The Rise of the Local in Dark Age Greece: The Case of Nichoria

Vincent Pichelli-260448188

Department of History and Classical Studies

McGill University, Montreal

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Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines in depth one of the archaeological sites which has traditionally been considered to be paradigmatic of Greece's 'Dark Age' (1100-800 BCE). Nichoria raises many of the questions about what had happened to the inhabitants of the Greek mainland once the Mycenaean palace system had fallen. In pursuing this line of inquiry both the site of Nichoria and the region of Messenia will be considered with special emphasis on examining these in their own context without anticipating the Greek civilization which came afterwards. Nichoria shows us that there is more continuity from the Bronze Age than has often been admitted. There is value in parsing this and distinguishing it from associations with Homer and other 8th century social realities. Indeed, what it holds most in common with other Greek communities both contemporary to it and later is what emerged after the Bronze Age: a parochial community that is self-referential in its norms. Nichoria's particular brand of parochialism, if anything, reinforces the notion that there existed a great deal of social diversity in the Dark Age.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine en profondeur un des sites archéologiques qui a été considéré exemplaire de 'L'Ère Obscure' (1100-800 av. J.-C.). Nichoria suscite plusieurs questions concernant le sort des habitants de la Grèce après la destruction du système Mycénienne des palais. En examinant ce sujet, le site archéologique de Nichoria et la région de Messénie seront considérés avec emphase sur l'étude de leur contexte dans L'Ère Obscure sans présager la Civilisation Héllénique qui a émergé plus tard. Nichoria nous démontre qu'il y a plus de continuité provenant de L'ère de Bronze qu'admit auparavant. Il est utile d'expliquer ceci et d'éviter de faire trop d'associations avec Homère ainsi que d'autres réalités sociaux provenant du 8ième siècle. Ce que Nichoria tient en commun avec les autres communautés Grecques est le paradigme qui a apparu après L'Ère de Bronze: une communauté isolé qui est autoréférentiel en ce qui concerne leurs normes sociaux. Manifestement, Nichoria renforce la notion qu'il existait une grande diversité sociale dans L'Ère Obscure.

Chronological Chart (according to the MME)[1]

Final Neolithic: 3500-3000 B.C.E.

Middle Helladic (MH) I: 2100-1850 B.C.E.

Middle Helladic II: 1850-1600 B.C.E.

Middle Helladic III: 1600-1550 B.C.E.

Late Helladic (LH) I: 1550-1500 B.C.E.

Late Helladic IIA: 1500-1450 B.C.E.

Late Helladic IIB: 1450-1420 B.C.E.

Late Helladic IIIA1: 1420-1380 B.C.E.

Late Helladic IIIA2: 1380-1330 B.C.E.

Late Helladic IIIA2/IIIB1 (transition): 1330-1250 B.C.E.

Late Helladic IIIB2: 1250-1200? B.C.E.

Late Helladic IIIC: 1200-1125? B.C.E.

Dark Age (DA) I: 1075-975? B.C.E.

Dark Age II: 975-850? B.C.E.

Dark Age II/III (transition): 850-800? B.C.E.

Dark Age III: 800-750? B.C.E.

Late Geometric: 750-700 B.C.E.

Archaic: 700-500 B.C.E.

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[1] The above dating chart is a near exact rendering of the chart to be found in MacDonald, William A., William D. E. Coulson, and John Rosser (1983)[to be referred to as *Nichoria* **III**]: xxvii. MacDonald comments that habitation is uncertain in the period of LHIIIC; furthermore, the evidence does not suggest any discernible trace for the use of the ridge in the Archaic period. MME refers to the University of Minnesota's Messenia Expedition in the 1960s. The three resulting volumes compile the archaeological findings on Nichoria and will be referred to as *Nichoria I, II* and *III* respectively.

Introduction

  There are many problems associated with the 11th-early 8th centuries BCE, encompassing everything from terminology (i.e. the 'Dark Age' vs the 'Iron Age' vs the 'Proto-Geometric period') to questions of continuity and change as these same centuries consisted of an important gestation period for the Greek civilization which later emerged. Indeed, after the fall of the Bronze Age 'palaces' and Mycenaean civilization, the paradigms governing a sizeable part of mainland Greece had virtually vanished in the span of 50 to 100+ years. These constituted a network-like system of exchange and redistribution of resources between the palaces and their concomitant towns, farmsteads and hamlets—all of varying size, significance and function (see chapter 2). Palaces were the 'nerve centers' of such networks and many outposts and towns were headed by their affiliated elite who (in the case of the kingdom of Pylos at least)[2] participated in a political economy of luxury goods in addition to the contribution of foodstuffs and resources. This political economy demarcated the elite as being part of a political class which would feast and be present at a *wanax*'s table. Such kingdoms would have had contacts with the Near East as well as with parts of the Western Mediterranean, though it is primarily towards the former that the Mycenaeans ostensibly directed their gaze for socio-political inspiration.

  This socio-political organisation (briefly summarized above) reached its end in a series of conflagrations whose exact nature are not clear and are debated by scholars. Some have claimed that the Bronze Age in Greece had come to an end due to a great migration (or series of migrations) of peoples which swept through the palatial kingdoms. Scholars in the past have tried to associate these migrations with those of the "Dorians" which are alleged in the literary record though this theory has since fallen out of fashion. Another explanation is that the

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[2] Aprile (2013).

Mycenaeans suffered a series of internal struggles which—given the interconnectivity of those kingdoms—may have precipitated a disaster to other palaces via a sort of 'domino effect'. Some have also argued that the raids and attacks which were suffered by the Egyptians, the Hittites, Cyprus and other cities in the Levant (in Egypt's case, the culprits are referred to as the so-called "Sea Peoples") evince a larger phenomenon of raids throughout the eastern Mediterranean which perhaps brought low the Mycenaeans as well. This has been conjectured based on the similar chronology and the fact that Pylos' own Linear B tablets seem to indicate that an impending attack was expected from the sea. These along with climate change and economic factors have also been suggested. Scholars have noted problems with each theory and it is often suspected that the truth may involve a combination of these factors. Nevertheless, what remains beyond the shadow of a doubt is that the way of life which had held sway for centuries had more or less ended and yielded to apparent uncertainty. [3] The palaces fell, migrations seem to have ensued and communities apparently shrunk as the knowledge of writing and of building permanent stone structures had disappeared. This has often been cited as Greece's civilizational 'reboot' whereby new ways of life had to be developed for communities no longer under the umbrella of the palaces.

As a matter of course, this era is difficult to assess due to the paucity of evidence from every quarter. Scholarly endeavour has spawned many differing theories about the levels of material sophistication, social structures and the extent to which the examples reflect a larger configuration. Nichoria is one of these oft cited examples and it has been used as a template— along with Lefkandi in Eretria—for discussions of the era at large. The aim of this research is to

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[3] The end of the Mycenaean Age is beyond the scope of this essay, but for more on this issue, see: Drew (1995, 1988), Andronikos (1954), Mylonas (1966), Vermeule (1960), Hall (2007), Chadwick (1976), Carpenter (1966), Desborough (1964).

try and reduce the scale of the investigation as much as possible in order to get a more accurate look at a Dark Age site which has been perceived as paradigmatic. To that end, the following chapters will attempt to restrict themselves (for the most part) to Messenia and Nichoria only, in order to assess them within their own context. Nevertheless, even within this lens, there remain some further problems with analysis. Firstly, by far the greatest focus of the archaeological investigations in the area to this day is *vis-à-vis* the Bronze Age remains and material record. This focus on the Bronze Age in Messenia may explain in part the paucity of evidence discovered for the Dark Age (though as we shall see, there are other reasons for this). Secondly, despite this Bronze Age focus, much of what has been said on Nichoria does not make overly explicit the BA continuities which, I shall argue, were still operative and formative for the settlement patterns we see in Dark Age Messenia (see Chapter 2).

In chapter 1, I endeavour first to describe the site, surrounds and material record as covered in the archaeological reports. The intention here is to summarize what is known of the site and the principle arguments surrounding the primary building remains and their material record. Also summarized are the nearby cemetery, the immediate nearby resources and the advantages inherent to the ridge upon which Nichoria stands. As viewed only through the lens of evidence on Nichoria ridge, one detects a pragmatic if not wholly cultural continuity of the BA kingdoms. Use of this lens is deliberate in order to counterpoise the more 'enthusiastic' interpretations which some scholars have taken—especially regarding the site's central building (the Chief's Dwelling, Unit IV-1).[4] Re-examining the archaeological record is important as it sets the tone for the following investigations.

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[4] It has been proposed that Unit IV-1 was a continuation of the Mycenaean distributive system in microcosm over the ridge's community. See chapter 1.

Though the evidence on the ridge, if viewed alone, can spur skepticism about alleged continuities, an examination of the broader Messenian picture (insofar as it can be discerned) reveals some startling possibilities for these continuities in ways which were unique to Messenia. It has often been assumed that with the collapse of the palace system, its distributive network destroyed and political hegemony dismantled, the settlement patterns of Messenia would follow suit and change (or collapse) as well. To the contrary, the Dark Age settlement patterns indicate an apparent stability as most of DA sites which were found were situated on former BA sites. Not only were Mycenaean remains the only structures of any permanence throughout the landscape, but the locations themselves presented similar advantages to DA inhabitants as they did serving as farmsteads and collection centers in the Kingdom of Pylos. In recent scholarship (see chapter 2), the primacy of the distributive role of the palace and the dependence of settlements thereof has been challenged in favor of highlighting the self-sufficiency of many of these settlements. Sites which survived the immediate aftermath of the 12th century's conflagrations may have indeed thrived without the burden of tribute from the palace. Messenia itself, due to its geographical isolation and unusual (for Greece) fertility, in effect forced no true need for the 'survivors' to move so far afield. This isolation and relative ease of access to resources made for a Nichoria (and one suspects Messenia as well) which was not outward looking but inward looking—as the lack of evidence for extensive movement beyond the ridge and trade with neighbors suggests. This thesis' second chapter examines the enduring BA settlement patterns and their effect on sites such as Nichoria.

