

that no single Ionian community had the established status of Athens. Even so, tradition suggests that Ephesus won preeminence as the center of the early league: its founder and first king, Androklos, might very well have emulated his father, King Kodros of Athens.

Both internal developments and outside pressures would cause paths to diverge as the Dark Age progressed through the ninth and eighth centuries. Regional distinctions apply as much to Attica and to the Ionian communities as they do to other parts of the Greek world.¹¹ In fact, Athens appears to have become more, rather than less, isolated as events quickened in many parts of the mainland, and by the eighth century its preeminence had disappeared. Even within Attica, Attic graves surpassed Athenian examples in their richness (Whitley 1991, 57). A declaration of independence from Athens is detectable in the development of hero cults in several communities that “chose now to emphasize their local origins, their local autochthony, rather than their links with Athens” (Whitley 1991, 60). Traditional accounts echo the material evidence by telling of the aristocratic factionalism so prominent in the Archaic period of Athenian history (Sealey 1960). From roughly 730 Athens was no longer an outward-looking city with major maritime and commercial interests; Attica now circumscribed its concerns. At the same time, Athenian artistic initiative was lost.

Consequently, conditions in Attica came to resemble those prevailing throughout most of the Greek mainland, even though the similarity appeared only late in the Dark Age. During the early Dark Age, an unusual twilight persisted in Athens, not the brilliance of thirteenth-century Mycenae but an unusual—perhaps unique—situation by comparison with much of the Aegean world. It was reflected in cultural, perhaps political, control over other parts of Attica and adjacent regions of mainland Greece. The perceived security offered by Athens drew others to the area, as tradition recalls. And from the late eleventh century, the community was a conduit for the movement of ideas, products, and people into and out of Athens. Although these traits disappeared, the earlier achievement was remembered through oral tradition and marked by physical evidence, not to be entirely forgotten. In fact, Athens’ strength during the early Dark Age would be a significant factor in its huge, better-known role in the Classical period.

4



Lefkandi

*New Heroes
of the Ninth Century*

We have seen how three communities coped, or failed to cope, with the profound reversal of fortune dealt to them in the closing decades of the Bronze Age, examining the strategies used by each community to make a new life in the face of changed circumstances. Many sites, some of the most powerful among them, suffered destruction, often on a massive scale, and when the inhabitants cleared away the rubble and reconstituted their communities, they did so, as at Mycenae, at a reduced level, maintaining a shadowy existence among the ruins. Scores of other communities were abandoned, their inhabitants fleeing to the hills or overseas; when these sites were again occupied the settlers may have had no memory of the old community, and the old blood lines were most likely intermingled with new ones. In the case of Dark Age Nichoria, there are indications both of continuity with the old population and of the addition of new elements. A handful of sites managed to weather the storm, suffering only slight social and

economic dislocation, and even, as in the case of Athens, seeming to profit from the straitened circumstances.

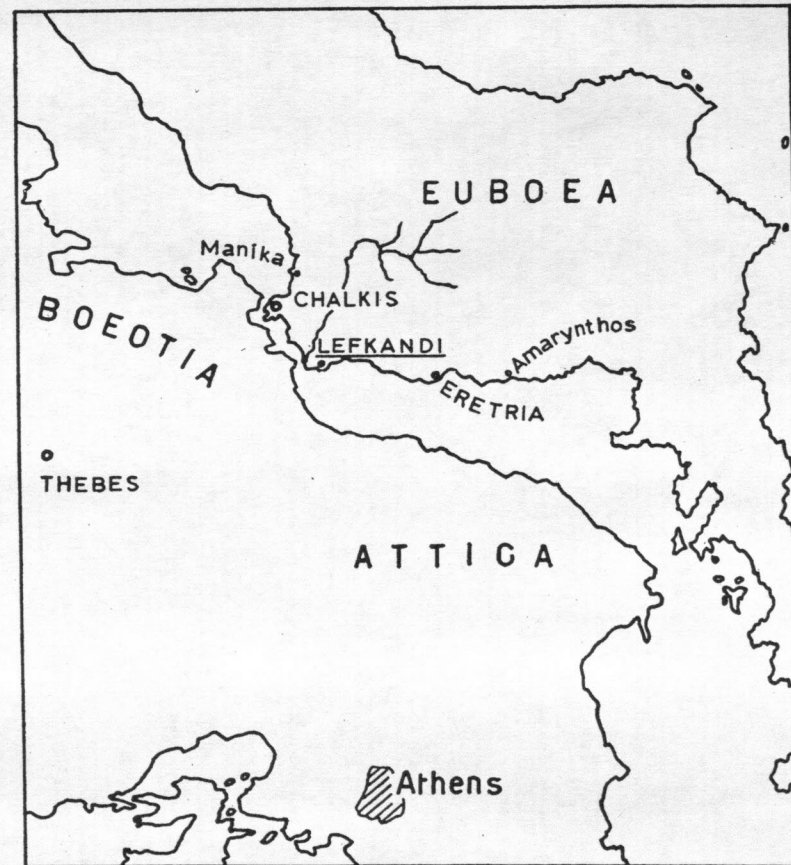
The site of Lefkandi on the island of Euboea bears certain similarities to each of the communities we have considered. Like Mycenae, this community suffered multiple destructions during the twelfth century and, like Nichoria, was eventually abandoned. However, its similarity with Athens may be most significant: like its neighbor, Lefkandi was able to withstand, or was bypassed by, the upheavals occurring at the end of the thirteenth century. Moreover, its proximity to Athens seems to have drawn Lefkandi into the sphere of Athenian cultural dynamism. An ongoing dialectic between cultural isolationism and expansionism is paralleled by a waning and waxing of Athenian influence.

Not simply outside influence but internal developments as well pushed this tiny community to reach well beyond its own territory, away from the island of Euboea and even well outside the Aegean. Lefkandi's precociousness is an early glimpse of the energies of the Archaic *poleis*.

The Site

At over 150 kilometers, the island of Euboea is prodigiously long, lying close to the mainland, opposite east Locris and south coastal Thessaly in the north and Attica in the south. Despite its proximity to the mainland, however, the island from prehistoric times has maintained periodic connections with the Sporades islands to the northeast (particularly Skyros), the west coast of Anatolia in the east, the Cyclades and Crete in the south, and Cyprus and the Levant in the southeast.

