

“Minding the Gap”

Bridging the Gaps in Cultural Change Within the Early Bronze Age Aegean

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Abstract

In one of the arguments about the Early Cycladic (EC) III “gap” in material culture, Jeremy Rutter recognized the Anatolianizing Kastri/Lefkandi I assemblage to be of great importance for developments in ceramics on the Early Helladic mainland. Now accepted by most scholars as having appeared in the EC/Early Helladic (EH) IIB period, rather than EC/EH III, the Kastri/Lefkandi I assemblage is not thought to be a coherent, unified package of material and social culture. Instead, there is great variation among regions of mainland Greece in how (and when) various components of the Kastri/Lefkandi I assemblage were adopted. This article explores the impact of Kastri/Lefkandi I shapes on the material culture and feasting practices of the Early Helladic mainland.*

The Early Cycladic (EC) III “gap”—that is, the relative lack of cultural material in the Cyclades that can be placed between the EC IIB and Middle Cycladic I assemblages—has significance for our understanding of the great changes in mainland Greece in the transition from Early Helladic (EH) II into EH III. Thirty years after Rutter first formulated the notion of the EC III gap,¹ our understanding of this period is still greatly informed by his keen, detailed observations. He recognized the importance of the Anatolianizing

Kastri/Lefkandi I assemblage, which appeared in the EC/EH IIB period, to the topic of the EC III gap. He also recognized that rather than the EC III gap being merely a problem of finding the right ceramic assemblage to fill it, or of which terminology should be employed to label it, the real issue is the nature of cultural change and how it affected societies during the later part of the third millennium B.C.E. The focus of this article is twofold: to reexamine the regional variation in impact that the Kastri/Lefkandi I phenomenon² had on the Greek mainland in the Early Bronze Age, and to examine broadly the nature of cultural and social change in the later third millennium B.C.E. Early Helladic societies by looking at the activities of feasting and drinking.

From the time Renfrew initially identified and named the Kastri Group of material,³ scholars have emphasized the following ceramic features associated with the group:

1. The limited number of vessel shapes—essentially the tankard, the bell-shaped cup, the depas cup, the lentoid jug with cutaway spout, and the “plate,” or very shallow bowl—that seem to constitute a new drinking assemblage (fig. 1).

*I would like to thank Jack Davis for inviting me to participate in the Gold Medal Colloquium held at the 114th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America (Seattle, 2013) in honor of Jerry Rutter. I would also like to thank my fellow participants, Tom Brogan, Cyprian Broodbank, Ourania Kouka, and Malcolm Wiener, for their insights and comments. Finally, I would like to thank Jerry Rutter for being a mentor and a friend for these many years since we worked together on the Nemea Valley Archaeological Project in the 1980s. There, I was given the task of supervising the excavations of the Early Bronze Age levels on the crown of Tsoungiza Hill, while Jerry was in charge of all the excavation pottery. His rapid analysis of the pottery allowed a dialogue between the excavation teams and the lab personnel. A wager over the identity of some highly burnished red cup fragments we re-

covered led to Jerry duly paying me six bottles of ice-cold Amstel, for instead of this contested pottery being Lefkandi I ware and thus filling the late Early Bronze (EB) II gap, it helped fill the gap in our knowledge of the beginnings of the EB II period. And it has sealed our friendship ever since. I hope that readers will also join the discussion on the *AJA* website (www.ajaonline.org).

¹Rutter 1983.

²In this article, I use the term Kastri/Lefkandi I in a general sense to include both Cycladic and mainland manifestations of the phenomenon, as described later in this article.

³Renfrew 1972, esp. 172–74, 533–34. He also recognized the close affinities of the Lefkandi I assemblage to the Kastri Group and emphasized the Anatolian connections of both.

