. 81). In 1990 Banou found a further and much denser proliferation of Mycenaean sherds here (LH IIIA-C, and including many very worn kylix stems), and over a larger area. As in 1956, the diagnostic pieces were mainly LH IIIA2 and LH IIIB1. There were also sporadic concentrations in parts of the eastern continuation of the hill range, on the east side of the Sparta-Gythion road, for a further distance of c. 500 m to east of the chapel. It is difficult to estimate the extent of the site on the basis of the distribution of these sherds, since they may have been spread further by deep ploughing (as seen in Abb. 23), evidently in parts for the planting of olives (e.g. Abb. 24) since 1956. But, by extrapolation from Banou’s sketch map (Plan 6) it may be deduced that Mycenaean sherds have now been found at the Ayios Vasilios site, over an area of c. 210,000 m², including, however, some lower ground⁵.

In 1956 remains of rubble foundations (apparently of ancient circuit walls) were observed on the northwest side of the chapel hill; and in two stretches, both about 16 m long, on the south side there were large rough blocks on rubble foundations (PL i. loc. cit., seen in the foreground of pl. 17a). Mycenaean sherds were observed in and around these foundations (MFHDC, 47). In 1990 Banou recorded these and other ‘Steinblöcke’ around the chapel hill and the adjoining plateau on the southwest (Banou 1996, 37, Plan b and Abb. 20-22).

II. THE ANCIENT TRADITIONS

Lakedaimon and Sparte

In the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, *Lakedaimon* (Λακεδαίμων) usually refers simply to the *homeland* of Menelaos and Helen (*Il.* iii. 239, 244, 387, 443; *Od.* iv. 313, 702; xiii. 414; xv. 1; xvii. 21; cf. CSHI, 74, 76 with nn. 1-4). It does not necessarily ever mean a city. And in the *Catalogue of the Ships*, as adopted and adapted in the *Iliad* (CSHI passim), *Lakedaimon* is accompanied by the epithets *κόιλη* and *κητώεσσα* (as in *Od.* iv. 1), which are not appropriate descriptions of a single settlement (*Il.* ii. 581; CSHI, 76; Cartledge 1979, 337-8). The epithet *κητώεσσα* has usually been taken to mean “full of ravines” or the equivalent. But it has been convincingly argued by S.P. Morris (1984) that it should instead be construed as “full of sea monsters” and as reflecting tales of the “perils of maritime Lakonia” in Greek tradition, and in accordance with the normal meaning of *κήτος* as a sea beast. Such a sailor’s perspective is also suggested by the Homeric epithet *ῥμαθόεις* (‘sandy’) applied to *Pylos*. But it seems less certain that the epithet *κόιλη* would *also* refer to the maritime aspect of Laconia (i.e. to describe the Laconian Gulf when approached from the south) or to the ‘hollows’ in which the sea monsters might be imagined as lurking, rather than to the Eurotas valley, lying between the high mountain chains of Taygetos and Parnon.

⁵ The much larger figures given on Banou 1996, 100 for sherd distributions at this site and at the Menelaion and Palaiopyrgi are clearly exaggerated.

Sparte (*Il.* ii. 582, Σπάρτη) in the *Odyssey* usually refers to the *home* of Menelaos and Helen itself, i.e. to the site of their palace (*Od.* 1. 93, 285; ii. 214, 327, 359; iv. 10; xi. 460; xiii. 412. In *Od.* xiii. 412-415 *Sparte* is *not* called a “country”, nor is *Lakedaimon* there called the “home” of Menelaos, *pace* Chapin and Hitchcock 2007, 257, where Murray’s mis-translations are accepted). *Sparte* is also frequently coupled with *Pylos* in the *Odyssey*. In the only other mention of *Sparte* in the *Iliad*, it is one of the three cities most dear to Hera, “Argos and Sparta and Mycenae of the wide streets” (*Il.* iv. 51-2). It was natural for the incoming Dorians to adopt the name *Lakedaimon* for their country and the name *Sparta* (the Doric form of *Sparte*) for their capital. But this capital, the classical Sparta, was clearly a *new* foundation (Cartledge 1979, 75-101; Cartledge 1992, 49-55; *LS* i. 153). Mycenaean finds at Sparta have been few [*PL* i. 70; *GAC*, 108 (C 2); *MG*, 101 (E 2)], although excavations here by the British School have been both widespread and thorough. The recent Sparta excavations, from 1988 onwards, (as reported in *AR*) have revealed no further evidence relating to Mycenaean habitation. At the Menelaion, on the other hand, the excavations have now provided conclusive proof, in the form of inscribed dedications, that this site was known to the ancient Spartans as the Sparta of Helen and Menelaos (Catling 1998, 26. For the dedications see Catling 1976a, 1977a, 1986a; Catling and Cavanagh 1976; Catling, R.W.V. 1986; *LS* i. 218-20, 231; *LS* ii. 220-22, 405). It follows that it may now be regarded as most probably the *Sparte* reflected in the *Catalogue of the Ships* in the *Iliad* (*Il.* ii. 582). At least there are now fewer grounds for the uncertainty formerly expressed (e.g. in *CSHI* 74-76) concerning this correlation.