The modern village of Lefkandi is situated on the western shore, about equidistant from the northern and southern extremities of the island. The ancient settlement, which may have been named Lelanton, was situated atop a long, broad ridge or hill 500 meters long by 120 meters wide a few hundred meters east of the modern town. The hill comprises the only eminence of a shallow promontory thrust into the sea midway between the towns of Chalcis to the west and Eretria to the east. Although greatly eroded, its ancient contours can be esti-



Map 8. Euboean sites. Popham and Sackett (1968, plate 3).
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mated with some confidence: the summit would have risen somewhat less than the present 17 meters and will have been less spacious than today. The south face was steep enough to provide defense without fortifications, while the inlets to east and west of the valley behind the hill were larger than is presently the case and would have provided some protection for the gentler north slope.

Strategically the most serious drawback to the site is its lack of water—its later name, Xeropolis, means “dry-town.” Water had to be fetched from the Lelas River, which empties into the sea a few hundred meters west of Xeropolis. Judging from the numerous

Table 4: Chronological Periods

Late Helladic IIIC	twelfth century B.C.E.
Submycenaean	1125–1050 B.C.E.
Protogeometric	1050–900 B.C.E.
Early	1050–1000 B.C.E.
Middle	1000–950 B.C.E.
Late	950–900 B.C.E.
Subprotogeometric	900–750 B.C.E.
Subprotogeometric I	900–875 B.C.E.
Subprotogeometric II	875–850 B.C.E.
Subprotogeometric III	850–750 B.C.E.
Late Geometric	750–700 B.C.E.

sherds of large *pitthoi* found at the site, the solution was to store large quantities of water within the settlement. Despite the difficulty of access to water, the location held other perhaps more important attractions, especially its proximity to the sea and its position at the southeast edge of the fertile Lelantine Plain, which gave access to the entire central portion of the island.

For a variety of reasons the archaeology of the site is difficult to interpret. Rising land values attendant upon a booming tourist industry have made it increasingly difficult to obtain excavation permits or to purchase land for long-term research. Increasing competition between landowners and archaeologists has led, in at least one instance, to the malicious destruction of a site. As a result, only a small fraction of the hill has been excavated.¹

Another problem arises in trying to correlate the cemeteries with settlement areas: the five cemeteries and burial groups unearthed since 1968 do not match the settlement areas chronologically. To date, no cemetery has been found corresponding to the Bronze Age settlement for which there is substantial evidence, although a number of intramural burials dating from the twelfth century have been found and studied. The earliest cemetery evidence dates from the Submycenaean through Middle Protogeometric periods (roughly 1125–950)—a period for which there exists no settlement evidence. The cemetery evidence ceases around 825, even though the site continued to be occupied down to about 700.

The Settlement

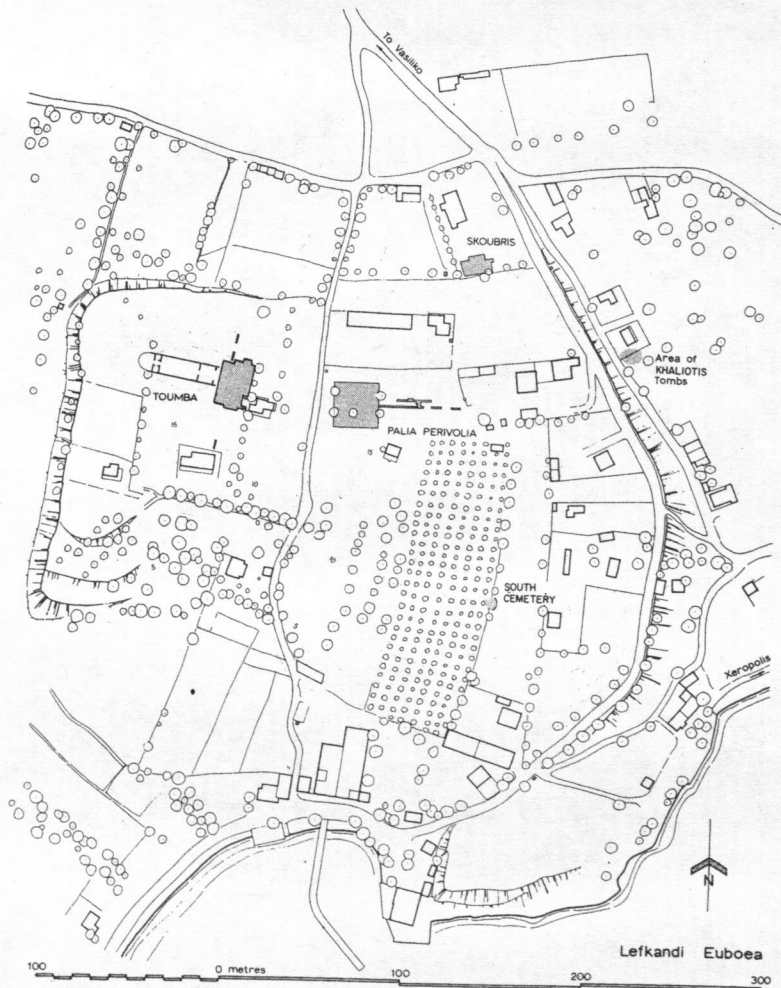
The site was occupied from Mycenaean times into the late Dark Age.² Finds from trenches include a good deal of LHIIIC material and significant Geometric evidence with Protogeometric layers below it. The main excavation in the northeast sector revealed the walls of an apsidal building dating to the latest phase of the site (ca. 825–700) built over an earlier building dating to the twelfth century. Mixed with Late Geometric sherds recovered from a refuse pit just west of the building was one bearing alphabetic graffiti. A wall paralleled the east wall of the building and abutting the wall on either side are three circular stone structures, perhaps used for processing grain, as a stone pounder was found in one of the structures. Two large rubbish pits east of the wall contain materials extending from Mycenaean times to the first half of the ninth century. A smaller, later pit containing tenth century material is referred to as the “Molds Deposit” since it held fragments of discarded clay molds used in bronze casting, apparently for the casting of decorated legs for bronze tripod stands.

South of the rubbish pits, several sets of disjointed walls were discovered which may be the remains of a building or perhaps a long terracing wall. Other walls in the area are thought to have served as animal pens. This collection is of Late Geometric date, although some lengths incorporate remains of earlier walls.