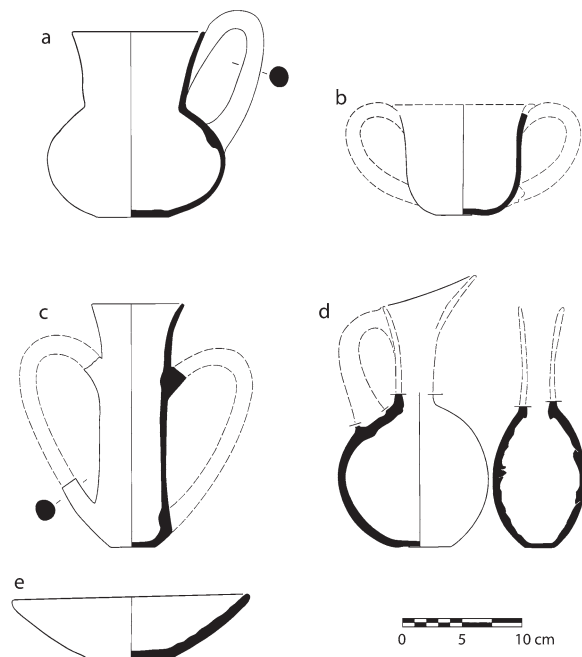


Fig. 1. Principal shapes of the Kastri/Lefkandi I assemblage: *a*, tankard; *b*, bell-shaped cup; *c*, depas cup; *d*, lentoid jug with cutaway spout; *e*, plate or very shallow bowl (modified from Rutter 2012, fig. 8.2).

2. The clear association of these shapes with west Anatolian shapes, whether the latter come from the central west coast around Liman Tepe in the İzmir region or the northern west coast around Troy.
3. The manufacture of some of these vessels through the use of the wheel.

Subsequently, other features have been associated with the Kastri/Lefkandi I phenomenon:

1. The shift to tin-based copper alloys in place of arsenical copper.
2. The construction of small fortified settlements.
3. The desertion of most Cycladic settlements by the end of the Early Bronze Age.

Some have seen the Kastri/Lefkandi I phenomenon as the material culture manifestation of the migration

of peoples from Anatolia (it later mixed with Aegean material culture and then spread throughout the Aegean), while others have seen the ceramic assemblage as the result of mercantile activities.⁴

Most of the scholarship on the Kastri/Lefkandi I phenomenon has been from the Cycladic perspective rather than from the mainland Greek perspective.⁵ Much of the debate initially involved dating the Kastri Group,⁶ trying to pigeonhole it into the familiar, but unsatisfactory, tripartite chronological scheme. Rutter's examination of the issue in 1979 made it clear that, at least from the mainland perspective, the Kastri/Lefkandi I ceramic material falls into the second "half" of the EH II period, not into the EH III period, and most scholars working in the Aegean today agree with this.⁷

Perhaps more important for social and cultural changes in the later Early Bronze Age is that the Kastri/Lefkandi I phenomenon is not a coherent assemblage of material culture that is the result of a migration or even deliberate mercantile activity—rather, the various components, even the individual ceramic vessel shapes, appear throughout a long period of perhaps two or three centuries, and not contemporaneously. We also need to keep in mind that when ceramic vessels of Kastri/Lefkandi I type appear at a particular site, they form only a small portion of the total ceramic assemblage. At Ayia Irini, for instance, they constitute only 13% of the total Period III (EC IIB) assemblage.⁸ Also, the frequency of individual vessel shapes of the Kastri/Lefkandi I assemblage varies from site to site, and both locally produced and imported versions of the same shape coexist at the same site.⁹ At only three sites, Ayia Irini on Kea, Kastri on Syros, and Dhaskalio Kavos on Keros, do all the main Kastri/Lefkandi I shapes appear.¹⁰ Careful study of the Kastri phenomenon in the Cyclades shows that it cannot be linked to the appearance of small, fortified sites or with a widespread horizon of destruction.¹¹

What, then, are we left with? On the mainland, Lefkandi I ceramic components are found at a number of sites from Thessaly in the north to Kolonna on Aegina in the south, in contexts dating to the later part

⁴Broodbank (2000, 309–19) presents a valuable critique of the scholarship.

⁵See Angelopoulou (2008) for a recent summary of the scholarship on the Kastri Group. See also Sotirakopoulou (1993) for an earlier, more detailed appraisal.