According to Herodotos (vi. 61. 3), Isocrates (x. 62-63) and Pausanias (iii. 19. 9, 20. 1-2), the Menelaion was in the place or district (χωρίον in Pausanias; cf. *LS* ii. 382) called Therapne (or Therapnai). And both Polybios (v. 18 and 22; cf. *LS* ii. 401) and Livy (xxxiv. 28) give the name Menelaion (Menelaëum) for the height on which the sanctuary of Helen and Menelaos stood. According to Pausanias, Therapne was named after a daughter of Lelex (Paus. iii. 19. 9), the legendary first king of Laconia (Paus. iii. 1. 1). According to Dickinson, the “old” (presumably here meaning “Mycenaean”) name for the Mycenaean settlement on the Menelaion ridge was “most probably Therapne” (Dickinson 1986, 31 and n. 34). And he further asserts that Therapne is “an impeccably ancient-sounding name,” which might be expected to have been “inherited from the prehistoric period” (Dickinson 1999, 209). But the earliest known mention of Therapne is in a fragment of Alkman (Page 1962, 34 Fr. 14b; Calame 1983, 40; Campbell 1988, 406; *LS* i. 18; *LS* ii. 382), where it is described as “the holy shrine of well-towered Serapna” (ναὸς ἄγνός ἐν πύργῳ Σεράπνας). This is indeed an apt depiction of the Menelaion ridge, as seen from Sparta [it is echoed in Pindar, *Isthm.* i. 30-32, where Therapne is called “high-placed” (ὕψιτεδον)]. This fragment is the only *direct* citation of Alkman which has come down to us. The citation was by Priscian, *de metr. Ter.* 34 (iii. 428 Keil); and both Harpocrates and the Suda (s.v. Θεράπναι) testify that Alkman spoke of Therapne. Σεράπνας is taken to be the correct (Doric dialect) spelling (*LS* i. 18). Σεράπνα is also restored in Fr. 8. 4, and Θεράπναις occurs at least once in Fr. 7 (Campbell 1988, 384, 396). Pindar (*Isthm.* i. 30-32) calls Therapne “high-placed,” but also (*Nem.* x. 55-57) with “hollows” (γυάλοις). In three of Pindar’s odes (in the two cited and in *Pyth.* xi. 61-64) Therapne is associated with the Dioskouroi (Frazer, *Pausanias* III, 359; *PL* i. 69;

cf. *LS* i. 231 n. 162, where it is conjectured that this association of Therapne with the Dioskouroi “may already be current in Alkman”).