Some distance north of the hill, a concentration of burnt sherds grouped in five separate find spots has been interpreted by the excavation team as marking the location of a building, or buildings, where pottery was stored until the area was abandoned, or perhaps destroyed, sometime in the late ninth or early eighth century. The possibility that Lefkandi had storage facilities for pottery is important since such a facility would be of little use for a site the size of ninth-century Lefkandi, unless the pottery were being used in trade.

The Cemeteries

The slopes leading to the Lelantine Plain immediately to the north of Lefkandi and about 600 meters northwest of Xeropolis seem to have been given over to cemeteries during the Dark Age. There are



Map 9. Regional map of Lefkandi with ancient sites. Popham, Sackett, and Themelis (1980, plate 1). Reproduced with permission of the British School at Athens.

three large cemeteries and two smaller burial groups. Closest to Xeropolis is a small group of tombs. Since they were thoroughly robbed and have not been formally investigated, they cannot be precisely dated, but there is a possibility that the area was in use for funeral purposes as early as the twelfth century. Of the larger cemeteries, that situated in the field of A. Skoubris contains the earliest known

evidence, a high proportion of which is Submycenaean and early Protogeometric material. The excavated area of roughly 175 square meters represents possibly no more than a quarter of the cemetery area. Between 1968 and 1980 a total of sixty tombs and nineteen pyres was examined.

About 100 meters south of the Skoubris cemetery is the cemetery of Palia Perivolia. Since this cemetery has been much more thoroughly explored, the excavators are confident that the forty tombs and forty-seven pyres unearthed represent all or most of the cemetery. It contains pyres and shaft graves dating mostly to the Protogeometric and Subprotogeometric periods. A series of trenches extending beyond the Palia Perivolia site have uncovered a separate group of four tombs and three pyres, with three of the seven certain cases of inhumation (in contrast to cremation) found in all of the cemeteries. One tomb, notable for its double burial, is identified as a warrior grave by weaponry found in it dated to around 880–870.

The final burial location lies on the hill of Toumba, about 50 meters west of Palia Perivolia. Although Toumba is roughly contemporary with Palia Perivolia, there is no comparison in terms of wealth between the two sites. Even without the monumental “tumulus” burial on the summit, Toumba is by far the wealthiest of the three major cemeteries. It is followed by Skoubris, while Palia Perivolia ranks a penurious third.

Historical Survey

The settlement area on Xeropolis has yielded evidence of continuous occupation from the second half of the third millennium down to the end of the twelfth century. After a hiatus, occupation resumed by the early or middle tenth century, continuing until the end of the eighth century. The earlier periods of the settlement indicate stability, longevity, and a modicum of prosperity. The pottery associated with the site derives not from the contemporary pottery found on the mainland, but seemingly from Early Bronze Age pottery from West Anatolia. The first known inhabitants, then, may have been recent emigrants from Anatolia.

Although the end of the Early Helladic period (2100/2000 B.C.E.) is associated on the mainland with the widespread destruction of set-

lements, no such destruction appears to have been visited on Lefkandi. Nor does there appear to have been radical change in material culture in the rest of its Bronze Age life. Even in the twelfth century, when mainland centers were going up in flames and their populations put to flight, Lefkandi presents the image of a bustling, populous town rather akin to contemporary Athens.

The excavators at Lefkandi have identified three distinct architectural and ceramic phases associated with the site's twelfth-century levels. Phase One bears all the hallmarks of a refugee town, thrown up quickly and haphazardly. The pottery of this phase, while competently executed, is limited in shape and decoration. The general conflagration that ended this phase brought forth the Phase Two community, a relatively large and prosperous town laid out on regular lines. While most of the pottery of this phase represents a continuation of Phase One, a few craftsmen were willing to extend the range of shapes and decoration, returning to figured decoration featuring both human and animal shapes. There is even a reemergence of the old griffin motif, familiar from Mycenaean contexts.

The Phase Two community was also brought to an end by destruction, after which the town was quickly rebuilt. Soon, however, the site underwent a general, unreversed decline. The Phase Three settlement shows signs of population loss and a careless arrangement of buildings interspersed with refuse heaps and pottery of limited shapes, decoration, and technical competence. Despite the settlement's final abandonment around 1100, we are confronted with evidence of a substantial cemetery some 600 meters northwest of Xeropolis, but no settlement on Xeropolis itself—a situation just the opposite of that of the twelfth century. It may be that the settlement that produced this cemetery has yet to be discovered. Another possibility is that the area was abandoned for several generations and that this cemetery was used beginning shortly after 1100 by a semi-nomadic, transient population, a situation akin to that at Nichoria.

Matching the apparent discontinuity of settlement is a true discontinuity of ceramic styles. The latest Mycenaean ware tends to be of a rather coarse fabric, light in color, and the most common drinking vessel is a small conical bowl. The Submycenaean material tends to have a dark ground, with the globular cup most common. Although the new material still represents what Desborough calls “the

dying stage of the Mycenaean tradition,” it is ultimately an alien, rather than Euboean, school of that tradition (Popham, Sackett, and Themelis 1980, 283–93).

The material remains bear all the signs of what has in the last few decades come to typify the early Iron Age Greek “cultural kit”: a debased pottery derived from Mycenaean forms, burial of the dead in single cist graves, long pins and arched fibulae to fasten clothing, and iron tools and weapons. Some gold found its way into this early Dark Age community: six datable tombs and two pyres (out of a total of sixty-four tombs and twenty-one pyres) contained that precious metal.