⁶Rutter 1979, 1983, 1984; Barber and MacGillivray 1980; Barber 1983; MacGillivray 1983.

⁷Rutter 1979. Renfrew et al.'s (2012) recently published radiocarbon dates from Dhaskalio off Keros have opened up again the question of the dating of the phases of the Early

Bronze Age in the Cyclades. But so far there has been proposed no similar revision of the dating of the chronological phases of the Early Bronze Age for the mainland or of the chronological placement of the Kastri/Lefkandi I assemblage in EH II.

⁸Wilson 1999, 95.

⁹Wilson 1999, 94–101.

¹⁰Broodbank 2000, 312, fig. 103.

¹¹See Broodbank (2000, 313–16) for detailed arguments.

of the EH II period. As Rutter stresses, few of these mainland sites experienced the same discontinuity as did sites in the Cyclades, and therefore the mainland saw continued ceramic development. Indeed, Rutter's original study of the Kastri/Lefkandi I material proposed that it was this mingling of northern EH II and Lefkandi I elements in late EH II that resulted in the appearance of what we call EH III ceramics, which have been found throughout central and southern Greece.¹²

Nakou has recently elaborated on this model of ceramic development, pointing out the problem of explaining why the small vessels for consumption are so different between the "standard" EH II assemblage (e.g., small bowls/saucers, sauceboats) and the Lefkandi I or EH III assemblage of one- or two-handled tankards, cups, and depas.¹³ Her revised model of ceramic change incorporates elements of metal vessel technology, new modes of ceramic technology, and the influence of basketry in an explanation for how and why we have the transformation from the standard EH II assemblage to that of the EH III period. In Nakou's formulation, the Kastri/Lefkandi I phenomenon stems from the "direct emulation of Anatolian metal tableware."¹⁴ Not content with looking only at the scanty evidence for metal vessels (and she argues that there was a significant body of metal vessels circulating in the Early Bronze Age Aegean), she examines some of the particular manufacturing techniques and how they changed. Good examples are the handles on the Trojan metal vessels: the more complex, hollow tubular handles of these vessels, first imitated in the Kastri/Lefkandi I ceramic shapes, are simplified into handles of simple straps of sheet metal, such as those used in the few extant EH II metal vessels. EH III pottery adopts this strap handle. Both the Fine Gray Burnished and Solidly Painted and Burnished ceramic classes of EH III¹⁵ are reminiscent of metalwork in their lustrous gray or dark-faced surfaces. As Rutter noted, the decoration of both pattern-painted and incised and impressed classes of EH III pottery resembles basketry and other woven materials.¹⁶ Nakou's

model, then, suggests that the Anatolian *Metallschock* and technology of the wheel resulted in the Lefkandi I ceramic repertoire emulating metal types in late EH II and, intermingling with the influence of basketry and local metallurgical transformations, resulted in the EH III pottery seen throughout southern and central Greece.

One of the most important observations Nakou makes is that the Kastri/Lefkandi I ceramic vessels are essentially symmetrical two-handled drinking cups, in contrast to the asymmetrical sauceboat and handleless small bowl/saucer of EH II. Likewise, the EH III ceramic assemblage is characterized by handled drinking and consumption vessels, such as the tankard and Bass bowl. Nakou suggests the new shapes and pattern-decorated bottoms of EH III drinking vessels indicate a fundamentally different social performance of feasting than existed in the earlier part of EH II.¹⁷

We are all aware of the importance of feasting in Aegean and other societies. Recently, I explored the topic of feasting in EH II contexts, with the best example of large-scale feasting occurring at Lerna; here, I highlight a few key points to emphasize how important feasting was to EH II society.¹⁸ Building on the work of Peperaki and Weiberg,¹⁹ I reconstructed a feasting arena at Lerna that featured an open space, or square, that existed from at least the time of Building BG (if not before) and continued in the same place through the period of the House of the Tiles until the end of the EH II period. In Lerna III phase C, the feasting arena was associated with the facade of Building BG on the north side of the square, and the feasting paraphernalia and preparations took place in Rooms CA and DM on the south side of the square (fig. 2). In the subsequent Lerna III phase D, the feasting arena continued essentially in the same place but in a more formalized setting, with the bounding of the open square²⁰ to the east of the House of the Tiles and the monumentalization of the facade of the House of the Tiles on the west side of the square (fig. 3). We can reconstruct the physical setting of the feasting arena to include the following features:²¹

¹²Rutter 1979.