Pausanias describes Therapne as a *chorion* (χωρίον) which suggests a *district* rather than a settlement (cf. *LS* ii. 382). For settlements (especially *former* settlements) Pausanias often uses the term *polis* (πόλις), even for settlements of small or unknown size, many of which would have been only villages⁶. There are no signs of *habitation* on the Menelaion ridge *after* the Mycenaean period but only of the use of the site as a shrine. “...Therapnai. The place referred to by this name did not correspond to a settlement or even to a settled landscape, as years of archaeological investigation have clearly proved” (*LS* i. 233 n. 14). Herodotos and Isocrates both describe the Menelaion as *in* (ἐν) Therapne. And that the Menelaion site did not itself constitute the *whole* of Therapne is indicated also by the fact that Pausanias himself saw the spring (or fountain) called Messeis *in* Therapne (Paus. iii. 20. 1, “ἐν Θεράπνῃ δὲ κρήνην τὴν Μεσσηίδα ἰδὼν οἶδα”). Obviously there could not have been such a spring on the Menelaion ridge itself; and there are only a few feeble (and seasonal) “seeps” at its western foot. The spring, however, was surely large enough to be famous (for the name cf. *Il.* vi. 457). The authors of the *Laconia Survey* say (*LS* ii. 382) that they can not identify the Messeis spring. But they report (*ibid.*) a large spring “...at the top of Aphyssou village, now superseded by a reservoir supplied with water pumped from the Eurotas...”. This certainly seems a more plausible location for the Messeis spring than that suggested by Bintliff (382-3, 408, 412-14), high up on the plateau above Aphyssou. There is no justification for Bintliff’s claim that his identification is supported by the “evidence” of Alkman and Pindar. And it is unlikely that Pausanias would have visited a site so far from his route to the Menelaion. Perhaps, however, by the time of Pausanias, the name Therapne might also have been applied to some of the area which is now part of modern Aphyssou. In the vicinity of the village the *Laconia Survey* discovered classical farmsteads, Hellenistic hamlets and a Roman hamlet and farm, but no site which could be characterized as a village (*LS* ii. 380-89; cf. *LS* i. 157-337 *passim*).

Amyklai and Pharis

The historicity of the name Amyklai (*Il.* ii. 584, Ἀμύκλαι) in the *Catalogue of the Ships* can surely not be doubted. The Amyklai of the historic period (and presumably also that of Pausanias’ time) occupied a considerable area to east of modern Amyklai (formerly Sklavochori) and to west of the Amyklaion. A rough estimate of the size of this area, based on the spread of potsherds observed on the surface in 1956, was “at least 2 kilometres north to south and 1 kilometre east to west” [*PL* i. 82 (No. 3); *LS* ii. 290 (GG92. Amykles)]. But presumably not all of this area was occupied by dwellings. As R.W.V. Catling remarks, “There is no unambiguous reference in the literary sources to any named settlement in the Sparta plain occupied in the historical

⁶ For a more realistic classification of ancient settlements see *LS* i. 243-8. As the authors remark, “the term *polis* has proved notoriously difficult to pin down...”, cf. Shipley 2004 *passim*.

period, apart from Sparta and Amyklai... Pharis and Bryseai seem to have been no more than place-names in this era..." [LS i. 233, cf. 230; Shipley 2004 (Pharis and Bryseai), 574 (Bryseai)].