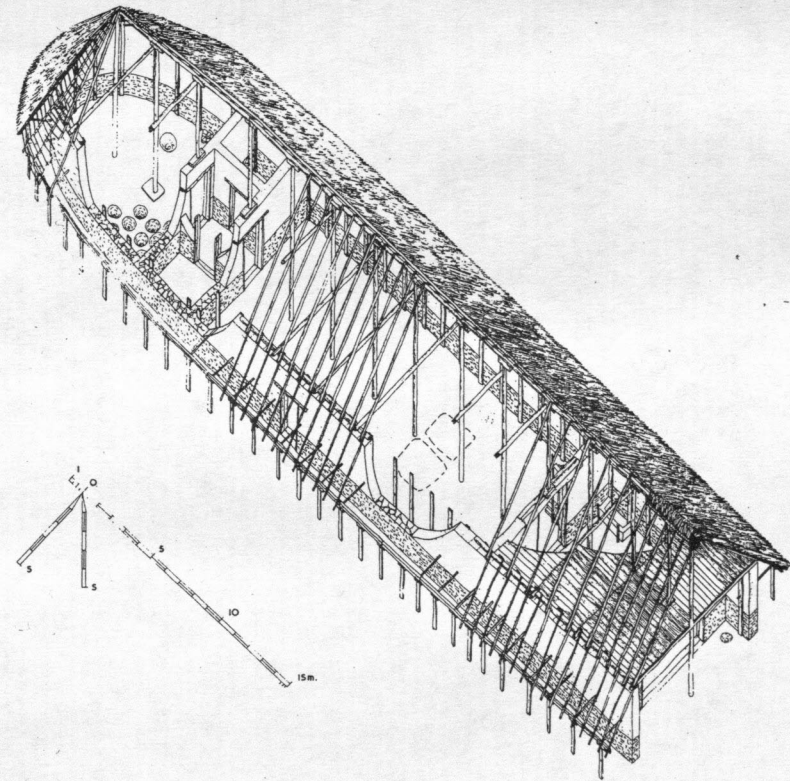
During the eleventh century, developments in pottery indicate a gradual improvement in quality of life and the establishment of more distant connections. In the later eleventh and early tenth centuries, technique improved, ceramic shapes witnessed a general standardization, and something approaching an artistic canon of decoration emerged. At the same time, imports appear: a juglet of Syro-Palestinian derivation, a flask, and a “*pyxis*,” or unguent jar, which may have derived either from Cyprus or from Crete, and an iron dirk found in the same tomb as the Syro-Palestinian juglet which may have come from the same area. A small number of locally crafted items are obvious imitations of foreign originals.

Although their “foreign” origin cannot be doubted, the circumstances of their importation is unknown. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the Lefkandians themselves may have initiated these foreign contacts, given earlier though sporadic contacts with the south Cyclades, Crete, and even Cyprus and the later evidence of Euboean and specifically Lefkandian contacts with Crete, Cyprus, and the Near East. Long distance trade to the south and east also appears less surprising if it is seen in the context of trade routes with nearer regions. Finds attest increasing Euboean interest in Thessaly, Skyros in the Sporades, and Naxos in the south, and Desborough has suggested that Euboean trading contacts with these areas had become so consolidated in the late eleventh century that they formed a new cultural *koine* (Popham, Sackett, and Themelis 1980, 283–93). It is equally possible that the seafarers came from the eastern Mediterranean. Although the cities of the Syro-Phoenician littoral had suffered devastation roughly contemporary with the Aegean disasters,

by the mid-eleventh century, they had recovered sufficiently to again become centers of commerce and trade.³ Yet another possibility is that Cypriots and Cretans acted as middlemen for Phoenician and even Egyptian goods.

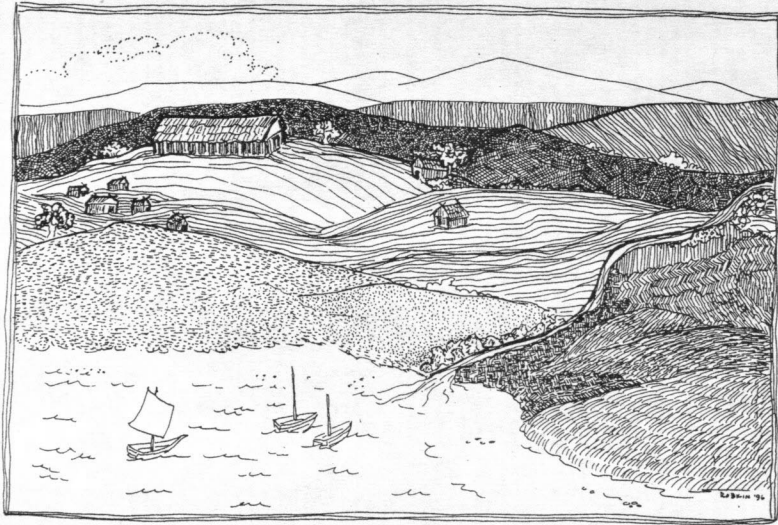
After this brief flurry of activity around 1050, however, there is as yet no evidence of further long distance contacts for several decades. Judging from the cemetery material, there seems to have been a decline in prosperity at Lefkandi during these years: gold and other high-status goods found in tombs cease almost entirely. A necklace of thirty-six faience beads is the sole luxury item from the tombs of this period. But more remarkable than this find is the puzzling evidence that during this less prosperous period all three of the area's major cemeteries were being used. Why this community should require three cemeteries, when one sufficed for the most prosperous early eleventh-century community is not known. Toumba, the latest of the three cemeteries, signals the third and last remarkable development of this period. Excavations on a low hill on the southern edge of the Lelantine Plain a few hundred meters north of modern Lefkandi, revealed a cemetery with initial finds of thirty-six tombs and eight pyres. New excavations showed that walls discovered in 1980 belonged to a building of monumental proportions: a long, narrow, multiple-room structure about 45 meters long by 10 meters wide with an apsidal west end, a peaked roof, and surrounded, probably on all but the east side, by a veranda. The east entrance was masked by a wall running north to south; between the wall and the doorway there was a shallow porch only 1.5 meters deep. The doorway itself, at 4.8 meters in width, was probably too wide to be closed by actual doors; possibly skins or cloth draperies were stretched across it in foul weather.

A smaller doorway in the center of the west wall of the East Room led into the Central Room, architecturally the heart of the building, with a length of 22 meters. Two stub walls in the room's northeast corner may be the remains of a staircase, which would have led to an upper storey or loft. This room produced the most startling discovery in the building, indeed within the entire Toumba site. In its center were two large burial shafts, side by side. The shaft nearest the south wall contained a double burial, a combination of inhumation and cremation. A large, richly tooled bronze amphora (perhaps



16. Heroön: Axonometric drawing of building as reconstructed. Popham, Calligas, and Sackett (1993, plate 28). Reproduced with permission of the British School at Athens.

an antique even at the time of burial) held the cremated remains together with a long, tube-like robe or shroud of rich cloth. Next to the amphora was a warrior's kit consisting of a sword along with the badly decomposed remains of a wooden scabbard, a spearhead, razor, and whetstone—all but the whetstone and scabbard of iron. Accompanying the cremation burial was the inhumation of a richly clad woman, laid out on her back, her head to the west. The amphora containing the bones of the warrior sat next to her right leg. The lady was bedecked in gold: she wore gold earrings; a necklace of gold, faience, and crystal; a gold pendant; and sheet-gold disks were placed over her breasts. The position of her hands, placed close together over her abdomen, and of her feet, also close together, has raised the



17. Artist's reconstruction of Lefkandi. Drawing ©Anne Lou Robkin. Used by permission.

suspicion that she may have been bound, perhaps a victim of suttee. A study of her dentition has indicated that she was probably in her late twenties at the time of her death. The man was probably older—between the ages of thirty and forty-five.