In the third chapter, then, I synthesize features from the first two chapters in order adumbrate elements of a possible social structure at Nichoria. My focus is primarily on the material record and a comparison between Lefkandi and Nichoria in order to contrast what I

argue are major differences in their social structure. Nichoria emerges as inward-looking and politically stable whereas Lefkandi portrays a dynamic, competitive and trade-oriented settlement. Nichoria's own material record, furthermore, reveals far more about its reliance and continuity on its BA remains than its presumed contacts suggested by the excavators and other scholars. Nichoria's social hierarchy also seems to have drawn some sort permanence around the Chief's Dwelling, whereas Lefkandi's changing center of political gravity across its settlement record suggests a more changeable social *milieu*.

Finally, there have been many attempts to graft the social structures reflected in Hesiod and the Homeric epics onto a putative Dark Age society. Most notably, Moses Finley had located Homeric society into the 10th and 9th centuries. This he reasoned on the basis that the imagined past of the poems could not be so far removed from the audience's own time that they could not relate to the values and social features within the epics yet still discernibly *in the past*. However, as much scholarship on the nature of oral poetry tells us, it is unlikely that Homer can offer much explanatory power with regards to Nichoria itself.[5] The society whose needs demanded the rise of the epics was quite different from that of Nichoria and this reinforces the common thread to this entire endeavour: that the Dark Age for Nichoria and Messenia followed local paradigms and were governed by parochial concerns. Nichoria did not seem to possess outsiders as alternative models to either demarcate themselves away from or consciously imitate.

Ultimately, my goal in assessing Nichoria is in addressing differing levels of locality—from the ridge's immediate surroundings to Messenia as a region—and attempting to make

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[5] See Chapter 4.

clearer how the site should be considered in within the rapidly changing landscape of the 'Greek'

world at this point in time.

Chapter 1:

Nichoria Ridge

The history of the Nichoria ridge is not one that can be easily placed within the general framework of settlement patterns in the period of Greece's Dark Age. To begin with, it stands as the only major Dark Age site excavated in the entire region of Messenia and therefore is our only basis for pottery and material dating for the area in this period. The Minnesota Messenia Expedition (MME) remains the most complete account of the site and its surroundings, though there has certainly been much scholarship since. But those scholars, as must be done here, had no choice but to rely on the reports from the excavators. Be that as it may, my research will attempt to demonstrate an appreciable link between the physical history of the site of Nichoria and settlement patterns in the region. In this first chapter, however, the priority will be to assess the site and its environs in order to discern some crucial elements of physical and perhaps economic reality in the area itself for the purposes of broader future analysis of the region.

<p style="text-align:center"><u>The Site and its Environment</u></p>

Located around 2 km from the Messenian Gulf, the Nichoria ridge is part of a series of plateaus within that area of the peninsula. Possessing an approximately north-west to south-east orientation, the hilltop site is roughly 500 meters in length and retains a striking command of the surrounding area.[6] McDonald himself puts it quite succinctly:

"The position is strategic, controlling the main east-west land route across the peninsula where it changes elevation from plain to plateau and overlooking the junction of this route with the road along the west side of the gulf. The recent village of Rizomilo[s] is located at this crossroad. From Nichoria one has an unobstructed view to east and south over the lower Pamisos valley and the upper gulf to the mighty Taygetos range-a command as sweeping as that of Ano Englianos on the west side of the peninsula. To south and west the eye controls long vistas along the main approaches by land."[7]

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[6] MacDonald (1972): 221.
[7] MacDonald (1972): 221.

Save one hill to the north, it was (in all likelihood) the highest hill in the immediate area, which afforded it a tremendous advantage for intercepting encroachment.[8] The bedrock sediments consist mainly of clay, sand and brown silt. Nichoria stood on such sediments owing to its intermediate position on the gradient soil between the coast and the mainland of Messenia.[9] Due to erosion from the elements, much of the ridge's edges have been reduced and therefore the site today has significantly changed from the one in view during the Bronze Age and the ensuing Dark Age (see Area II in **fig.1**, where the erosion has been more prominent; see also **fig.7**).[10] Nichoria overlooked the combined lowlands of the rivers Tsana, Karia, Velika, Tiflo, and Tzori (referred to as the "Five Rivers" region). This permitted for an arable landscape with a large water supply for settlement in the area.[11] For all these reasons, Nichoria, both in the Bronze and Dark Ages, was a prime location for the establishment of a settlement.

For the purpose of this research, my primary focus will be on the Dark Age settlement, with only a few opening comments on the site's Bronze Age settlement and history. Beyond this brief treatment, I will only mention Nichoria's Bronze Age elements in conjunction with its Dark Age elements, if it carries explanatory power. In Nichoria's direct vicinity, only a few hundred meters west from the main site of habitation, lay a Bronze Age cemetery. The view of artificial mounds, characteristic of Mycenaean *tholos* tombs, had spurred the first investigations of local Mycenaean material finds.[12] The site itself has been thought of as (at the very least) an important town and perhaps economic center in the "Further" province of the kingdom of Pylos in the Late

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[8] Ibid: 221.
[9] Rapp (1978): 78. [= *Nichoria I*]; see figure 1
[10] MacDonald, (1972): 219. MacDonald speculates that there may have been a "retreat of the edges by as much as 6 to 10m in a few locations".
[11] *Nichoria I*, 80.
[12] MacDonald (1972): 219.

Bronze Age (LBA), due to its capacity to control approaches and intersections from both land and sea.[13] Considering the paucity of larger sites in southern Messenia as well as its facility for watching the major crossroads leading towards Pylos, it would seem that Nichoria is a very likely candidate for such an important town. [14]

On an economic note, according to the findings of the excavators in the summary reports, there was a marked transition from cattle to sheep/goats on the part of the settlers in the immediate area from the LH(Late-Helladic) to the DA period, as far as is discernable from animal remains. Sheep and goats are better suited to graze and forage on plateaus and hills such as that of Nichoria, whereas cattle are better suited to grassy plains. This has been interpreted to mean that it involved a change of prominence towards herding and pasturing in the lowlands below instead of the dairy production which was apparently in use during the LH period. All of this would be in keeping with the generally acknowledged theory that this was a time of relative instability and of reduced agriculture. [15]

However, this picture of relative instability is challenged when due consideration is given to the overall distribution of DA sites throughout Messenia. Indeed "MME statistics show that 82% of the LHIIIC sites, 88% of the Sub-Mycenaean sites, and 92% of the Proto-Geometric sites were founded on old Mycenaean centers."[16]In other words, though diminished, settlement patterns seem to have remained roughly the same despite the claim of instability. Though the issue of settlement patterns shall be dealt with more thoroughly in later chapters, this discrepancy between continuity and change must be kept in mind throughout the study, even as we examine

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[13] Shelmerdine (1981): 319-321; The suggestion that *Ti-mi-to-a-ke-e*, mentioned in Linear B tablets, may in fact be Nichoria is not universally accepted. For doubts see F. Lukermann and J. Moody (1978): 86-87.
[14] Shelmerdine, (1981): 321-322; MacDonald (1972): 108-110; Chadwick (1976): 47-48.
[15] *Nichoria I*, 94-95.
[16] *Ibid*, 102; Morgan (1990): 68-69.

the site of Nichoria proper. After the fall of the Mycenaean "Palace" system, Nichoria had also seen an interruption of settlement upon the ridge. Habitation was to be resumed in around 1050 BCE, and the steady increase in the quantity of estimated families living on the ridge had rendered it a substantial Dark Age site by the Dark Age II and III periods (to be referred to as DA II/III). The peak of habitation and population during this period had been in DA II, and will thus serve as the primary focus of investigation.[17]

<u>Nichoria: Areas II, III & IV of the Ridge</u>

The MME excavations organised the site into several areas upon the top of the ridge. These areas comprise: Areas I, II and III to the north; Areas IV & V in the rough center of the site and finally Areas VI & VII to the southeast **(see fig. 1)**.[18] As mentioned above, the excavators had conveniently arranged the chronology of the site into the phases known as DAI, DAII, DAII/III (a possible transition period briefly reflected in the archeological record) and DAIII. The approximate (this the excavators stress) nature of the dating is as follows: DAI (ca. 1075-975 BCE), DAII (ca. 975-850 BCE), DAII/III (ca. 850-800 BCE) and DAIII (800-750 BCE). The span of the DAI layer is relatively difficult to establish due to "the meager nature of both pottery and small finds and because of uncertain stratigraphic contexts." [19] In any case, the primary locus of concern for this study is that of the DA II layer and closer observation, in particular, to the primary building at the center which is referred to by the excavators as Unit IV-1.

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[17] MacDonald (1972): 215-219.
[18] *Nichoria III*, 5.
[19] *Ibid*, 318.

Before this, however, it would be fruitful to render a general layout and appraisal of the site and its settlement. As discernable from its archaeological chronology (see above), Nichoria was a settlement which hosted differing levels of population. Most noticeably, DAII seems to point to an occupation by approximately 40 families, or around 200 people, making it the most active and populated phase in Nichoria's development.[20] DAII is also more securely dated than DAI due to the architecture and stratigraphy. For the most part, this sort of evidence is derived from the floor of the central building known as Unit IV-1. Other forms of evidence which allowed the excavators to establish a (albeit not absolute) dating are the "characteristics of shape, decoration, and clay type in the pottery from this level [which] are used to identify DAII material from elsewhere on the ridge, notably in Area IVSW and in Area III."[21]

Before analysing the most significant architectural feature of the site (Unit IV-1), let us examine some of the remains in the surrounding area atop the ridge. Area II contained no traces of DA homes. All that was to be found there was a short collection of pottery sherds from DAI/DAII interspersed with a much larger supply of Mycenaean, Late-Helladic (LH) and Byzantine pottery.[22] This would suggest, based on the much larger presence of Mycenaean pottery, either that pottery production had lowered in this period due to the population's disposition to recycling Mycenaean material or that the amount of pottery merely reflects the small settlement size in comparison to the Bronze Age. Determining what is more likely to have occurred is obscured by the evidence itself (or lack thereof) and by the fact that the above

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[20] *Ibid*, 3-8. The excavators did not elaborate on what they meant by "families". However, in this context which seems to have consisted of some combination between pasturage and sedentary settlement, the 'nuclear' family seems to have been likely. Indeed, when details about the 'Chief's Dwelling' (see below) are considered, it does not seem to strain credulity to suppose that the other denizens of the ridge also lived in circumstance which we could term 'domestic' (i.e. people had children, gathered food and seem to have enjoyed a form of communal existence focused around the Unit IV-1 (chief's home))

[21] *Ibid*, 319.