As is pointed out above, it is reasonable to suppose that the Mycenaean settlements at the Amyklaion and at Vaphio: Palaiopyrgi formed a single community, since the two sites (and their accompanying tombs) are so close together. Allen (1921, 74) certainly assumed this association; and it was advocated by Hope Simpson and Lazenby (*CSHI*, 78; and there *contradicting* *PL* i. 78 and *PL* ii. 173-5). The identification of Pharis (*Il.* ii. 582, Φᾶρις) with Vaphio has long been a popular assumption [e.g. Frazer, *Pausanias* III, 363-4; *PL* locc. cit.; Bintliff, 427-33; *LS* ii. 290-1 (although the authors of the latter two publications had not taken *CSHI* into consideration)]. But the proximity of Palaiopyrgi to the Amyklaion, when considered in relation to Pausanias' account, appears to rule out this identification. Pausanias denotes Pharis as a *polis*, "a city in Laconia which was once inhabited." (Paus. iii. 20. 3). According to Pausanias, Pharis was reached after crossing [from the north] the river Phellia [the Riviotissa stream? (Bintliff, 432-3)] "and going past Amyklai along the road which goes directly towards the sea" (... διαβᾶσι δὲ αὐτόθεν ποταμὸν Φελλίαν, παρὰ Ἀμύκλας ἰοῦσιν εὐθείαν ὡς ἐπὶ θάλασσαν Φᾶρις πόλις ἐν τῇ Λακωνικῇ ποτε ᾤκειτο ...). This indicates that Pharis was said to have been on or near the road from Sparta to Gytheion, since the same words, "towards the sea" (ἐπὶ θάλασσαν) are used for the journey from Sparta to Gytheion via Krokeai (Paus. iii. 21. 4) and the same description of the road as "direct" (τῆς ἐς Γύθειον εὐθείας, Paus. iii. 21. 5). And Pausanias certainly took this road, since he visited Krokeai and saw the *Lapis Lacedaemonius* quarries [Paus. iii. 21. 4, cf. *LS* ii. 295 (JJ119, JJ120, JJ121)]. The road from Sparta to Gytheion would have passed Amyklai at some point between it and the Amyklaion, i.e. to *west* of the Amyklaion hill itself and the plateau [with the excavated Mycenaean chamber tombs] between it and Palaiopyrgi (see *PL* i. 75, fig. 3, sketch map of the Amyklaion area). This road would have passed about a kilometre to *west* of Palaiopyrgi (as shown on Fig. 1, and on *LS* i. 152, Ill. 5. 1). On the map in Armstrong, Cavanagh and Shipley (p. 96) the road is placed too far to the east, presumably on the assumption that it here passed to *east* of Palaiopyrgi, i.e. *between* Palaiopyrgi and the Eurotas. But there are no recorded traces of *ancient* roads here [confusion seems to have been generated by unwarranted extrapolation from Leake's account of his journey from Sparta to Helos (Leake, *TM* i. 192-5). See note below]. Unlike Amyklai, Palaiopyrgi has shown no signs of habitation in any period *subsequent* to the Mycenaean. And the existence of the Mycenaean site and its tholos tomb may well have been unknown at the time of Pausanias' visit to the Amyklaion. If he had been informed of any ancient remains at Palaiopyrgi, we would expect to find a mention of these either with or next to his detailed account of Amyklai. Instead, this account is immediately followed by his description of the features along the road to Therapne (Paus. iii. 19. 6-8).

For the "once inhabited" *polis* of Pharis, therefore, we should look for a site near the line of the ancient road from Sparta to Gytheion, but sufficiently far from Amyklai to have been mentioned *separately*. The site of Ayios Vasilios is c. 4 km distant from Palaiopyrgi and close to, if not indeed on, the line of the ancient road.

The identification of Ayios Vasilios as the site of Pausanias' Pharis (as argued in *CSHI*, 74) is supported both by the topography and by the archaeological evidence⁷.

Note on Leake's Journey from Sparta to Helos

In 1805, on his journey from Sparta to Helos, Leake (*TM* i. 192-5) first followed the west bank of the Eurotas, past PalaioPyrgi, and then crossed to the east bank at Vasilo-Perama, near the foot of Lykovouni (see map of Leake's journeys in Laconia, Wagstaff 1992, 282, fig. 77). The traces which he describes of wheel ruts in the rock (also briefly mentioned in Leake *Pel.* 165) were over 10 km further to the southeast, at various points between Tsasi (now Peristeri) and Grammoussa (now Ambelochori) and between Tsasi and Skala. In 1956 these traces were followed for "practically the whole distance between Grammoussa and Tsasi" (*PL* i. 85 n. 73 and pl. 18(c); *LS* ii. 297 (KK341)). Leake's measurements (given by him in feet and inches) were confirmed. As recorded in Hope Simpson's 1956 notebook, the wheel ruts were from 0.10 m to 0.20 m wide at the top, c. 1.20 m apart (inner edge to inner edge), and at one point c. 0.30 m deep (but here only c. 0.06 m wide at the bottom of the rut). Leake thought that these wheel tracks were "vestiges probably of the ancient carriage road which led from Sparta to Helos, and to the towns of the Laconia gulf." Hope Simpson in 1956 also assumed that this road was of the historic period, "...To west of Tsasi there is a branch running westward towards Skala" (*PL* i. loc. cit.). But from the depth of the wheel ruts, and from their location and orientation, it appears much more likely that they are in fact part of the *medieval* route from the port of Skala to Chrysapha, via Grammoussa, Geraki, Zoupaina, Goritsa and Perpeni, at a time when this road would have had heavy traffic and heavy loads, especially when Mistra was the capital (cf. P. Armstrong, in *LS* i. 341-3, particularly the map, Ill. 7. 1).