The other shaft contained the skeletons of four horses, the iron bits still in their mouths. These animals were apparently thrown headlong into the shaft as a funerary sacrifice to accompany their late master into the next world. This is not the only instance of horse sacrifice at Toumba.⁴

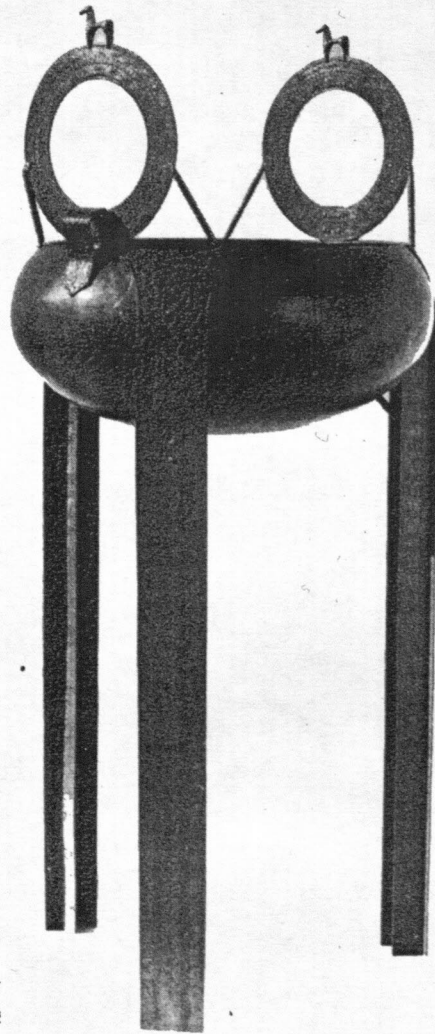
Signs of ancient damage appear on the interior walls of the two small rooms adjoining the central room; moreover, these rooms and the apse appear to have been left unfinished when the building was abandoned. Within a short space of time, to judge by finds associated with the building, the upper walls, roofing, and support posts were dismantled, the interior filled in, and a tumulus raised over the whole site. Some of the excavators have concluded that the building was never used as a residence, for there are few signs of heavy use, no trace of a hearth, and no indication of food preparation or consumption. Thus, the edifice may have been intended for destruction from the beginning—as a *heroön*, or hero shrine. Furthermore, the burials

of the Toumba cemetery, which began soon after the mound was raised over the site, huddled close to the tumulus as if to bask in the reflected glory of its occupants. However, P.G. Calligas, a member of the excavation team, has published a minority report which maintains that the building was indeed the residence, for however short a time, of a patriarchal clan chieftain or head of an *oikos* (Popham, Calligas, and Sackett 1993; and Calligas 1988).

Not long after the warrior's burial—probably by 950—there are signs of unparalleled wealth at the Toumba cemetery and of reoccupation of the settlement on Xeropolis Hill. The Late Protogeometric period (ca. 975–900) opens with another brief phase of cultural and commercial expansion, more brilliant and profound in its consequences than that of the earlier epoch. From the start, the new settlement at Lefkandi was inundated by alien influences, and local craftsmen absorbed these new influences and experimented with new shapes and designs. Such conditions mark the opening of a long period of commercial expansion overseas with prosperity and seeming stability at home which Calligas has termed the *Lefkandi Period*. Not only Lefkandi but the entire island of Euboea played a leading role in the commercial and cultural affairs of Greece and the Aegean, centering, at least initially, around the settlement on Xeropolis.

The evidence at Lefkandi consists mainly of potsherds, but their wide scatter indicates an enlarged settled area and population. Evidence of greater socioeconomic complexity accompanies the increase in population. The molds deposit described above indicates the existence of a bronze foundry that manufactured large tripods or tripod-caldrons, precursors of the ceremonial caldrons of the eighth and seventh centuries. If the caldrons were intended for home consumption, we can surmise the existence of a ruling family or a small aristocratic group with the means to acquire such items. If they were to be used primarily in trade, we have some indication of the nature of that trade. Both conclusions may be essentially correct.

The evidence from the cemeteries is more spectacular and similarly indicative of renewed long-distance contacts. The wealth and vitality of the period is reflected mainly in the amount of pottery found in the tombs, its quality, and numerous indications of foreign influence and contact. One tomb at Palia Perivolvia (Tomb 22) yielded a veritable potter's inventory of ceramic objects: no fewer than twen-



18. Bronze cauldron (ht. 1.5 m.)
© Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Athen
negative number 74.115. Used by permis:

ty-nine vases of various shapes and a thirtieth object in the form of a bell-shaped “dolly” with movable legs. Tomb 26 at Toumba, one of several “warrior graves,” produced eleven vases in addition to an iron sword and a “quiverful” of arrows.

New shapes flourish alongside older shapes. The favored *skyphos*, an open, two-handled bowl, for example, retains its earlier Attic-inspired form even while new versions appear. Evidence of outside influence comes notably from Thessaly and Cyprus, two areas

with previous histories of contact with Lefkandi. There is solid evidence of contact with Vergina, in southern Macedonia, where late Protogeometric Euboean pottery has been found; and a gold pendant from Palia Perivolia Tomb 22 has an analogue discovered on the island of Skyros. Lefkandian pottery has been identified on the north Cycladic islands of Tenos and Andros. The site’s pottery now shows substantial Athenian influence in motifs, and the number of direct Athenian imports is higher than at any previous time.

Attic influence spilled over into the more conservative area of burial customs. The remains stored in the two funeral amphorae of a rare double-urn cremation were almost certainly of a man and a woman, for one of the amphorae was of the belly-handled variety used in women’s cremations, while the other was neck-handled, signifying a man’s cremation.⁵ That identification was made easier since it was found in association with a spearhead and a “killed” sword—that is, a sword intentionally made useless by firing the blade and bending it double. Such “warrior graves” are more common at Athens.