[22] *Ibid*, 9.

explanations are not mutually exclusive. Regardless, it appears that the quotidian existence of the

ridge's inhabitants was by-and-large achieved with what remained of Mycenaean materials.

With regards to Area III, we find the same diversity in pottery remains, yet in this area

we are able to discern some clear signs of DA settlement due to the area's higher concentration

of DA artifacts along the (today) heavily eroded northern edge.[23] The primary architectural

remains which I wish to draw attention to is that which is referred to as Unit III-1. Remains of

DAII pottery were found beneath the foundations, providing us with a *terminus post quem* for the

structure as being from the DAII layer. The foundations were of Mycenaean construction and

apsidal in form. The foundations were never, as far as we know, higher than a single stone block

and it stands to reason that the remainder of the dwelling consisted of either mud brick, daub, or

other perishable materials (likely some combination of several materials).[24] From this the

excavators derive the conclusion that—though not intended as a foundation for larger

monumental buildings—the Mycenaean blocks functioned as frameworks or "outlines" upon

which the inhabitants would establish dwellings.[25] In this vein, continuity had remained between

the inhabitants and their Mycenaean surroundings. At the core of the apsidal wall lies a pit,

whose exact function remains unclear despite some traces of animal bones (some displaying

signs of burning), sherds, a bronze pin and a fragment of a chert blade.[26] Immediately to the east

lies what remains of a posthole. This, presumably, had functioned as a kind of support structure

for an overarching roof. Excavators had speculated that this may in fact be represented on "a

trapezoidal schist plaque (**N701**) on which a number of lines are incised. They form what appears

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[23] *Ibid*, 9.
[24] *Ibid*, 14-15.
[25] *Ibid*, 16.
[26] *Ibid*, 15.

to be a tent-like or A-frame structure with a deeply pitched roof."[27] **(see fig. 2)** It is unclear how common this sort of construction was in DAII, however I would hazard a guess that the size of the Mycenaean apsidal foundation suggests that one is not dealing with the more common huts which were likely to have been there; perhaps it indicates greater wealth on the part of one or more families, but further speculation is constrained by scanty evidence. However, the point remains that settlement could still be substantial (relative to settlement size) on the periphery of the ridge.

<center>The "Chieftain's Dwelling": Unit IV-1</center>

This is likewise the case if we consider Area IV, which had been the center of habitation for DAII and for DAIII in particular. The main structure in question was that of Unit IV-1. This building, along with its later DAIII successor Unit IV-5, was indeed the largest building throughout the site and considered to have perhaps fulfilled a number of functions including, but not limited to, the dwelling of a possible "chieftain" and his family.[28] Due to its position—chronologically speaking—at the core of DA habitation, Unit IV-1 will be the primary focus in this chapter. Apparently, there had been two major phases in its construction (referred to as Phase 1 & 2 by the excavators), which can be distinguished by excavators' claims that initially, contrary to Unit III-1 (see above), the building had been rectangular and not apsidal. At this initial stage, the structure would have been 10.50m EW [in orientation] X 7.0m NS **(see fig. 3)**. However, there are several problems with this interpretation. These have been adumbrated by both Fagerström and Ainian, who both challenge the assertion that the original phase had been

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[27] *Ibid*, 16, 490.
[28] *Ibid*, 19.

rectangular.[29] Indeed, though there was certainly a pervasive trend for rectangular Mycenaean houses, we also have examples for apsidal and curvilineal structures during the Late Bronze Age (LBA).[30] The fact that other structures at Nichoria were apsidal as well undermines the theory further still.[31] Coulson interprets in *Nichoria III* that Wall D essentially consists of the original walled end of the building and that the courtyard encapsulated by the apsidal shape was a later addition associated with phase 2. However, as others have indicated, Wall X does not align with Wall D to form the rear wall of the first building. Instead, as Ainian suggests, it may be more likely that the apse had been there from the first and that the lack of alignment between Wall A and the apse may simply be due to a repair which could possibly have been initiated for the purpose of a side-door.[32] Whatever the case, this raises the issue of settlement continuity between the DA inhabitants and their Mycenaean predecessors. With this and other examples of recycling Mycenaean remains, I argue that the inhabitants held at best 'weak' ties to their predecessors, and what followed instead was a mixture of practical concerns along with a limited continuity of their settlement (from the BA), with new ways of reckoning their place on the ridge.

To build upon this claim, I will examine more closely the objects, activities and roles which can be found from within the "Chief's dwelling" itself. This is to refer to the remains of the building know as Unit IV-1. I will begin with this building since it is thought of as the building of central importance by the excavators during the DAII (10th century BCE) period which, as mentioned above, was the most populous and occupied period for Nichoria in the Dark Age. (**see fig. 4**) I have already touched on the notion that the building had already carried some

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[29] Ainian (1997): 77; Fagerström (1988): 36.
[30] Ainian (1989): 269-270. There is also a parallel to be found in Nichoria's near contemporary, Lefkandi (see chapter 3).
[31] Ainian (1989): 273.
[32] Ainian (1997): 77.

Mycenaean precedent in the apsidal form of the building foundations. In this same respect, I will endeavour to outline those elements which could be construed as a continuation of Mycenaean tendencies in the building and examine how this interpretation fares in light of changes brought about from the DA period. Within these juxtapositions, I will also attempt to highlight some of the more socially revealing features (especially in chapters 2-3) and attempt a synthesis.

According to the excavators, the interior of the phase 1 building was not, as was originally thought, "partitioned", but rather the probability is that it consisted of one room with rough dimensions of "8.0 m EW X 6.0 m NS." [33] The Wall S (see **fig.** 4) had rested on Mycenaean (a LHIIIB house to be exact) foundations, though these had been fragmentary in form.[34] Other Mycenaean fragments used for the foundation were accounted for by the excavators in light of the slight slope which existed in the Mycenaean age (going W in orientation), whereby the DA inhabitants had acquired the "tumbled" fragments to reuse.[35] Unlike the Mycenaean builders, however, it seems that the DA inhabitants had (fairly successfully) concerned themselves with flattening and leveling the surface of the floor for the building. A further difference was the use of "chinking", which was the filling of gaps and increasing of stone density in the walls by means of smaller stones; this their Mycenaean predecessors did not practice.[36]

Within the building, approximately in the center (see **fig.** 4), there is a circular pit to be found (around 1.08 m in diameter). This pit contains soft soil and the remains of "carbonized elements."[37] This was interpreted by the excavator to indicate that this was likely a hearth. Given

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[33] *Nichoria III*, 25; MacDonald (1972): 253.
[34] *Nichoria III*, 27.
[35] *Ibid,* 27.
[36] *Ibid,* 27.
[37] *Ibid,* 27.

its central position in the building as well as the oak and olive composition of the fragments

(these can even be commonly found in the area today), it would appear to be a well-founded

belief.[38] Nearer to the apsidal section delineated by Wall D, we find a paved circle built with

smooth and flat stones.[39] Such stones, as well as the pottery in its earth fill indicate a transition

from LHIIIA to DA, have allowed the excavator (correctly, I believe) to deduce that this too was

made with the fragments of Mycenaean buildings from the slope.[40] A carbonized layer (0.05 m

thick) was detected on top of the circle's stones, which led to a further deduction that this

functioned as an altar. It may be possible that the distinction was not yet made between

(communal) religious and domestic functions within the same building.[41]

The excavator further expounds on the nature of the building's roofing, as pointed to by

the postholes found on site. Three such postholes were found on the interior side of Wall A (**see**

fig. 4) and from these MME excavators have restored seven posts in total which would have

propped up the interior. The positioning and orientation of these (likely) wooden beams seem to

indicate that the walls of Unit IV-1 were vertical.[42] This was interpreted to have been

advantageous both for the support of the roof's weight as well as creating "minimal interference

with the view of the altar."[43]

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[38] *Ibid,* 27; *Nichoria I*, 53-57.
[39] Cf. Ainian (1997): 77; Fagerström (1988): 36.
[40] *Nichoria III*, 29-30.
[41] *Ibid,* 30; Snodgrass (1971), 408. Snodgrass expounds that "there may even, according to a recently advanced theory, have been at first no absolute distinction in use. Many of the earliest temples may have been converted dwelling-houses or dining-halls, whose prime function was now to provide a setting for sacrifices and sacred meals and not, as in later days, to house the cult-statue of a deity."
[42] *Nichoria III*, 30-31.
[43] *Ibid,* 31.