¹³Nakou 2007.

¹⁴Nakou 2007, 235–36.

¹⁵Rutter 1995, 23–4, 19–20, respectively.

¹⁶Rutter 1988; Nakou 2007, 232–33.

¹⁷There are a very few EH II vessels decorated on the underside, primarily small bowls with a large dot of paint on the bottom or underside (Pullen 2011a, 353, 356). The idea of decorating the bottom or underside of a vessel is much more common in the EH III ceramic repertoire, and often the pattern on the bottom is integral with the decoration on the lower part of the vessel (Pullen 2011a, 493–94, tables 6.16, 6.22).

¹⁸Pullen 2011b.

¹⁹Peperaki 2004; Weiberg 2007, 44–57.

²⁰Area C in Weiberg 2007, 51.

²¹Peperaki (2004) introduced the important idea of multiple levels of differentiation of space at various times in the House of the Tiles. Weiberg (2007, 44–57) analyzed the physical setting of the House of the Tiles and identified four separate exterior spaces (one per side of the corridor house) that articulated with the interiors. Thus, instead of a "front" half and "back" half of the interior of the building (e.g., Pullen 1986), she argues one should consider a greater integration of these exterior spaces with the interior.

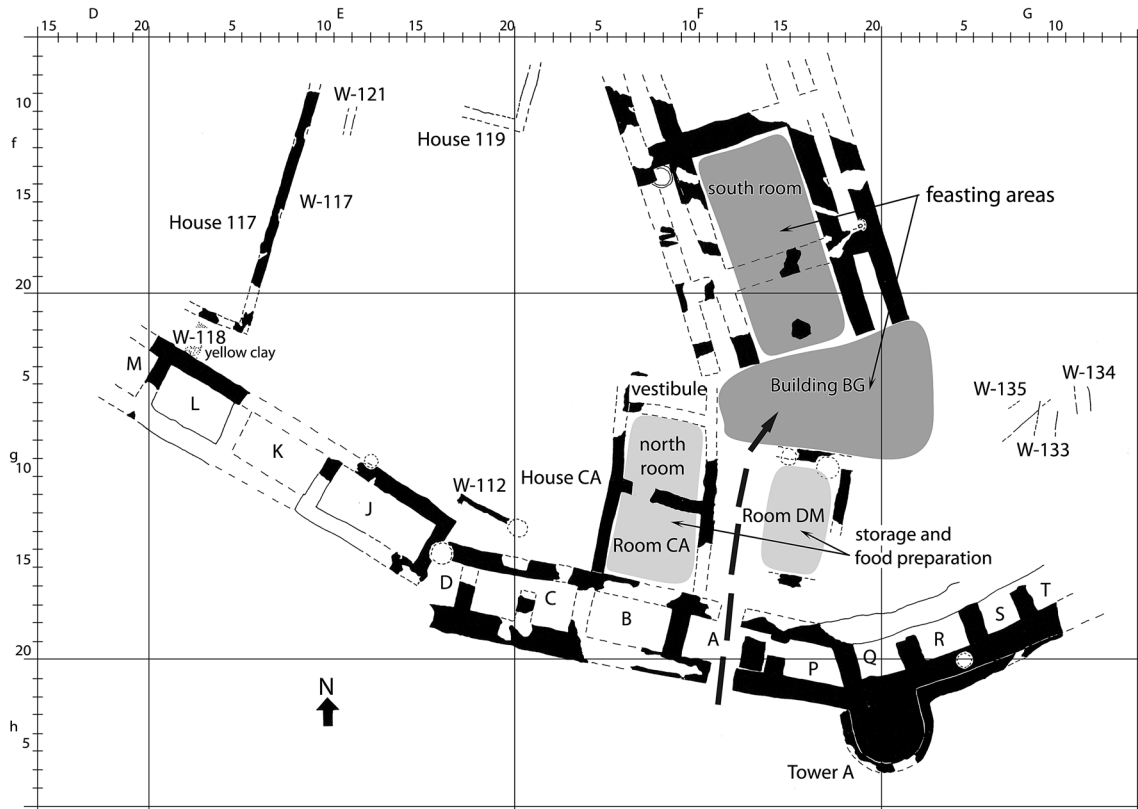


Fig. 2. Feasting arena at Lerna III phase C (EH IIB) in association with Building BG and Rooms CA and DM (modified from Wiencke 2000, plan 7; courtesy the Trustees of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens).

1. Storage of feasting equipment in the small Room XI. This includes at least 62 small bowls (all plain, but one with a pot mark) for consumption, five sauceboats (only two of which were painted), and of course the sealings that probably were markers of contributions to the feast by the participants.²²
 2. The open space on the south of the House of the Tiles, where several fragments of at least eight large roller-stamped pithoi were found,²³ indicating the area where food and drink were stored, perhaps under temporary shelter.²⁴ One might imagine the roller-impressed decoration marked these pithoi for special use.
 3. Room XII, the largest and most elaborately decorated room in the House of the Tiles, with its double doors on the east that opened onto the monumental porch with central post (Room XIII). The porch in turn opened onto the west side of the square.
 4. The second-story balcony over the monumental entrance to the House of the Tiles and its Room XII, which was visible to the open square below.
 5. The large open square (Area C) to the east that continued from earlier phases.
- One can imagine that the doors to the House of the Tiles could function either to exclude those feasting

²² Is it merely coincidental that the number of small bowls in Room XI is about the same as the number of different seal designs represented in the same space? One should remember that there is no evidence for the presence of any storage vessels in Room XI, and no other type of vessel is represented by more than a small sherd.

²³ Wiencke 2000, 288, nos. P936, P1163, P1165–67, P1223, P1237, P1242.

²⁴ Wiencke 2000, 288. The presence of eight pithoi is hardly evidence for large-scale storage; such a number of pithoi might store food for a nuclear family of four to six individuals for a year. Instead, we should imagine that these pithoi were used to store food for a shorter period of time but for more people, even for a large number of people for a one-time event, such as a feast.