Bryseai and Messapeai

If the proposed identification of Pharis as the site at Ayios Vasilios is accepted as probable, it follows that the former identification of this site as Bryseai (*PL* i. 81) should be discarded. From Pausanias' vague indications we may deduce that Bryseai was to south of Sparta and not far from Taygetos (Paus. iii. 20. 2-5). But it is obvious

⁷ Banou (1996, 36, 82-85) locates Homeric Amyklai at PalaioPyrgi (in substantial agreement with my arguments above), but proposes the site of Vouno Panayias (to east of Shoura) for Homeric Pharis (78-80, 82-85), Ayios Vasilios for Homeric Messe (86-88) and Arkines in Mt. Taygetos for Homeric Bryseiai (88-90). These last three proposed identifications are contrary to the indications given by Pausanias. Vouno Panayias is *not* on the road from Sparta to Gytheion; Pausanias' Bryseai is reached after *leaving* Taygetos (see below); and, if Homeric Messe is *not* Pausanias' 'Messa' (iii. 25.9-10) to north of Hippola (in the Mani), its location is unknown (Strabo viii. 5.3, cf. *CSHI* 76-77). A connection of Messa with Messapeus would involve a false etymology.

Chapin and Hitchcock (2007) also discuss Homer's *Catalogue of the Ships*, "in a good faith effort to mine the ancient texts for information about the cities in the realm of Menelaus". But they do not offer any firm conclusions concerning the locations of the places; and their restrained scepticism does not go much further than the "honest agnosticism" recommended by Cartledge (1979, 335-339).

that Pausanias did not visit in person most of the sites he lists in and around the Sparta plain, but only the more accessible, such as the Amyklaion, the Menelaion, and those at Sparta itself. After discussing Pharis, he backtracks abruptly by next mentioning the road from the Phellia toward Taÿgetos. It is quite evident that Pausanias never took this road himself and that his discussions (which follow immediately after this and with the same abruptness) of the Zeus Messapeus sanctuary and Bryseai were constructed from hearsay. The 'visitor(s)' to these places are indicated by Pausanias *impersonally*, and in the dative case ("...ἔστι δὲ...", "...ἀπιούσιν..." , "...ἔστιν ὁρᾶν..."). He merely lists the sites and sights which may be seen, in the manner of a Guidebook (e.g. the shrine of Dionysos at Bryseai, with an image in the open, and an image inside which only women are allowed to see). Throughout this whole section (Paus. iii. 20. 2-6) Pausanias is mainly following the sequence in the Homeric *Catalogue of the Ships*, where the line beginning with *Bryseai* [*Il.* ii. 583 (Βρυσειά)] follows the line beginning with *Pharis*, and is itself followed by the line with *Amyklai* and *Helos*, which he cites (Paus. iii. 20. 6). The mention of the road from Phellia towards Taÿgetos is in the nature of an afterthought and a break in this sequence. So there is no justification for any argument that Pausanias' sanctuary of Messapian Zeus *must* be located close to the Phellia or just south of Sparta. But neither can it be the same as the sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus excavated at Tsakona near Aphyssou by the British School under H.W. Catling [Catling 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 2000; cf. *LS* i. xxix (corrigenda), 153, 156, 220, 286, 309; *LS* ii. 221-2, 225, 369, 390-1; *SEG* xxxix. 376, xl. 358; Catling and Shipley]. Pausanias describes *his* sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus as "in the plain". And it was apparently close to the foothills of Taÿgetos, since he then tells us that "...after leaving Taÿgetos from here you come to the place [*chorion*] where there was once a city [*polis*] of Bryseai..." (Paus. iii. 20. 3, "ἐντεῦθεν ἔστιν ἀπιούσιν ἐκ τοῦ Ταῦγέτου χωρίον ἔνθα πόλις ποτὲ ᾤκειτο Βρυσεάι"), and that "...Above Bryseai rises Taleton, a peak of Taÿgetos. This they call sacred to Helios..." (Paus. iii. 20. 4, "ἄκρα δὲ τοῦ Ταῦγέτου Ταλετὸν ὑπὲρ Βρυσεῶν ἀνέχει. ταύτην Ἡλίου καλοῦσιν ἱερὰν..."). Frazer and others have proposed the identification of Taleton as the peak of Prophitis Ilias, the summit of Mt. Taÿgetos (Frazer, *Pausanias* III, 364). At c. 2404 m a.s.l., it is by far higher than all its other peaks. It is therefore naturally, and conspicuously, the first to be illuminated by the rising sun (Helios). And Prophitis Ilias, seen from the east, appears to stand directly behind Xerokambi [*CSHI*, 77, cf. *PL* i. 81. This alone would seem to rule out Ayios Ioannis Riganas, *LS* ii. 290 (GG339), near Katsarou, c. 5 km south of Sparta]. Pausanias next discusses places in Taÿgetos itself. This discussion is interrupted by a *lacuna*, following which the Sanctuary of Eleusinian Demeter is named (Paus. iii. 20. 5), but (and probably because of the *lacuna*) with no indication of its location. Now, however, the position of this sanctuary has actually become our fixed point, since it has been firmly identified at Kalyvia tis Sochas by the British School's excavations [Dawkins 1910, 12-14; Cook and Nicholls 1950, 261-281; *LS* i. 231, 282; *LS* ii. 291 (GG95)]. It is therefore unfortunate that the *lacuna* has denied us the opportunity of comparing the *actual* location of this sanctuary with Pausanias' whole account (Catling and Shipley, 95-6 and n. 39, categorize the *lacuna* as "insignificant", but give no reasons for this assessment). After the discussion of the Eleusinion, it appears that Pausanias was detailing places to the south of it, and ostensibly with greater precision, since