In the second phase of Unit IV-1 (9th century BCE; **see fig. 5**), Coulson (excavator) describes the changes as follows:

"a. A Courtyard was added to the E of the porch.

b. The S wall (Ca) was replaced by Wall C.

c. An apse (Wall B) was added to the W of Room 1.

d. A sector of the N end of Wall D was demolished to allow easy circulation between the room formed by the apse (Room 3) and the main room (Room 1).

e. Wall E was built to the N of the paved circle, forming, with Wall D, a podium for the altar.

f. Exterior posts were added along the side walls and apse."[44]

However, as Ainian and Fagerström have expounded (see above), if one puts forward the claim that the apse was in fact not a later addition, then many things follow from that assumption. (For all further references about these changes, see **fig. 6**) Indeed, with this Walls H and G become part of the first phase, not later additions from phase 2 (as Coulson claims), since they would connect with the apse. Furthermore, Wall X could, according to Ainian, be a later addition from phase 2 since it connects with Wall Ca and is at a "slightly higher level than wall F."[45] In both my and Ainian's estimation, the slight angular curve which is observable in Wall A is further evidence of the original apse formation. Indeed, the difference in width between Wall B (the apse) and Wall A may represent later accretions and repairs made to the walls, as perhaps the difference in the stone composition for each wall indicates (wall A is slightly thicker).[46]

While keeping these considerations in mind, we now turn our attention the pottery (again, that of DAII). Unlike the somewhat practical reasoning behind using Mycenaean stone foundations, pottery may indeed be a clearer sign of Mycenaean continuity. The trends evidently

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[44] *Ibid,* 33.
[45] Ainian (1997): 77-78; *Nichoria III*, 26. For Ainian's reconstruction, **see fig. 6**.
[46] *Nichoria III*, 34-35.

evoke the Mycenaean style, albeit somewhat lower in quality. The tendency for deep bowls, *skyphoi*, jugs and *Oinochoai* all suggest a survival of LHIIIC motifs and styles; such is demonstrated in the concentric semi-circle motifs, which were also found in "Attica, the Corinthia, and the Argolid."[47] Overall, the tendency revealed from pottery is one that included both the midway survival of Mycenaean styles as well as a significant amount of experimentation throughout.[48]

The differentiations and similarities between pottery (see chapter 3) and architectural features, one might object, would really stem from the fact that this period (the Dark Age) was characterized by "hard times."[49] This would certainly have a great deal of validity. However I would point to the more salient facts about the social organization to show that the ties to the Mycenaean world, if there were any, were weak ties at best. The MME has characterized the central building of Unit IV-1 as being a model or survival of sorts (in miniature) of the Mycenaean palace system.[50] The building was to be the center for political, religious and economic activity in the town. It would fulfill communal religious rites, distribution of food and produce (as deduced from the function of Room 3)[51], be the centre of the town's political life (perhaps a communal meeting place) and dwelling for the "chieftain" and his family in Unit IV-1. The excavators cite the orientation of the building, its monumental character and the sustained upkeep over a couple of centuries which it would have required as indications of this.[52]

[47] *Ibid,* 86.
[48] *Ibid,* 72-90.
[49] *Nichoria III*, 291. Carol G. Thomas and Craig Conant (1999): 46
[50] *Nichoria III*, 40, 72.
[51] *Ibid,* 36. **See fig. 6**
[52] *Ibid,* 33.

Furthermore, the finds of rings, whorls, cups and cooking materials—along with the altar and storage room—would seem to confirm the domestic as well as religious/political role.[53]

However, for all that, the comparison to previous Mycenaean structures is rather problematic. First, an essential factor in the character of Mycenaean distribution was the keeping of records for the transactions as well as the use of a large administrative structure. Neither of these are reflected in the evidence at Nichoria (DA remains). Though these concerns could be brushed aside by arguing that Nichoria was merely a miniature and deformed version of this system, its mode of production would also seem to counter this assertion of Mycenaean distribution. As proven by the seeds and grains found on site, there certainly was some produce. As we have already seen (see above) the primary activity for the acquisition of food was that of pasturage and flock keeping. This is easily identifiable by the sheer amount and dominance of animal remains over plant remains.[54] Indeed, though the valley itself had contained five rivers, there was no source of water on top of the ridge itself and villagers would have had to spend time every day retrieving it down the valley. There is furthermore no evidence that the inhabitants had maintained any kind of specialty crops or sustained agriculture other than olive trees and the like which could already be found in the local area.[55] Though Room 3 does seem to point toward storage of food, it would seem to rather stretch the argument that, instead of being due to the prominence of the individual who dwelled in it, it was a communal distribution center in keeping with the Mycenaean way.

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[53] *Ibid,* 33.
[54] *Nichoria I*, 94-95.
[55] *Ibid*, 95-96.

In conclusion, though there were certainly some continuations between the late Bronze Age and DA Nichoria, these were tenuous as settlement and relations to Mycenaean remains had to be reimagined. The material record seems to point towards a consistent—if rather practically minded—use of Mycenaean ruins and the discernible social order had echoed this transformation; the communal existence of the town also had to yield to changing concerns. In this vein, I would propose to study further the extent to which Nichoria was typical (or not) of DA Messenia as a whole. In the process, the problem of continuity between the Mycenaean world and that of DA Messenia—and Nichoria's place within it—will be more fully addressed.

Chapter 2:

A Feel for the Land: Messenia in the Dark Age

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[56] View from the top of the mount Ithome. Photo taken by Stefan Artinger,
München - http://www.hikr.org/gallery/photo308114.html?post_id=24751#1.

Having roughly outlined Nichoria and some of its material/archaeological circumstances, I would now turn our attention towards the topography and wider context of Messenia. Messenia, much like elsewhere in Bronze Age Greece had undergone social, economic and material organization under the rule of the *wanax*. This consisted of roads and resource highways along with tributes of produce and raw materials for consumption and redistribution from the Palace of Pylos. Said kingdom was organized into two provinces: the Hither Province and the Further Province.[57] Resources and authority were intimately linked as both provinces were composed of primary settlements or 'centers' for resource collection and distribution; these in turn were made possible from sites big and small—mostly self-sufficient farmsteads.[58] In the advent of the many conflagrations which brought down the Mycenaean world, this system of collection and distribution also disappeared, but I would argue that Messenia's particular set of circumstances managed to slow change of settlement patterns in the Dark Age such that they remained largely congruent with those of the Bronze Age. Though diminished, I will argue that the discernible settlement patterns during the Dark Age had the 'Palace' system as its antecedent. It also owed its continued existence due to Messenia's cultural and geographical isolation, which had largely endured until its violent contact with Spartan invaders in the 7th century BCE.

Before undertaking a more detailed look at the Dark Age landscape of Messenia, I will attempt a brief sketch of the settlement patterns in the Late Bronze Age in order to provide a frame of reference for later investigation. By the time the reader reaches the section treating the Dark Age (see below), it will hopefully have been made clear why this was necessary.

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[57] Chadwick (1976): 69-75.
[58] Carothers and MacDonald (1979): 442-443.

Messenia and Pylos: Bronze Age Precursors

The organization of the kingdom of Pylos could be described as paradigmatic of the

Mycenaean model for social, economic and political organization. Divided into two provinces—

"Hither" and "Further"—both contained several 'centers' within these territorial designations.

These acted both as the local 'collection centers' for resources and raw goods as well as the

probable seats for the local elites.[59] Consider this map:

Map from Rodney Castleden's "Mycenaeans"[60]

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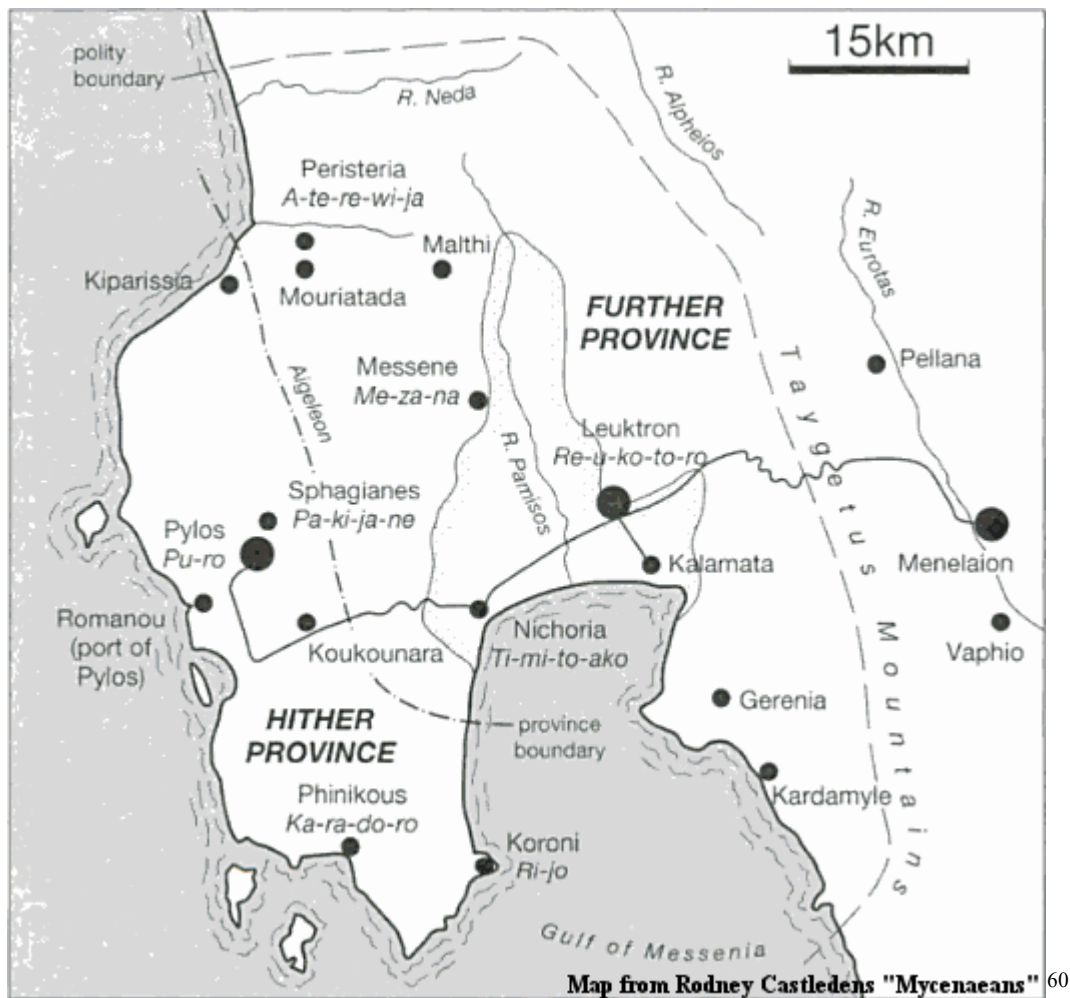
[59] We are told of this organizational scheme by the Linear B tablets fired by the destruction of the Pylos palace. It has been variously argued and debated by scholars that the "Ti-mi-to-ako" center in the Further Province is in fact Nichoria, due to its description of being in close proximity to the Messenian Gulf as well its ideal positioning for overseeing the communication routes in the immediate area. I am in agreement with this assessment.
[60] Castleden (2005): 12