All of these developments occurred during a brief period, perhaps no longer than a decade. Just as suddenly they ceased. The later tenth and ninth centuries show a marked return to conservatism.⁶ Native pottery shapes and decorative systems re-emerge, and only the hardiest of imports are retained. In funerary terms, the return to conservatism meant a return to the shaft grave and the pyre. The one or two urn burials later than those already described date from the end of the tenth century. However, foreign contacts were maintained, and there is no indication of a decline in prosperity.

Nothing could better illustrate this continuity than the remarkable centaur statuette found in the Toumba cemetery in 1969.⁷ Dating from the closing years of the tenth century or the early years of the ninth, the statuette is something of a hybrid: its animal body is a wheel-made terra-cotta cylinder common in the late Mycenaean period, while the human torso and front legs resemble a series of Cypriot centaurs and bull-men manufactured from the late twelfth century down to the late eighth century.

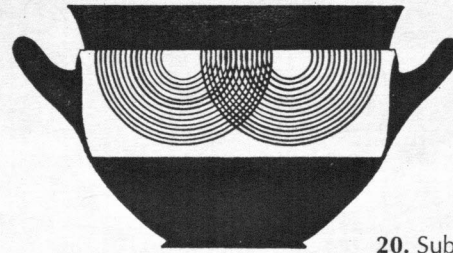
Following M. L. West’s suggestion, we might even name the centaur. Though its left arm is missing, the irregular surface of the statuette’s left shoulder makes it likely that the left hand was grasping an elongated object which rested there, perhaps a branch or club, the

centaurs' weapons of choice. Of even greater significance is the deep incision just below the centaur's left knee, made prior to the firing of the statuette. Tradition has it that the leader of the centaurs, Cheiron, accidentally received just such a wound at the hands of Heracles. The intent of the artist may well have been to produce a likeness of Cheiron, which, at 36 centimeters in height and 26 centimeters in length, is the largest and most impressive work of sculpture to survive from the Dark Age and fairly represents the continuing commercial and artistic vitality of the community even during a period of supposed cultural conservatism.

The explosion of wealth implied by objects recovered from the cemeteries, particularly from Toumba, is puzzling. Even the old Skoubris cemetery experienced something like a renaissance, with



19. Lefkandi centaur (ca. 900). Popham, Sackett, and Themelis (1980, plate 22). Reproduced with permission of the British School at Athens.



20. Subprotogeometric *skyphos* with semicircle decoration. Popham and Sackett (1968, plate 60). Reproduced with permission of the British School at Athens.

five gold finds in tombs dated to between 875 and 825. In addition to indicating wealth, many of the rich finds are imports and imply a level of trade unprecedented at Lefkandi or elsewhere in Greece. The faience necklaces are all Near Eastern or Egyptian in derivation. A bronze jug and bowl, described as a wine-service set, also have an Egyptian or Phoenician derivation.

The possibility that a Euboean carrying trade was involved is supported by the numerous local products that have turned up in foreign quarters. Euboean enterprise in the latter half of the ninth century is well represented by exports found on Cyprus, at Al Mina in Syria, and for the first time, in Italy and Sicily to the west. Perhaps the most popular Euboean export of the time was the ubiquitous pendant semicircle *skyphos*, a shape whose decorative scheme was already over a century old at the time of the establishment in the later ninth century of the Al Mina trading station. In a list of contacts, one region is missing during this period: Attic imports are almost totally absent. The new Geometric forms and motifs of the ninth century current in Attica were either unknown or ignored on Euboea.

This strange mix of parochialism and prosperity lasted to about 825, when signs of trouble appear: use of all of the known cemeteries ends; surface sherds that seem to date from the later ninth century show definite signs of burning; and on Xeropolis there are signs that the settlement may have been losing population and that the area of the site was contracting. The reduced settlement on Xeropolis survived another century or more, managing to continue foreign contacts and even renewing contact with Attica: Attic imports and

products of local manufacture with Attic characteristics are much in evidence. Some sort of equilibrium seems to have lasted down to about 750, when another profound change occurred. Lefkandi finally entered the Geometric Age: inspired primarily by Athenian examples, it began developing a late Geometric style of its own. This apparently sudden change of heart after a century and a half of stubborn resistance illuminates Lefkandi's continuing interest, despite its reduced circumstances, in overseas trade. To preserve its markets, Lefkandi may have adopted the tool of its Athenian and, more recently, Corinthian competitors: Geometric pottery.

By the late eighth century Lefkandi was no longer the sole, or even principal, population center on the island. For some decades it seems to have been losing primacy, and perhaps population, to the new settlements of Chalcis and Eretria at either end of the Lelantine Plain, settlements that grew increasingly prominent after the disturbances at Lefkandi in about 825. With this development, Lefkandi would have found itself in the unenviable position of having a potential enemy on either flank. The site appears to have been destroyed and finally abandoned at the close of the eighth century because of this very situation: it may have been caught literally in the middle of a struggle for control of the plain between Eretria and Chalcis, a victim of the first Greek war of which we have record, an event that closes the door to the Dark Ages. The final destruction of Lefkandi around 700 B.C.E. coincides so closely with the most recent dating of the half-legendary Lelantine War that we hardly need look further for the circumstances of the demise of the settlement on Xeropolis Hill.

Social Organization

James Whitley included both Nichoria and Lefkandi in his list of "unstable" settlements, so named because they did not survive the Dark Age and indeed seemed to flourish only within a Dark Age political and social setting. Lefkandi was also singled out as spatially unstable, as demonstrated by a supposed shift in population locus from Xeropolis to Toumba at about the time of the construction of the monumental building. According to Whitley, the reason for this shift was that Lefkandi was a Big Man society and the Toumba build-

ing was his dwelling (1991a). Since this kind of society is founded on the prestige of one Big Man, it is inherently unstable: should this person lose prestige or die, his power would be dispersed.

There are chronological problems with this hypothesis, for Whitley suggests an unbroken sequence of events from the twelfth-century settlement of Xeropolis to a tenth-century establishment at Toumba, and then back again to Xeropolis a century later. Yet, as we have seen, the area may well have been abandoned, except for funerary purposes, from 1100 until some time in the tenth century. Further, aside from the possibility that the monumental building was used as a residence, there is no evidence of settlement on Toumba Hill during the eleventh and early tenth centuries. We must describe the settlement pattern not as unstable, but as nonexistent.