the main intervals between the places are given in stades. First we have the Lapithaion, "fifteen stades from the Eleusinion" and "in Taygetos," and then Dereion, "not far off," followed by Harpleia, "about twenty stades after Dereion and bordering on the plain." (Paus. iii. 20. 7). If Dereion is correctly placed at Anogeia [LS ii. 291 (GG118)] and Harpleia is at Xerokambi, LS ii. 293 (GG107)], an ancient road must be presumed here, at least between the Eleusinion and the Xerokambi bridge and southward from it. The bridge is thought to be of the first century BC or the first century AD. [Höper 1981; Armstrong, Cavanagh and Shipley, 297, 305; LS i. 152, Ill. 5. 1, 245, Ill. 5. 5; LS ii. 293 (GG107)].

A location for Bryseai previously suggested (*CSHI*, 77) is the site of the chapel of Analipsis, near Anthochorion, about 2 km to south of Xerokambi, and on the road to Goranoi. The chapel stands on a low mound, formed by the debris of successive periods of activity on the site, the rest of which is comparatively flat ground. In 1962 Ch. Christou excavated several small trenches around all sides of the chapel and in the adjacent field (of Lykourgos Phorbis), where levelling of the field had revealed archaic sherds, together with some lead figurines, said to be of the kind found at Artemis Orthia and at the Menelaion. Christou published only three brief reports of his excavations [in *ADelt* (Christou 1962a) and in identical accounts in *PAE* (Christou 1962b) and in *Ergon* (Christou 1962c)]. Some further information on the finds was later provided by P. Cartledge and O. Dickinson [Cartledge 1979, 83-4, 88, 99, 191, 338; cf. Dickinson in *GAC*, 110 (C 8) and *MG*, 103 (E 8); LS i. 231-3; LS ii. 293 (GG108)]. The stratigraphy was best preserved near the fence between the chapel and the Phorbis field. In the lowest level here (from c. 3.50 m to c. 2.40 m down) the pottery ranged from LH IIA to LH IIIB, including an abundance of tall kylikes. LH IIIC may also be present (Cartledge 1979, 83-4, but not confirmed by Dickinson in *GAC*, 110); but it is generally agreed that there was no continuity here into the Dark Age. Above the Mycenaean stratum there was a disturbed level (from c. 2.40 m to c. 2.0 m down) containing Laconian Protogeometric and Geometric pottery but also some Mycenaean. Above this was the richest level (from c. 2.0 m to c. 1.20 m down), the archaic, with 'characteristic' pottery and some lead figurines. The next level (from c. 1.20 m to c. 0.80 m down) contained classical and Hellenistic black-glazed pottery. Above this was an 'unmixed' Byzantine stratum. A trench to north of the chapel, and in the middle of the site produced a mass of sherds 'of all periods' i.e. of all the periods listed above but mixed together. The whole site was estimated by Christou to be about 500 m in circumference and of an extent greater than that of the modern village of Anthochorion, as attested by sherds of all these periods and remains of buildings and foundations. Despite the presence of the plentiful archaic material, and especially the lead figurines, Christou concluded nevertheless that his excavations around the Analipsis chapel had *not* shown that an ancient shrine lay below this Christian church.