The centers—such as Nichoria—were surrounded by smaller farmsteads and were linked by both 'primary' and 'secondary' roads to sites which were designed for the extraction of raw goods, such as lumber.[61] Nine such centers are mentioned for the Hither Province and seven for the Further Province, each with various toponyms designating mountains, rivers and "some indicating districts or settlements of varying size and importance."[62] Due to my emphasis on the Dark Age in this study, I will not treat this system with the level of detail which it deserves but rather I will attempt to narrow my focus to three issues: (1) the relationship between the availability of resources and the positioning of sites and roads, (2) the independence or lack thereof of sites big and small and (3) finally how the collapse of the Mycenaean system would have affected this settlement scheme.

Fortunately, Macdonald and Carothers have already taken the trouble to delineate what relationship may have existed between the availability of resources and the positioning of sites and roads. To be sure—as the authors themselves make clear—there are some limitations to these statistics.[63] These difficulties notwithstanding, it is not the intent of this chapter to address the social or political hierarchy of Messenian topography *per se* (see footnote 6), but rather to compare and contrast Late Bronze Age and Dark Age topographies (this will be more fully addressed in chapter 3). Without relaying the findings in too much detail here, they essentially determined that the most statistically relevant factor concerning settlements was the relationship

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[61] Carothers and MacDonald (1979): 444-445.
[62] Cosmopoulos (2006):206.
[63] "They [i.e. statistical techniques] are unlikely to provide definitive data on such problems as the following: (1) the size and density of selected large and small "type" sites, including the capitals; (2) size hierarchy versus administrative hierarchy; (3) the relative importance of soil fertility and other environ-mental variables versus economic and social organization in explaining site size and location; (4) the suggestion that some (all?) of the smallest sites are really good-sized individual farmsteads rather than tiny villages of a dozen families or less. Vital questions of this sort demand a whole series of selective, problem-oriented test excavations." In Macdonald and Carothers (1979): 453.

between site size, environment and land use.[64] As aforementioned, there were 'centers' for

administration and the handling of specialty goods and imports (and exports) and small

farmsteads. Within the context of Carothers' and MacDonald's statistical work, the former

("large sites", consisting of 22 sites) is over 2.4 hectares in occupied area and the latter ("small

sites", constituting 107 sites) is below this limit.[65] Small sites, generally speaking, had various

levels of water availability and elevation and only a third had access to the primary

communication routes in the kingdom.[66] Their major economic activities included cereal

agriculture, grazing and herding, which could supply hides, meat, wheat and barley. In addition

to varying levels of elevation and water supply, soil quality could also be factored into

explaining why most of these small sites had been limited in their potential for growth into larger

sites.[67] The larger sites, on the other hand, seem to manifest several reasons for their size and

positions relative to roads:

"If, as seems likely, most of the large sites were subregional collecting and distributing centers, this responsibility in itself would require a considerable work force, as well as unusually large facilities for storage, handling, and perhaps for some processing of goods in transit. *Easy access to the communication network then becomes a real priority;* and the statistical tests fully support this generalization"[68] [my Italics]

Quite apart from these concerns, the large sites were also likely to have been the sites for

labor intensive production of raw goods and tree crops such as grape vines, olives and figs and

metallurgy. The large sites were also prone to have good/abundant water supplies.[69]

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[64] MacDonald and Carothers (1979): 452. Cf. *Ibid*: 446-449.
[65] Carothers and MacDonald (1979): 451.
[66] Ibid: 451.
[67] Ibid: 451.
[68] Ibid: 451.
[69] "Although 49.2% of all sites are cereal producers, the proportion drops to 27.3% in the case of the large sites. Whereas 26% of all sites are tree-cropping sites, the proportion rises to 36.3% in the case of the large sites. Most of the forested sites are in the large size range." In Ibid: 451; Tree crops certainly persisted in Nichoria during the DA period, in particular the olive (see chapter 1).

Furthermore, the population of settlements seems to have varied according to the land use and the needs of labor. For example, though many large sites were devoted to tree-cropping (see footnote 12), this did not exclude other uses such as cereal agriculture and grazing of animals; merely the size seems to have been correlated with forested or tree-cropping.

It has been recently cautioned by scholars that 'redistribution' should be at the very least used cautiously—not least due to its imprecision and its lack of recognition for the relative self-sufficiency of the small sites.[70] Despite this, "redistribution" does seem to have been a factor when considering metal, specialty and luxury items, which were either imported or produced at large sites.[71] The destruction of the Palace system would have no doubt crippled the supply of such products throughout the region, as well as erased the political economy which had existed between the palace at Pylos and those elite centers located at large sites.[72] However, for sites large and small, self-sufficiency was the rule. The destruction of the Pylian kingdom—as I intend to show—does not necessarily mean that all those sites must have fallen to disuse or remained abandoned indefinitely. Moreover, with the fall of the Palace system—which demanded tribute—survival might have been less onerous to those sites whose destruction did not immediately follow those conflagrations. Admittedly this is speculative, however it is important to keep in mind that the destruction of the Mycenaean world was not immediate and happened over a period of perhaps around a century.[73]

Another factor in arguing for continuity between epochs is that of the geographical isolation of Messenia itself. In Laconia and sites such as the Menelaion, the interaction of

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[70] Cf. Halstead (2011): 229-232; Halstead (1992): 57-86; Bennet (1998): 19-23; Lupack (2011): 207-217.
[71] Aprile (2013): 429-433.
[72] Aprile (2013): 434.
[73] Chadwick (1976): 189-193.

peoples and proximity of sites were quite frequent and numerous—as reflected in the destruction layers thereof (see below).[74] Messenia, to the contrary, is rather geographically isolated. To the South and the West it is surrounded by the sea, to the East it is shielded from most of the Peloponnese by the Taygetos Mountain range.

The (very) rough outline of details from Bronze Age Messenia introduced thus far is meant to provide a framework to keep in mind. I will now endeavour to explore why I believe the DA to have been far more in keeping with this Late Bronze Age (LBA) landscape than has often been assumed. In doing so, it will also better expose those aforementioned BA facets in juxtaposition with those of the DA.

<div align="center">Messenia in the Dark Age: A story of Isolation and Continuity</div>

Dark Age Landscape

If Nichoria can be considered paradigmatic of Messenia, then it would seem that the DA inhabitants of Messenia had adopted the strategy of residing on hilltops and plateaus and engaging in pasturage on the plains (in Nichoria's case, the Five Rivers area—see Chapter 1). As seen in Chapter 1, production and agriculture had yielded to grazing and pasturage for food supply and to the easier cropping of olive trees since these trees could last several generations and required little maintenance.[75] It was also shown that any sort of redistribution was difficult to determine, yet that factor need not have any bearing on how the DA inhabitants of Messenia chose to locate themselves. As with Nichoria, other areas of Messenia were extremely viable in these respects as well:

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[74] Catling (1977): 29-33.
[75] Rapp *et al* (1978)=Nichoria I: 93-95.

"Messenia's coastal plain and the inner plain by Stenyclarus, larger and richer than the Laconian plain, produce fine cereals, vines, olives and figs, and there is an abundance of summer and winter pasture on this, the rainier side of the peninsula."[76]

As in the BA, the plains were likely not where the bulk of the population dwelled, and there seems to have been no discernible reason as to why this would *not* be the case. Indeed, Pylos and its environs remained the area most densely covered by DA sites where "the Mycenaean past was clearly very visible for Dark Age Messenians."[77] Nichoria itself was built upon Mycenaean foundations and, despite being a mere 2 km away from the Gulf of Messenia, the inhabitants seem to have not ventured much at all as evinced by the complete lack of evidence such as seashell remains.[78] Nichoria is an example of 'clustering' around a Mycenaean settlement where the necessary resources typically available to Messenia were easy enough to reach without compromising a pattern of living (the absence of the Palace system notwithstanding) which may have had precedence and familiarity.

Dark Age Sites and Burials

One way in which Messenia stands out was the continued use of the *Tholos* tomb-type, in which multiple burials were practiced.[79] Again, I will begin with Nichoria. Below is a map made by MacDonald *et al* on the verified DA burials in Nichoria's immediate surroundings:[80]

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[76] Hammond (1982): 701.

[77] Luraghi (2008):112; Coulson (1986): 71-72.

[78] Thomas and Conant (1999): 45-46; whereas we *have* found many remains in the form of seeds, animal bones and olives (see Chapter 1).

[79] Dickinson (2006): 246. This was also apparently the case DA Thessaly, which was also a 'marginal' area in comparison to the rapidly changing landscape of Athens, Corinth and Sparta.