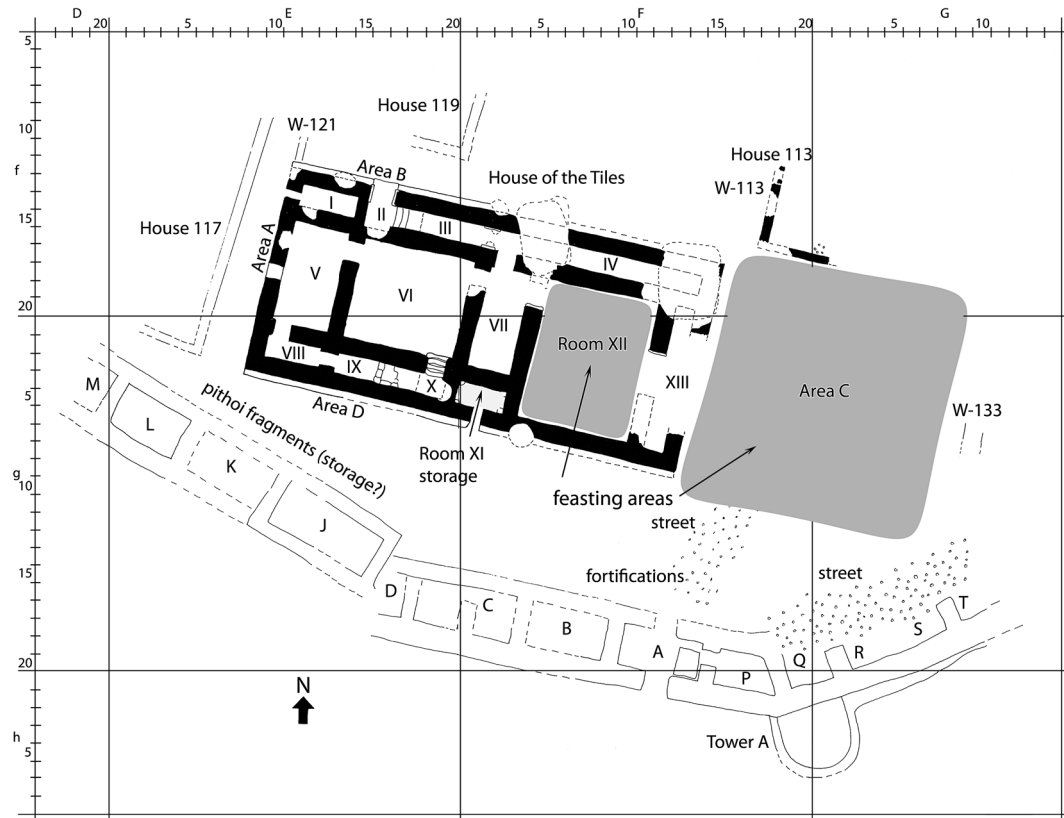


Fig. 3. Feasting arena at Lerna III phase D (EH IIB) in association with the House of the Tiles (modified from Wiencke 2000, plan 8; courtesy the Trustees of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens).

inside from contact with those outside or to give those on the outside a view of activities taking place within Room XII. Thus, Room XII and the open square Area C, while united as the location of the same general feasting activity, were also distinct spaces. Area C extended the full width of the House of the Tiles (12.13 m) north–south and 6–10 m east–west, or approximately 72–120 m²; thus, it could potentially accommodate more participants than Room XII (52 m²).

The ceramic assemblage from Room XI is a feasting (or at least drinking) assemblage.²⁵ Wiencke argues that the bowls and sauceboats found there constituted a special-purpose assemblage rapidly made by only a few potters.²⁶ Peperaki suggests that feasting participants would have been differentiated through rituals of serving order and elaboration, not through the dec-

oration of the ceramic vessels used.²⁷ Thus, we have a situation where differentiation among participants in the feasting was marked not principally by the pottery used (though one should note the two painted sauceboats and one small bowl with a potter's mark among the mostly unpainted Room XI deposit) but rather by where the participants were situated: one group was situated inside Room XII (but visible through the double doors), another outside in the open to the east, and perhaps a third on the second-story balcony looking out over Area C. A dimension of performance in how individuals were served, and in what order, may also have conveyed distinctions between participants.

Additional evidence for feasting comes from other EH II sites, though no systematic study has yet been undertaken.²⁸ At Tsoungiza, some sets of smaller