A stamped tile fragment, subsequently found here on the surface, "a chance find in the area of Christou's excavations at Anthochori", and published by Taiphakos (1975, 1976, 1977) appears to refer to Messapian Zeus [Catling and Shipley 195-6, citing Taiphakos 1977; *SEG* xxvi. 460, xxxix. 373; LS i. 231-2; LS ii. 293 (GG108); Shipley 2004, 572, 575]. The inscription is dated by Taiphakos to the second century B.C.

His reading of the letters which are preserved is:

]ΣΙΟΙΔΙΟΣ[
]ΠΕΟΣΦΑΡ[

His restoration of the text is:

δαμό]στοι Διὸς
Μεσσα]πέος φαρ[

The beginning of the last word suggests a connection with Pharis. Catling and Shipley (195, n. 40) say that in Taiphakos' photograph of the inscription "the last letter looks more like gamma or epsilon." But it would be difficult to suggest an appropriate continuation of this word if either ΦΑΓ or ΦΑΕ were to be read here.

The tile fragment certainly appears to indicate the probability of the presence, either at Anthochorion or nearby, of a sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus. And this sanctuary, according to Pausanias' indications, was not far from Bryseai (Paus. iii. 20. 3, cited above). But the objects found in Christou's excavations at Anthochorion do not provide support for the location of a sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus at the Analipsis site itself. The mould-made lead figurines found here (Cartledge 1979, 181, cf. 191) differ, both in material and in kind, from the hand-made terracotta statuettes (ithyphallic etc.) found at the Tsakona shrine of Zeus Messapeus, where the few lead objects found were mostly parts of wreaths (Catling, 1990b, 30). And, in contrast to the Analipsis site, Tsakona is a prominent hilltop, from which "...the location of the Athena Chalkioikos and Orthia sanctuaries in Sparta are clearly visible, as are the Menelaion and the Amyklaion." (Catling 1990a, 22, cf. Catling 1990b, 16-18). The identification of the Tsakona shrine as that of Zeus Messapeus has been established both by the fragmentary stamped roof-tiles, "no later than the first century BC," from the east half of Building I [Catling 1990a with fig. 66 (photo); Catling 1990b, 32-5; *SEG* xl. 358; *LS* i. 286 and n. 52], and by the fragments of a Lakonian cup of the first half of the sixth century BC found previously by the Lakonia Survey on the southwest slope of the Tsakona ridge, only 250 to 300 metres southwest of the shrine (Catling and Shipley; *SEG* xxxix. 376). The main period of use of the shrine was from the later sixth century BC to the mid-fourth century BC (Catling 1998, 27, Catling 2000; *LS* i. 220, 309). Between this period and the modest revival in the third and fourth centuries AD, attested by the mould-made lamp fragments (Catling 1990b, 33-35; *LS* i. 309; *SEG* xl. 359), the only signs of activity are the stamped roof-tiles. Since there is no material datable to either the first or the second centuries AD, the shrine may not have been in use at this time, when Sparta was no longer a state, but only part of a Roman province. Catling observes two "distinct" types of activity at the Tsakona shrine. The dedications of weapons, armour and athletic gear etc. suggest to him "a standard cult directed to a male deity" by male worshippers. He describes the other main function of the shrine as "something akin to a fertility clinic" (Catling 2000), as indicated especially by the very large number of terracotta statuettes with oversize phalloi. Catling asks, "Are we dealing

with a Spartan attempt to respond to the problem of *oliganthropia*?" (Catling 1990b, 34-35, cf. Catling 1998, 27). Sparta's power and her survival (especially in the sixth to fourth centuries BC) depended on her warriors. Her army had to be kept up to strength. Perhaps at this shrine there was no dichotomy between the worship of Zeus as a Warrior God and the invocation of his sexual potency. Obviously such a cult, devoted to the supremacy of, and to the preservation of, the Spartan state, would not have been appropriate for the Sparta of the first and second centuries AD, now at peace and under Roman rule; indeed it would probably have been forbidden. "...It may be that the cult, like the Menelaos and Helen cult, was not one that appealed to Rome. Perhaps it conveyed nationalistic overtones too overtly for even the most benevolent Imperial patron of Sparta to swallow." (Catling 1990b, 34).