[80] MacDonald *et al* (1983)=Nichoria III: 267.
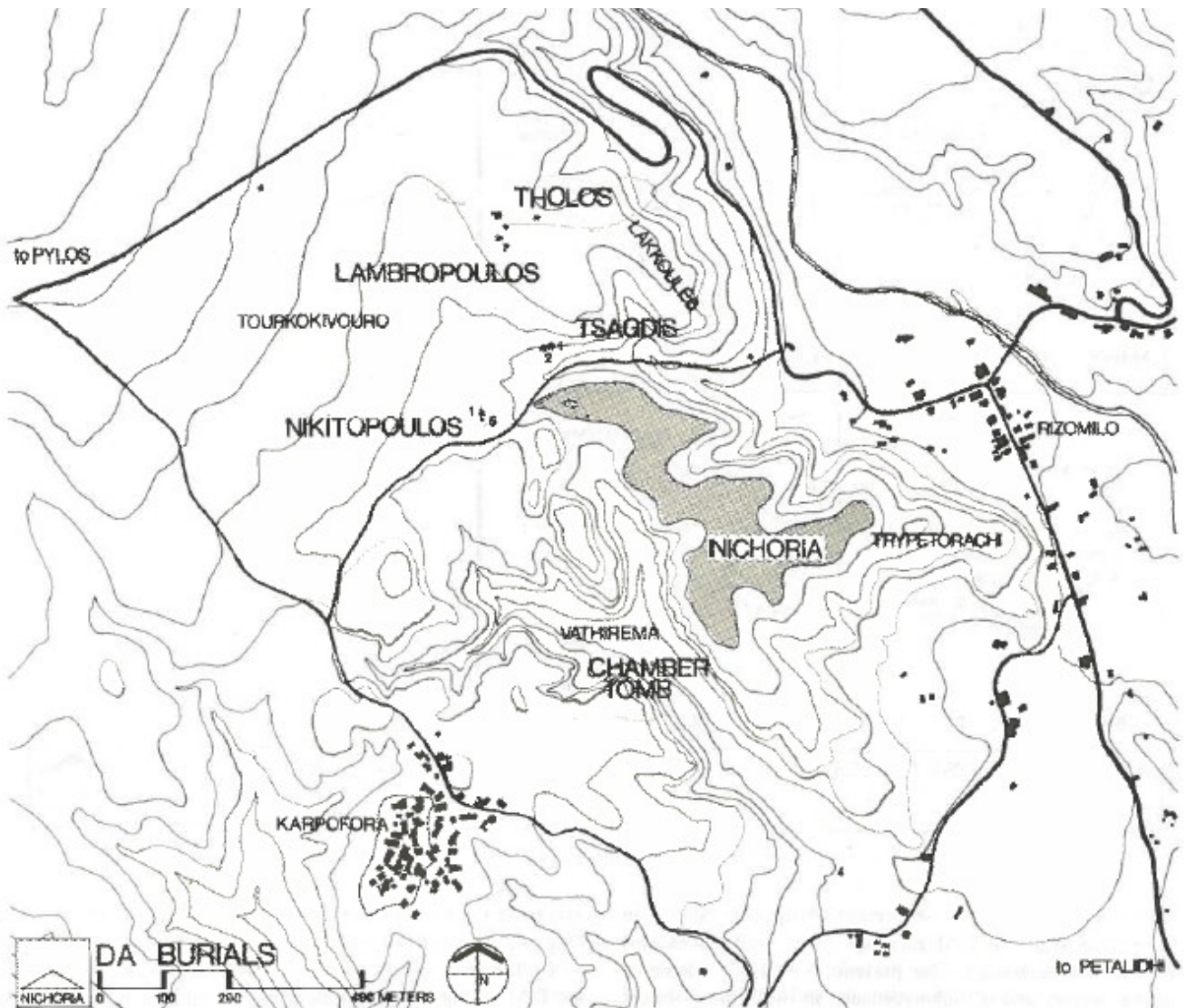
Unlike the "Chamber Tomb" (which was a Mycenaean tholos) found on the ridge itself next to the Nichoria settlement area, the *Tholos* to the North near the Lakkoules Mycenaean cemetery was actually constructed in the DA, but on a smaller scale than its Mycenaean precursors. Furthermore, the BA *Tholoi* (numbered 1 & 6, Nikitopoulos, on the map) contained DAI burials, perhaps indicating a possible familial tie to the tombs.[81] Whether built or reused, these *tholoi* presumably indicate a cultural continuity. The *Tholos* East of the Lambropoulos

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group of cist graves (see map, around modern day Karpophora) is approximately 2m in diameter

and the four burials therein were securely date to DAII due to the pottery finds.[82] Despite its

reduction in size—perhaps a reflection of the community's limited (compared to BA standards)

resources—the task of constructing such a tomb would require an effort more demanding than

mere pastoralists would have likely been capable of; this would have required at least a small

community nearby.[83]

The construction of a tomb and its relationship to a nearby community is something

which deserves to be explored further. DAII (or Proto-Geometric) remains have been found in

reused tombs in sites as far afield in Messenia as Tragana, Malthi, Antheia and Volimnos. In

Tragana and Malthi, there is confirmed reuse of LH tombs for multiple DA burials.[84] The site of

the Ellinika ridge (later to become Thouria) also shows signs of this in Tomb 6 in the East side

necropolis.[85] Despite the reduced size compared to the BA, we see *Tholoi* built in Karpophora

(near Nichoria, see above) and Kato Englianos (area near the palace at Pylos).[86] If, as in the BA,

the sites of Nichoria were DA examples of 'large' sites (though much diminished compared to

their antecedents), then it would not be surprising that—relative to their community size and

available workforce—they were among the few sites where DA *tholoi* were found. The burials

themselves were likely reserved for the more prominent individuals. Otherwise, in most cases we

witness a variety of burial methods including "apsidal cist graves and *pithos* burials where

inhumation seems to be the prevailing rite, although cremations, too, have been reported in

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[82] Nichoria III: 270; Choremis (1968, 1973).
[83] For the "pastoralist hypothesis", cf. Snodgrass (1987): 19-43 and Tandy (1997): 190-209.
[84] This was confirmed by the Minnesota Messenia Expedition. Cf. MacDonald and Hope Simpson (1961): 233-234, 240.
[85] Chatzi-Spiliopoulou (2001): 293-294.
[86] Snodgrass (1971): 171.

tholoi."[87] In light of this evidence, I would propose that not only do these DA *tholoi* indicate Mycenaean continuity in one form or another but they also allow us to infer that communities of a size necessary to build them would be relatively near. As Luraghi has already pointed out: "In the vast majority of cases, the [Dark Age] sites had been frequented already during the Bronze Age."[88] It is interesting to note, however, that the maintenance of these tombs—be they DA *tholoi* in their own right or recycled BA *tholoi*—would presumably require more work and resources than mere semi-sedentary pastoralists could have managed. I would argue that these are indicative not only of nearby settlements but of relatively permanent ones which were not occupied solely on a seasonal basis. As discussed above, the need for movement of this kind was not present with respect to Messenian food/water sources. Furthermore, as Luraghi has also pointed out (see footnote 22), the Mycenaean ruins were already present for Messenians to see and if indeed there were early cultural survivals (DAI) then the choice of maintaining their previous settlement configuration may have seemed obvious.

Pottery

My next field of inquiry is a common metric by which cultural and material change are measured: pottery styles. Contrary to the tremendous flux of style and creativity occurring in Corinth, Athens and Sparta at this time (ca. 850-750 BCE), Messenia's DA pottery did not undergo a radical shift from the motifs found in the LBA.

Before beginning, it is worth reiterating what was mentioned in Chapter 1, namely that Nichoria is the sole and most complete basis for our knowledge of DA Messenian pottery and— unless otherwise specified—all pieces of pottery discussed stem from that site. Once again, the

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[87] Coldstream (2003): 140.
[88] Luraghi (2008): 112.

excavators' data is what we must rely on. Macdonald and Coulson divide the pottery finds into their chronological categories (DA I, DA II, DA III).[89] In the case of DA I pottery, we are woefully lacking in sample size. Nevertheless, some general order remarks can be made. Firstly, that the shape and decoration clearly still stemmed from BA styles with respect to their shapes and decoration. Yet, as the excavators describe, the findings depict "considerable experimentation, as seen in the varied *skyphos* and deep bowl rims and shapes, the development of the *skyphos* shape and of the ribbed stem, and in the use of the narrow reserved band as a decorative motif […] such a variety of local features may indicate a broad chronological range."[90] With that being said, it nonetheless remains the case that DAI did not constitute a major departure from the Mycenaean style, and many of these differences—absent discernible outside influence—could be due to the presumably declined physical circumstances whereby the potter's means of working were constrained by a lack of material diversity.

The DAII layer is by far the most representative sample of pottery for Nichoria and, consequently, for DA Messenia. In considering the finds from Nichoria, the excavators have postulated the existence of two different (groups of?) potters: one which produced kiln-fired pottery and was more prone to experimentation while the other produced coarse ware which was fired over an open fire in domestic environments.[91] The latter was "more conservative in shape and decoration, reflecting the survival of Mycenaean characteristics and of motifs once common during the Bronze Age in N Greece."[92] As it stands, there are several detectible influences on DAII pottery. (1) As in DAI, there was a continuation of LBA (LHIIIC) in the shape of the

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[89] The chronology as contrived by the excavators: "Dark Age (DA) I: 1075-975? B.C.E. Dark Age II: 975-850? B.C.E. Dark Age II/III (transition): 850-800? B.C.E. Dark Age III: 800-750? B.C.E." in Nichoria III: xxvii.
[90] Nichoria III: 72.
[91] Ibid: 90.
[92] Ibid: 90.

ribbed kylix stems and the "ovoid shape of some of the *oinochoai* and *amphorae*".[93] There are also local variations such as the popular use of small vessels and the concentric semi-circles on the pottery decoration.[94] There are also some traceable influences from Laconia which the excavators determined from the "use of hatched and cross-hatched triangles in metopal panels and wolf's tooth."[95] Coulson and MacDonald also detected traces of influence from Western Crete and some resemblance to Attic pottery in the form of the "full concentric circles" motif. However, in my estimation, the link to Attica is somewhat of an exaggeration. Nichoria, in most respects, seems to have been quite isolated even from other parts of Messenia—it strains credulity to conceive of any true 'Attic' influence; likewise for Western Crete since there seems to be no indication of any sea travel despite Nichoria being only 2 km away from the coastline. Indeed, the only truly substantive influence seems to be from Laconia and this makes sense in terms of geographic proximity.