²⁵ Whether or not the sealings are to be associated with the service ware at a single event, as Peperaki (2004, 223–26) proposes.

²⁶ Wiencke 2000, 235–36.

²⁷ Peperaki 2004, 225.

²⁸ Weiberg (2007, 350–69) discusses feasting in mortuary contexts of the EH II period.

quantities of vessels have been identified as feasting assemblages, and one set was discarded in a pit (Pit 56) associated with an open space on the south side of the proto–corridor house where the porch and entrance were located.²⁹ These finds indicate that feasting was present from the earlier stages of the EH II period and likely associated with open spaces adjacent to important structures. This same phenomenon has been identified, albeit on a larger scale, for the predecessors of the Minoan court complexes; large-scale feasting is associated with large courts at Knossos and Phaistos from at least the Early Minoan period, perhaps even, in the case of Phaistos, from the Final Neolithic period. The courts continued into the Middle Minoan period to become the West Court and Central Court of the court complexes (“palaces”).³⁰

Given the importance of feasting to EH II society, one of the most puzzling aspects of the Kastri/Lefkandi I phenomenon is the variation in adoption of various components of it among different regions. Why did the northeast Peloponnese (i.e., the Argolid and Corinthia) not adopt components of the Kastri/Lefkandi I ceramic assemblage, despite the proximity of sites such as Kolonna³¹ and some in Attica that did? It was not for lack of knowledge of the Lefkandi I shapes, for some of them appeared at Lerna in non-ceramic form in EH II, as seen in the cutaway spouted jugs on a Lerna seal³² and the stone bell-shaped cup most likely carved several generations before its deposition in a Lerna IV phase 1 bothros (i.e., early EH III).³³