According to Stephanos of Byzantion, Theopompos, a historian of the fourth century BC, in the fifty-seventh book of his *Philippica*, named Messapeai as a place (*chorion*) in Laconia where Zeus was honoured:

Μεσσαπέαι, χωρίον Λακωνικῆς. Τὸ ἔθνικὸν Μεσσαπέυς·
οὕτω γὰρ ὁ Ζεὺς ἐκεῖ τιμᾶται. Θεόπομπος ν.5.

(Steph. Byz. s.v. Μεσσαπέαι)

There is, however, no reason to assume that Theopompos and Pausanias were both referring to the *same* sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus. Since the Tsakona sanctuary was *near* Sparta (only four and a half kilometres distant), flourished in the fifth century BC, and was not abandoned until the mid-fourth century BC, it seems much more likely that Theopompos was referring to *this* sanctuary of Messapian Zeus rather than to a remote sanctuary (i.e. near Anthochorion), some fifteen kilometres south of Sparta. Conversely, it would not be surprising if Pausanias' informant(s) did not know about the (former?) Tsakona sanctuary. Pausanias describes Bryseai both as a *chorion* (in his time) and as a former *polis*; and the site of Analipsis near Anthochorion was (according to Christou) large enough to qualify as a *polis* in the sense implied by Pausanias, i.e. it would have been at least a large village. And it is in a location which could be described as "below Taleton, a peak of Taÿgetos," if this is correctly identified as the summit of Mt. Taÿgetos. And, if Analipsis was the site of Bryseai, it follows that Pausanias' shrine of Zeus Messapeus would not have been at this same location but, as Pausanias indicates, close by, also on the plain but nearer to the foothills of Taÿgetos.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Special abbreviations:

- Armstrong, Cavanagh and Shipley = P. Armstrong, W.G. Cavanagh and G. Shipley, Crossing the river: reflections on routes and bridges in Laconia from the archaic to Byzantine periods, *BSA* 87 (1992), 293-310.
- Bintliff = J.L. Bintliff, *Natural Environment and Human Settlement in Prehistoric Greece* (BAR Int. Ser. 28, i and ii; Oxford, 1977).
- Catling and Shipley = R.W.V. Catling and D.G.J. Shipley, Messapian Zeus: an early sixth-century inscribed cup from Lakonia, *BSA* 84 (1989), 187-200.
- Cavanagh and Walker = W.G. Cavanagh and S.E.C. Walker (eds), *Sparta in Laconia: The Archaeology of a City and its Countryside (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)* (BSA Studies, 4; London, 1998).
- CSHI = R. Hope Simpson and J.F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of the Ships in Homer's Iliad* (Oxford, 1970).
- Frazer, *Pausanias* = J.G. Frazer, *Pausanias' Description of Greece* (London, 1898; repr. New York 1965).
- GAC = R. Hope Simpson and O.T.P.K. Dickinson, *A Gazetteer of Aegean Civilisation in the Bronze Age, i: The Mainland and Islands* (SIMA 52; Göteborg, 1979; Paul Åströms Förlag).
- Leake, *Pel* = W.M. Leake, *Peloponnesiaca: A Supplement to Travels in the Morea* (London, 1846; repr. Amsterdam, 1968).
- Leake, *TM* = id., *Travels in the Morea*, i - iii (London, 1830; repr. Amsterdam, 1967).
- LS i = W. Cavanagh, J. Crouwel, R.W.V. Catling and G. Shipley, *Continuity and Change in a Greek Rural Landscape: The Laconia Survey, i: Methodology and Interpretation* (Annual of the British School at Athens supp. vol. 26; London, 2002).
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