The pottery in DAIII experienced a regression in terms of its variety in shapes, sizes and motifs as the finds were restricted to the immediate area around Unit V-1 (see Chapter 1) in Area IV. Some were also found in the nearby Lakkoules cemetery (see below), indicating that the cemetery was used "throughout the DA habitation phases."[96] Indeed, the only layer of pottery in which excavators were able to discern any strong connection with developments in other parts of Greece was found in the *pithos* burial on Nichoria's ridge and the Vathirema chamber tomb (see appendix).These were classified as Late Geometric and in full keeping with developments in Laconia, Attica and Corinth.[97] Ultimately, what I would argue is that this points to the rather

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[93] Ibid: 111.
[94] Ibid: 111.
[95] Ibid: 111.
[96] Ibid: 111.
[97] Ibid: 111.

isolated cultural sphere within which Messenia existed during the DA, and is exemplified by Nichoria. Of course, this sort of extrapolation has its weaknesses, not least of them being that it would be risky to make such a generalized claim about the pottery based on a single site. Unfortunately, what we may claim is limited by the paucity of evidence for this period. However, at this juncture it would perhaps be fruitful to make another brief comparison with pottery from another site: DA Sparta.

In his own study on DA pottery in Sparta and Amyclae, Coulson has—with some reservations—argued that there is some credible evidence suggesting that there had been a "cultural break" between the Late Mycenaean period and the early Dark Age ("Proto-Geometric).[98] Indeed, the "decorative motifs on the vases allow for a *terminus post quem* of around 900 BC, but, in any case, no earlier than 950 BC. A strong argument can thus be made for a break in tradition."[99] It was further argued that, in accordance with similarities vis-à-vis shape and style to "West Greece" pottery, this "cultural break" originated from "newcomers" from Western Greece.[100] As Coulson later remarks, this is an interesting coincidence when compared to the Laconian influence found at Nichoria (see above). Whatever the level of interaction, the very fact of the later Spartan invasion in the Archaic Period seems to validate the view that Messenia and Laconia were in contact with one another as the pottery seems to indicate. Again like Nichoria, the DA pottery evidence at Sparta and Amyclae seems to be lacking from any significant amount of influence *other* than from those immediately west from them. As with Nichoria, Coulson discerns that "[Sparta] also had a meagre early phase (DA I), a

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[98] Coulson (1985): 63; Cf. Cartledge (1975) for the original version of this theory. Coulson admits that despite some reservations it remains our best model respecting the current evidence.
[99] Coulson (1985): 63
[100] Ibid: 63.

long and impressive second phase (DA II) and a somewhat poorer third phase (DA III), lagging behind developments that occurred elsewhere in the Greek world."[101] The major difference, I would argue, is that while Coulson admits that "the evidence of the pottery, then, in respect to continuity is unclear", this is certainly not the case for Nichoria (see above).[102]

The exact reasons for this difference are unknown. It is possible that the difference emerged from the relative isolation of Nichoria itself, obscuring our vision of how the state of things were in the rest of Messenia or (as I would argue) that Messenia itself was less prone to an influx of neighboring peoples—which ultimately explains why certain continuities were able to take place. Though both Nichoria and DA Sparta seem to point to a "South-Western *Koine"* in pottery styles (with added local variations), it seems that the continuity with the LBA is more ascertainable in Messenia and lasts a great deal longer than in other areas of DA (or Proto-Geometric) Greece.

In conclusion, by examining the enduring quality of Mycenaean features in Messenian settlement patterns and in the material record, it would seem that this continuity was permitted partly by convenience and partly by geographic isolation. The convenience had originated from Messenia's natural environment and the ease of access from the pre-existing Mycenaean hilltop settlements (as shrunken and diminished as they were). This quasi-Mycenaean continuity had furthermore been able to undergo a slower death (when compared to the Argolid and Attica) due to the area's natural barriers of the sea and the Taygetos Mountains which made for a difficult crossing on foot.

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[101] Ibid: 66.
[102] Ibid: 65

Chapter 3
Society in Isolation: Nichoria's Social Organization
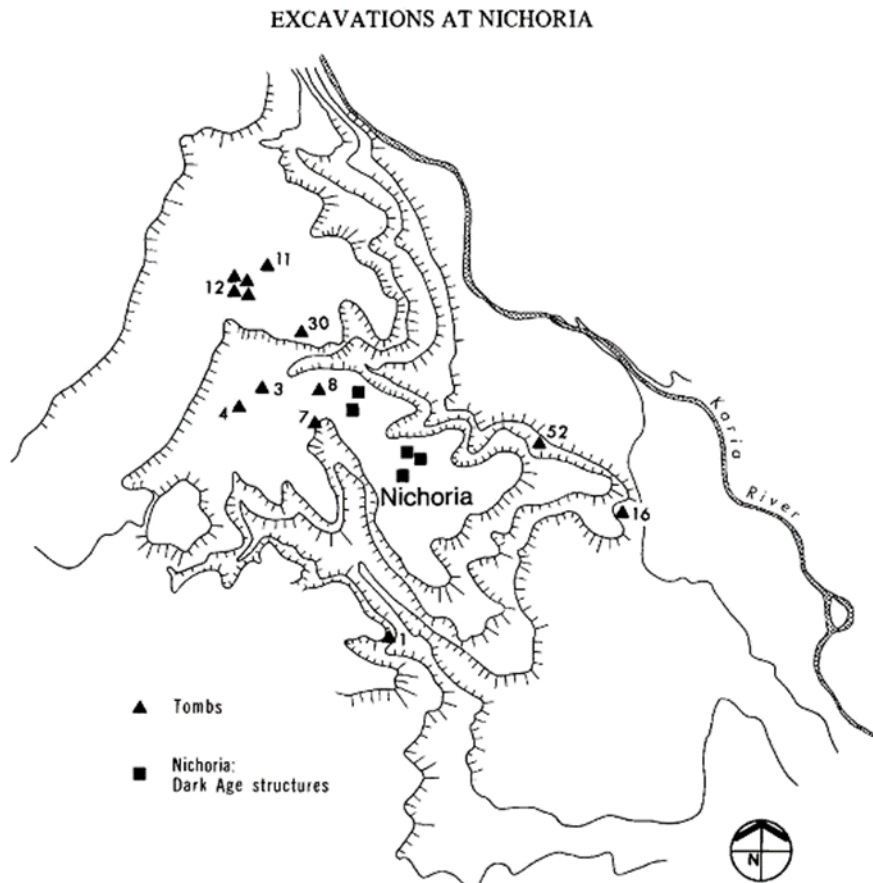
EXCAVATIONS AT NICHORIA

Figure 7-11. Nichoria: Dark Age features

As I have outlined in the previous chapter, though there was significant continuity from Mycenaean settlement configurations for Messenia's Dark Age inhabitants, they seem to have been quite isolated in their respective settlements and their immediate surroundings despite the interconnectivity which characterized the Mycenaean age. The positioning of Nichoria—benefitting from the very same advantages as in the Bronze Age—did not draw from the interconnectivity of the Pylian kingdom and its many checkpoints and trade contacts. Indeed, it will be the principal object of this chapter to demonstrate that the social makeup of Nichoria would therefore have been largely self-referential. The local conditions such as material wealth for individuals, resources in the immediate area and the relationship between the Iron Age inhabitants and its Mycenaean remains were the most pertinent factors.

The *wanax* was gone and the distributive system of roads had largely grown defunct as the calamities which brought down the Pylian kingdom had taken their course. However, a skeletal form of this settlement pattern remained (see chapter 2). Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the original BA desertion of the site, the eventual return of inhabitants to the Mycenaean hilltop produced (albeit cruder) clear continuities in conventions of pottery. Also telling is the early construction in DA1 of *tholoi* in the nearby Mycenaean Lakkoules Cemetery—which was also reused throughout the period of the ridge's occupation.[103] Whatever the continuity or meaning may have been ascribed to the Mycenaean past by the early inhabitants, one thing was clear: that the Mycenaean material past was ubiquitous in their daily experience. Though skeletal and emaciated, it provided the framework that—within local pressures—helped create a new local paradigm. As the settlement had expanded both in population and in the occupation of the ridge (DA II), so too did the innovation in pottery, the

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[103] Spencer, *Sandy Pylos* (1998): 167-169.

diversification in small finds and the appearance of a clear hierarchical structure as evinced from the "Chief's Dwelling" (unit IV-1). After initial hunting had likely exhausted local stocks of game, the Nichorians also shifted their attention to a more diversified diet which not only signified a change to cattle raising and dairy but also a turn towards whatever they could manage to grow around the ridge (see below).[104] The community contracted in DA III, seeing a sharp reduction in the quality and variety of pottery whilst also seeing the construction of Unit IV-1's successor: Unit IV-5. The Building was in every sense larger and likely fulfilled similar purposes –if nothing else due to being Unit IV-1's replacement (I shall return to this below). It would be idle to speculate why the settlement was destroyed (ostensibly by fire)—the issue is too contingent in nature to address here. Rather it will be the object of this chapter to explain some of the social dynamics and activities which marked life on the ridge before its termination.