Another interpretation is P. G. Calligas' view that the building was the residence of an "oikist" or head of a settlement enterprise. Early Iron Age Lefkandi, Calligas reasons, was a patriarchal society in which power was dispersed among the male heads of families. The major clans or family groupings would have established clan centers (*oikoi*) on the summits of low hills, which acted as residences, cult areas, and council houses. Such a system, Calligas believes, grew out of the unsettled conditions of the twelfth and eleventh centuries, when populations turned to a semi-nomadic, pastoral way of life. With the return of peace and stability, families or clans established permanent homes while continuing to pursue a pastoral economy. He sees the tombs on the eastern slope and at the foot of the hill as housing the remains of the members of the Toumba *oikos* over a period of several generations. When unstable conditions recurred in the late ninth and eighth centuries, fortified settlements, the direct precursors of the Archaic *poleis*, replaced the *oikoi*. The new environment proved antithetical to the old, dispersed *oikos* economy. Thus, pastoralism declined in favor of settled agriculture, with its ability to support large populations, and the power once wielded by the oikist was divided among a new rising aristocracy (Popham, Calligas, and Sackett 1993; Calligas 1988).

If this reconstruction is correct, it neglects the living members of the group. The building on Toumba Hill is large by any standards—certainly large enough to fulfill the three roles of oikist's residence, cult center, and council house. But it would be absurd to

suppose that it was large enough to house the entire population of Lefkandi, even in this early period. Moreover, the chronology is flawed: why do we see the Toumba building abandoned and destroyed a century and a half before the move to fortified settlements? This thesis lacks one of the strengths of Whitley's argument, which accounts for possible divisions within the community leading to the expulsion or voluntary emigration of part of the population.

Another scenario constitutes not a model so much as a number of suggestions to bear in mind for future consideration as evidence from Lefkandi accumulates. Popham suggests a fundamental division along economic (and perhaps other) lines within Lefkandian society, manifested early in the history of the site and growing more pronounced in later periods. Landed interests—farmers and stock breeders—form one group and mercantile interests—overseas traders, cargo carriers, and adventurers—form the other. The farmers and ranchers can be considered the more conservative, while the sailors and overseas merchants should be thought of as more adventurous, more willing to take risks, and more accepting of alien ways (Popham, Sackett, and Themelis 1980). Tensions might increase between the two groups inasmuch as few pursuits could be more dissimilar than farming and overseas trade. We will find that Hesiod, in compiling his *Works and Days* (a sort of farmers' almanac) urged against this foolish endeavor of taking to the sea. Only the increased potential for profit makes the increased risk bearable.

On the other hand, one should not underestimate the long-term potential of land holders to amass wealth, power, and prestige. Land ownership at Lefkandi may have been similar to that at Corinth, which we will see was increasingly concentrated in fewer hands, possibly resulting in the beginnings of a bipartite social structure like the one Popham has suggested. As the younger sons and poor relations of the oikists became increasingly cut off from land ownership, they may have taken to seafaring, much like the younger sons of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English nobility. Even if landed wealth was equally distributed among an oikist's sons, one could expect cycles of dispersal of land until the divided and subdivided plots could no longer support their owners, forcing small holders to abandon or exchange their unprofitable plots, and to turn to trade.

We have noticed that the usual placid development of shapes

and decorative styles of pottery was punctuated by a number of episodes characterized by an acceptance of foreign motifs and experimentation. Of these episodes, all but the last, which represented Lefkandi's belated entry into the Geometric period around 750, were brief and were followed by a return to severe conservatism. The first episode (ca. 1050 B.C.E.) was nearly contemporaneous with the beginnings of Iron Age Lefkandi; the following episodes occurred along with the first signs of resettlement on Xeropolis and just prior to the late ninth-century disturbances.

By superimposing Popham's bipartite structure of Lefkandian society over these episodes we can conclude that the conservative element in the community restrained innovation, but from time to time the progressive element gained the upper hand. This alternative is especially noticeable in the fluctuations of Athenian influence. The first great period of Athenian influence began and ended quickly with the return to conservatism. The late ninth-century disruptions at Lefkandi occurred in the midst of a return of Athenian influence in ceramics.

The cemeteries, and specifically the burial customs, also give indications of divisions within society. In a substantial number of tombs such objects as jewelry and clothing fasteners have been found arranged as if they still adorned a body—a body made conspicuous by its absence. P. G. Themelis, the member of Popham's team charged with analyzing the burials, has suggested that in such instances what appears to be a grave is in fact a cenotaph, that is, a memorial for one whose remains lie elsewhere. He proposes that most, if not all, of the missing bodies were cremated elsewhere (there are too few pyres to accommodate all of the missing bodies), but that the grave goods were "inhumed" in such a way as to suggest the presence of a body. A seeming conflict between the older rite of inhumation and the more recent rite of cremation may have resulted in a unique burial practice dating back to the late twelfth century which combined elements of both (Popham, Sackett, and Themelis 1980).

"Warrior" graves provide another possible clue to societal division. Perhaps as many as three of these burials are inhumations, which suggests to Themelis that a warrior elite at Lefkandi was of the old Mycenaean stock and that its members were aware of this fact. Popham argues that the phenomenon of the "warrior" grave was

most at home in Dark Age Athens and may have been imported to Lefkandi from there (Popham, Sackett, and Themelis 1980). The “warrior” graves do seem to have been most common during the periods of heightened Attic influence at Lefkandi. The traditional account of Aiklos and Kothos, grandsons of the Athenian hero Ion, point in this same direction. Strabo (10.1.8) remembered that after the Trojan War they colonized both Eretria and Chalcis, and until that time the Euboeans had been known as Abantes, an identification also found in Homer (*Iliad* 2.536).

Another curious feature of the cemeteries at Lefkandi is the fundamental dissimilarity of evidence drawn from them. Nearly all of the “warrior” graves have been found at Toumba: five along with at least two, and possibly four, pyres that have yielded weaponry. There are none at Skoubris and only one early to mid-ninth-century example from Palia Perivolia. The concentration of such finds at Toumba is consistent with the wealth of other high-status objects found there.

There is a perceptible sequence in the use of the cemeteries themselves. For most of the eleventh century, Skoubris was the only cemetery. Palia Perivolia began receiving burials during the middle Protogeometric (1000–950) and was followed, presumably within a few years, by Toumba. Their beginnings coincide with a sharp decline in the use of Skoubris. The new popularity of Toumba seems self-evident given its proximity to the Heroön, and since Palia Perivolia is only about 50 meters east of Toumba, its use too may be attributed to its proximity to the Heroön. Its further distance from the Heroön and the modesty of its tombs may reveal that Palia Perivolia was reserved for the common folk of Lefkandi, who, like the wealthier dead buried at Toumba, accorded the great ones of the Heroön an equal measure of reverence.