The distribution of material of the so-called Kampos Group, dating to the period from the late EB I into the early EB II, provides a comparable scenario for the impact of new cultural elements on cultures of the northeast Peloponnese. “Cycladic” material culture from this period has been recognized throughout southern Euboia, Attica, the Saronic Gulf, and the southern Argolid and even on the north coast of

Crete.³⁴ A recent rescue excavation by the Δ' Ephoreia (Nafplion) at Delpriza (Kranidhi), near Franchthi Cave, revealed a built tomb similar to the built Grave 14 at Ayios Kosmas; Delpriza yielded the remains of at least 30 individuals (based on the number of skulls) accompanied by a Plastiras-type figurine and pottery of Kampos types.³⁵ This excavation confirms what we had postulated for the southern Argolid a number of years ago based on our survey work there—that is, during the EH I and early EH II phases the area was more closely linked in terms of material culture with the Saronic Gulf and the Cyclades than with the Argive Plain and Corinthia.³⁶ Our recent work in the Korphos region on the western shore of the Saronic Gulf paints a similar picture, as far as we can tell from surface remains. But elements of Kampos material culture penetrated far inland, too: even at Tsoungiza, frying pans, pedestaled bowls or fruit stands, and the popularity of incised and impressed decoration all point to the penetration of Kampos-related ideas into the interior of the Greek mainland.³⁷ At some point in the EH II period, the Cycladic nature of the material culture waned, and the EH II ceramics of the southern Argolid and the Korphos region became quite similar to those of the Argive Plain and Corinthia.³⁸

This period of intense interaction and influence in the earlier Early Bronze Age indicates that there is no geographic reason for the northeast Peloponnese to have been isolated from adjacent regions to the east and north in the adoption of Lefkandi I elements. One might suggest that the lack of adoption was merely a factor of distance—in other words, the appearance of Lefkandi I elements fell off and then ended before those elements could reach the Argolid and Corinthia. This explanation does not account for why the knowledge of Lefkandi I shapes appeared at Lerna, but not the ceramic forms. Rather, we should look to cultural reasons to explain why the EH II inhabitants

²⁹ For the feasting assemblages at Tsoungiza, see Pullen 2011b, 218–20. For the open space, Surface 2, associated with the proto–corridor house, see Pullen 2011a, 256–61.

³⁰ For Phaistos, see Todaro and di Tonto 2008; Todaro 2012. For Knossos, see Tomkins 2012.

³¹ Rutter 2012, 77–8.

³² *CMS* 5, no. 109; Heath 1958, no. S55. The identification of the vessels as a “typical” Kastri/Lefkandi I shape was first made by Aruz (1994, 221) and emphasized by Weingarten 1997, 160.

³³ Caskey 1956, 164, fig. 4, pl. 47i; Banks 1967, 227–30; Rutter 2008, 465. Two small portions of ceramic vessels at Lerna perhaps are Lefkandi I shapes, a tankard (Rutter 1995, no. P637) and a bell-shaped cup (Rutter 1995, no. P646), but these appear in an EH III context, and not one of the earliest EH III contexts at Lerna (Rutter 2008, 464–65). These

two vessel fragments are, as reiterated by Rutter, unique for the Peloponnese in either EH II or EH III contexts. Wiencke (2000, 656) suggests possible “influence from the Lefkandi I shapes in later EH II ceramic types” of the collared bowl and some askos types, but there are no explicitly “Lefkandi I” ceramic pieces in EH II contexts at Lerna.

³⁴ A partial list of relevant sites with this material includes southern Euboia (Tankosic 2011), Tsepi (Pantelidou Gkofa 2005), the Southern Argolid Survey (Pullen 1995), and Ayia Photia (Davaras and Betancourt 2004, 2012).