The warrior buried beneath the tumulus held such elevated status that any of the suggested epithets—king, clan chieftain, or Big Man—might reasonably be applied. Given the small size and relative simplicity of the community during the tenth and ninth centuries, a leader’s role was not likely to have been institutionalized either by formal rules or cult but rather through acts of personal courage, eloquence, and generosity. During the course of the late tenth and ninth centuries this leadership may have been formalized and passed on, as Popham has suggested, to the descendants of the Toumba warrior

(Popham, Calligas, and Sackett 1993). If power at Lefkandi came to reside in a single family, supported perhaps by armed, dependent retainers, the outcome may have forced a division within the community which led, in the later ninth century, to the expulsion of one group by the other.

It is interesting to refer once again to the almost parallel fate of Nichoria, which, like Lefkandi, experienced a prolonged period of population decline from about the mid-ninth century. Meanwhile, the large building at the center of the settlement seems to have grown larger and more complex as the number of inhabitants shrank. Sometime in the mid-eighth century, Nichoria was destroyed by fire and abandoned—a catastrophe that may have been the result of warfare between Sparta and Messenia dating from the end of the eighth century, though it is possible that smaller scale hostilities preceded this date.

Both Lefkandi and Nichoria began experiencing difficulties during the ninth century. Why did these two sites not transform themselves into enduring *poleis*? One answer may be that they had no powerful neighbors to prompt the greater cohesion that occurred elsewhere in Greece. In the ninth century, both Nichoria and Lefkandi had room for expansion, and any civil dispute could result in the injured party simply taking up an abode elsewhere. The ensuing depopulation left the remaining community vulnerable to attack by any neighbors who were increasing their size and ambitions. Chalcis and Eretria on Euboea and Sparta in the southern Peloponnese did just this. Against their strength, small communities characteristic of the Dark Age stood little or no chance.

In summary, we believed that the disturbances of ca. 825 B.C.E. at Lefkandi can be ascribed to internal causes. Division within society may have led to civil unrest. An internal crisis may have resulted from a century and a half of the steady accumulation of land held by the few whom Calligas has identified as oikists, the leaders of transient clans who took up permanent or semi-permanent abodes in the tenth and ninth centuries. Over time, these men were able to increase their holdings through raiding, intermarriage, or purchase, while their less successful contemporaries saw their lands subdivided away, alienated for the payment of debt, or simply lost through bad luck. Those who lost their holdings will have had few choices in the struggle to gain a livelihood.

For free landless people at this time, only three alternatives to basic farming seem likely: some form of food production other than farming or stockbreeding; the production of secondary goods and services in support of the primary industry of food production; or trade and colonization. The first option entails either hunting or fishing. While various regions of Greece, notably Messenia, show evidence of increased hunting activity during the Dark Age, there is little evidence that this was the case on Euboea. As for fishing, there is no evidence that it ever counted as a significant factor in the economy of Dark Age Greece. It is instructive that Hesiod, who in *Works and Days* sang about nearly every other craft or skill, has nothing to say of either of these pursuits. The second option would be fulfilled by such tasks as pottery production, smithery, tanning, weaving, and the various construction trades. Here again Hesiod is helpful as a guide, for the society of small, independent farmers that he describes is nearly self-sufficient. Hesiod's wise farmer is also a ploughwright, a cartwright, a carpenter, and a tanner, while his long-suffering wife is a weaver and tailor. This self-sufficiency would further reduce the market for free-lance craftsmen.

Under such circumstances, the sea must have proved a powerful lure. Hesiod's own father, in order to escape poverty, took to the sea, presumably as a trader. Those adventurers with resources of their own could organize a trading venture, while those whom poverty had already caught could hire on as oarsmen. The prosperous few may also have had a hand in the new shipping ventures. It would be anachronistic to assume an aristocratic prejudice against trade at this early date. After all, Athena deigns to assume the guise of a trader in the first book of the *Odyssey*. Let us not forget that among the grave goods found beneath the tumulus on Toumba was a bronze amphora of Cypriot manufacture. The man whose remains were deposited in the amphora may have obtained it during a trading voyage to that far-away island.



Orality and Literacy in a Heroic Society

All models of Lefkandian social structure share one basic similarity: they assume what has come to be called a "heroic" society, characterized by a war-like and adventurous spirit and an obsession with hon-

or and prestige (*time*) and fear of its opposite, shame, loss of face (*aischune*). The warrior graves, the atypical splendor of the Toumba burials, possible cults of heroes, and heroic efforts in venturing into the risky realm of Poseidon are all evocative of the heroization of life.

Display, deeds, and speech are the foundations of such a society. For the first two there is evidence in abundance, but the third by its very nature eludes us since, as we have seen, literacy appears to have vanished with the collapse of the Mycenaean palace-centered administration. However, the end-product of the oral tradition allows us to visualize inhabitants of Lefkandi gathered together to hear the remembered tradition of their community in order to deal with the present. It is easy to imagine a praise poem, a miniature epic in hexameters retelling the deeds (*ta erga*) of the great warrior buried on Toumba Hill, who made a voyage to the fabulous island of Cyprus, rich in copper, or to the land of the Phoenicians, famous for its purple cloth. It is tantalizing to think that the name of this hero might be enshrined in some familiar myth.

Somewhat ironically, we can reconstruct the nature of such oral praise poems only through the return of literacy to the late Dark Age world.⁸ Where this occurred, and under what circumstances, is a matter of considerable debate. The surviving evidence dates to the eighth century but suggests steps toward adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet to the Greek language in the ninth century. Recently the case for Euboea as the place of origin has been made by Barry Powell, who argues for the confluence of several necessary factors in this island toward the end of the ninth and on into the eighth century (1991). Not only is the Euboean script close in form to the Phoenician script from which the Greek form was developed, but many of the earliest examples of Greek alphabetic writing are linked with Euboea. The traditional explanation for the purpose of the innovation is well suited to Euboea: many scholars believe that writing first served as an *aide de memoire* for traders operating in the Near East. Another possible motive—the wish to record Homeric verse—is equally at home on that island. As Powell has pointed out, the earliest extant inscriptions are poetic in nature, composed in hexameters of varying quality, and many of the surviving examples are associated with Euboea (1991, 123–29, 163–67, 185). Even the earliest