³⁵ Kossyva 2009.

³⁶ Pullen 1995; see also Pullen 1984.

³⁷ Pullen 2011a, 897–99, 901–2.

³⁸ Though there are still some differences, such as a preference for pedestals over ring bases for bowls and sauceboats in the southern Argolid and Saronic Gulf regions.

of the Argolid and Corinthia retained their traditional handleless and asymmetrical drinking vessel shapes, whereas their neighbors to the east and north adopted some of the new drinking paraphernalia.

Elsewhere we have suggested that Kolonna, through its control of maritime transportation, prevented the coastal regions of the Saronic Gulf from developing long-distance trade connections through maritime activity.³⁹ This does not, however, explain why communities such as Lerna, Tiryns, and Korakou, all of which did not need to go through the Saronic Gulf for maritime connections, did not adopt Lefkandi I components. Perhaps, then, the inhabitants of the northeast Peloponnese deliberately chose not to accept the Lefkandi ceramics and the different drinking and feasting performance their presence implies. It may be that the liquid(s) consumed through the Lefkandi I assemblage were not to the taste of the inhabitants of the northeast Peloponnese.⁴⁰

Nakou, following Broodbank, identifies a Cycladic sphere (which includes Euboia and east-central mainland regions such as Attica and Boeotia) of social structure based on “asymmetrical power relations based on the monopolization of long-distance trade by advantageously situated communities.”⁴¹ In such a social structure, there is an expanding need for the acquisition of exotic goods and other foreign novelties, including new types of consumption practices. Nakou suggests that in contrast to the Cycladic sphere, the northeast Peloponnesian communities favored conformity over competition—hence the prevalence of essentially identical drinking vessels in the House of the Tiles feasting assemblage. This preference for conformity over competition and display may also be reflected in the mortuary record; the paucity of graves in the Argolid and Corinthia is well known and contrasts with the numerous graves of the Cyclades and coastal regions of the mainland, such as Attica. The few graves we do have from the mainland, such as those at Zygouries or Delpriza (discussed above), seem to be for a larger number of individuals, in contrast to the smaller number entombed in Cycladic graves.

Corridor houses are present both in areas where Lefkandi I elements were adopted (e.g., at Thebes and Kolonna) and in areas where these elements

were not adopted (e.g., at Lerna). Unfortunately, our knowledge of how these buildings functioned at sites other than Lerna is limited and fragmentary, and at those sites we cannot reconstruct a feasting pattern such as that outlined above for Lerna. Undoubtedly, given its widespread popularity, feasting took place at those other sites with corridor houses, as well as at others throughout the Early Helladic mainland. If, as I have argued before,⁴² the corridor houses represent the seats of power held by individuals (chiefs?), then one might adopt the notion of agency here and suggest that some leaders were at the forefront of accepting cultural change (the competition and display culture), others were receptive to cultural change, and yet others were less amenable to change. However, several scholars, such as Weiberg and Peperaki, have emphasized the multiplicity of functions occurring in and around the corridor houses, and thus the agency of an individual leader may not be so important.⁴³ Thus, despite the great similarities among the corridor houses, perhaps they really were used in different ways, or some functions were more emphasized at one corridor house than at others.

Nonetheless, we are left with a gap that still needs to be bridged—that of understanding the “why” behind the variation in cultural change in the later part of the Early Bronze Age Aegean.

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³⁹Pullen and Tartaron 2007. During the EH II period, Kolonna began its emergence into one of the largest and most important sites in the Aegean, surrounded by fortification walls rivaled only by those of contemporaneous Troy. We believe that the growth of Kolonna was fueled in part by its adoption of the Cycladic longboat in EH II, allowing it to participate more readily in the maritime economy of the EB II Aegean (Broodbank 2000, 256–58) and to dominate the Saronic Gulf

coastal regions, nearly all of which were reachable in one day’s travel by longboat from Kolonna.

⁴⁰Rutter (2008, 467–68) speculates on the possible liquids consumed.

⁴¹Nakou 2007, 238.

⁴²E.g., Pullen 2008.

⁴³Supra n. 19.

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