<u>Life on the hilltop: Nichoria's 'daily grind'</u>

Before elaborating on the economic/daily tasks of the ridge, it would be worthwhile to expound more on the reuse of Mycenaean materials. As the excavators have astutely pointed out, there is an obvious reason why there are many remains of Mycenaean items—broken or whole— found in DA contexts: it can be reasonably inferred that this was due to their recycling and reuse by the DA inhabitants.[105] Examples include a stone celt, two spindle whorls made from "*kylix* feet" and another which was made from "the top of a stirrup jar."[106]Of the 84 steatite ("soapstone") *conuli* (their purpose is unclear, perhaps acting as beads or 'buttons'), those included in the excavator's DA finds consisted of 23% of the whole and the majority of total

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[104] *Nichoria I*: 94-95.
[105] *Nichoria III*: 292.
[106] *Nichoria III*: 292. In the catalogue of small finds, they are items **239** (stone celt), **131/195** (whorls made from *kylix*) and **192** (whorl made from a stirrup jar); cf. 305-315 ("Catalog of DA Small Finds").

conuli were "from unequivocally LH levels". In sum, all of this points to the degree of visibility which Mycenaean remains had from the part of the ridge's inhabitants. This is to say nothing of the reuse of tombs and of Mycenaean building foundations to prop up buildings. [107]

I would argue that this interrelation between BA and DA layers might explain the "significant correlation […] between bronzes with very high content and their decorative function. Not excepting a phalaron, all these objects were part of dress (fibulae, pins) or more directly on the person (finger rings, hair spirals)."[108] For instance, in the last chapter, I referenced research which was done on the 'political economy' between Nichoria and Pylos.[109] In particular, though the smelting of bronze seems to have disappeared on the site, the remaining bronze items likely came from the BA material layers. In light of the *de facto* rarity of these items in the Dark Age, it may have been the case that these items referred to above were in possession of the more prominent members of the community. This is admittedly speculation, but it wouldn't be impossible to envisage in light of other continuities from the BA. Cynthia Shelmerdine provides an interesting vector on the issue of bronze:

"Then *ti-mi-to-a-ke-e* was a center for bronze workers. At Nichoria, a bronze-working establishment was discovered of the same date as the Pylos tablets. Metallurgists were puzzled, though, to note that most of the work done here involved *not the alloying of tin and copper, but the melting down and reworking of bronze*. The [Linear B] tablets provide the explanation for this: the palace allocated lump bronze to smiths at *ti-mi-to-a-ke-e* and elsewhere, for reworking into spear points, arrowheads, and the like."[110] [my italics]

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[107] *Nichoria III*: 292.
[108] *Nichoria III*: 283.
[109] Aprile (2013).
[110] Shelmerdine, *Sandy Pylos* (1998):143.

To the extent that this might have continued in the Dark Age, it would have been a combination of reworking bronze 'lumps' and reuse or pre-existing BA decorative items. Much has been made of possible contacts that Nichoria might have had in light of both its pottery and its metallurgy. Namely, that Nichoria, at least during the zenith of occupation (DAII), was a settlement which enjoyed contacts far afield because its pottery was similar to those "as far away as Achaea and Ithaca in the North and West, and to the East contacts were clear with the practices of those dwelling beyond the Taygetus range in Laconia."[111] This will be addressed at a later point in this chapter. However, the notion that Nichoria also had contacts because there was metallurgical activity involving tin, copper and iron despite the lack of local sources (i.e. implying trade with other communities) does not, in my opinion, necessarily follow upon close scrutiny. As mentioned above, the vast majority of bronze scrap and items were likely to have been of BA provenance and Nichoria's LH role as a center for *reworking* bronze explains the presence of Bronze despite the apparent lack of tin and copper smelting.

The state of ironworking is more complex. According to the metallurgical analyses of the site, there is no clear evidence for the appearance of iron slags or artifacts before the Dark Age, however, the vast majority of such slags were found in the Byzantine contexts of the hill situated in the highly eroded Area II of the site plan.[112] It is possible that iron items may have been present in the BA yet as the site's metallurgical study points out, the particular erosion pattern of iron makes it more difficult to detect than Bronze. Indeed, even in the LHIII *tholos* of Area I, there appears to have been no signs of iron artifacts whatsoever "nor evidence of their former

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[111] Spencer, *Sandy Pylos* (1998): 168; *Nichoria I*: 180:"many if not most of the bronze artifacts found at Nichoria came there *in finished form*."
[112] See site plan below.

presence [if eroded]".[113] It is for this reason that I would be reluctant to assert that there was no ironworking and smelting at during the DA but that—as metallurgical analyses have found—this constituted a minor activity at Nichoria and mostly consisted of the re-melting and/or recycling of metal at best.[114] Ultimately, the notion that metalwork at Nichoria somehow pointed to expanded contacts around the DA II seems overstated if not dubious.

The metalworking that was largely done at Nichoria does seem to point to a degree of social stratification, however, and this can be inferred from the contexts in which the metal finds were discovered. First, the highest concentration of the most securely dated (to the DA) iron artifacts and finds are found in Area IV—where the "Chief's Dwelling" was located. As aforementioned, most of the bronze artifacts recovered from the period seem to have been decorative and personal in nature (see above). This can be concretized in view of the items which were found in the *pithos* burial near area III on the ridge.[115] Among the findings buried with the warrior therein (this will be elaborated upon later) were a "bronze ring, iron sword, iron spear, and two bronze bowls."[116] Admittedly, this burial was the only burial to be found on the ridge itself and it was dated to the Late Geometric period (ca. 745-725 BCE), therefore nothing definitive can be asserted on this basis alone. However, given the paucity of metal production overall, the richness of metal finds (relative to the site as a whole) in the grave and the preponderance of metal finds in the center (Area IV) of the Dark Age town throughout its

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[113] *Nichoria I*: 211.

[114] For instance, the amount of slag (metallic impurities/waste separated from the metal in the process of smelting iron ore) recovered from the site suggest a very small amount of iron production: "With the exception of iron slags Nos. 37 and 51, found in Area IV, the remainder were found in Area IV [see site map] […] The iron slags recovered from the excavated part of Area II amounted to only about 500 gm, which taken by itself is indicative of a very small-scale smelting operation, since it would result from the production of some 85-200 gm of iron for smelting efficiencies, respectively, of about 25% to as high as about 45%. *These are trivial amounts of iron.*" [my italics] In *Nichoria I*: 215 &221.

[115] *Nichoria III*: 260.

[116] *Nichoria I*: 286.

habitation, it wouldn't be implausible to suggest that metal finds of this sort was reserved for individuals of higher status among the Nichorians. The late Geometric *pithos* notwithstanding,[117] it seems that this was largely enabled (such as it was) due to the pre-existing material leftover from the Bronze Age settlement.

The Mycenaean past is also echoed in some of the more quotidian activities which were held on the ridge. As mentioned before in Chapter 1, the inhabitants had eventually made a change in their diet which was reflected from primarily hunting (ca. DAI) to cattle raising (DAII). A possible solution emerges if we operate under the assumption that the initial DA settlers may in fact have been Mycenaean survivors. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, pottery styles and the construction of a DA *Tholos* in the nearby Lakkoules cemetery seems to provide some evidence for continuity in a quasi-Mycenaean form.[118] Nichoria had experienced an interruption in habitation as the BA had come to a close. Yet by the above-mentioned LHIIIC findings, it may have been the case that the inhabitants—forced into a form of nomadism after the fall of the palaces—had returned to settle in Nichoria with their hunting habits intact.[119] Indeed, as the excavators had noticed, game hunting had been undertaken to such a degree that the local herds in the immediate vicinity may have been extirpated or at least exhausted to the point of diminishing returns.[120] In time, the settlers were made to 'remember' what advantages the ridge had beyond its mere positioning and material remains: its ample

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[117] At point, it seems that the findings in the grave reflect a 'rejoining' of the material developments occurring elsewhere in Greece with pottery styles carrying affinity with other regions in the Peloponnese. Cf. *Nichoria III*: 265.

[118] Conant (1999): 34-36.

[119] Conant (1999) *Nichoria I*: 94-95.

[120] *Nichoria I*: 94-96.

grazing space and its large water supply. Both have been elaborated upon in the first chapter, and

the latter factor has been interestingly connected to the Mycenaean past by Cynthia Shelmerdine:

"*Ti-mi-to-a-ke-e* was a major source of flax for the kingdom's linen industry, by far the largest in the Further Province. Flax can only be grown in areas that meet two exacting requirements. They must have very rich soil, since the crop quickly exhausts even the most fertile land; and they must have a good supply of water, for the flax must be thoroughly soaked (retted) before it can be spun. Soil analysis and other environmental studies by the Minnesota team proved that the Nichoria area, unlike most of the Messenian Valley, has all the qualities needed to be a center of flax production: flat bottomlands, rich soil, the water from five nearby rivers for retting, and a convenient road for transporting the flax to Pylos."[121]

The former shepherding lifestyle which people may have prevailed before 'resettling' at

Nichoria had given way to the advantages which had rendered it ideal in first place. Though still

primarily meat-oriented, this move from hunting to cattle rearing had also allowed for a greater

prevalence of dairy production and the diversification of the diet at large in the form of olives,

figs, cereals and legumes.[122] Again, the Mycenaean past might be more informative than one

might think in informing us on the lives of the ridge's DA inhabitants: the purposes which

rendered *ti-mi-to-ake-e* an ideal place for a palace economy were also ideal for other reasons

which were specifically tailored to the local concerns of the inhabitants.

Another activity which abounded in Nichoria was that of textiles via spinning and

weaving. Many whorls of various sizes were found haphazardly throughout the ridge, no small

amount of which (10 out of 78 identified as DA whorls) were found in Area IV's "Chief's

Dwelling".[123] Most of these handmade whorls were "often clumsy and asymmetrical" and "in an

age when whorls were very often decorated, all save two (**159, 159 A**) of our whorls are

plain."[124] These were by and large *homemade* as well, and they were also items which broke

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[121] Shelmerdine, *Sandy Pylos* (1999): 139-140.
[122] *Nichoria I*: 94-96.
[123] *Nichoria I*: 287.
[124] *Nichoria I*: 287.

often. Like with the coarse-ware pottery mentioned in Chapter 2, these were likely to have needed frequent fashioning as everyday use exhausted them.[125] If one were to re-examine the settlement map of the ridge, I would stress the notion that the settlement consisted of several 'campsites' of huddled buildings (made of perishable materials, likely tent-like in shape; *my highlights in red*):
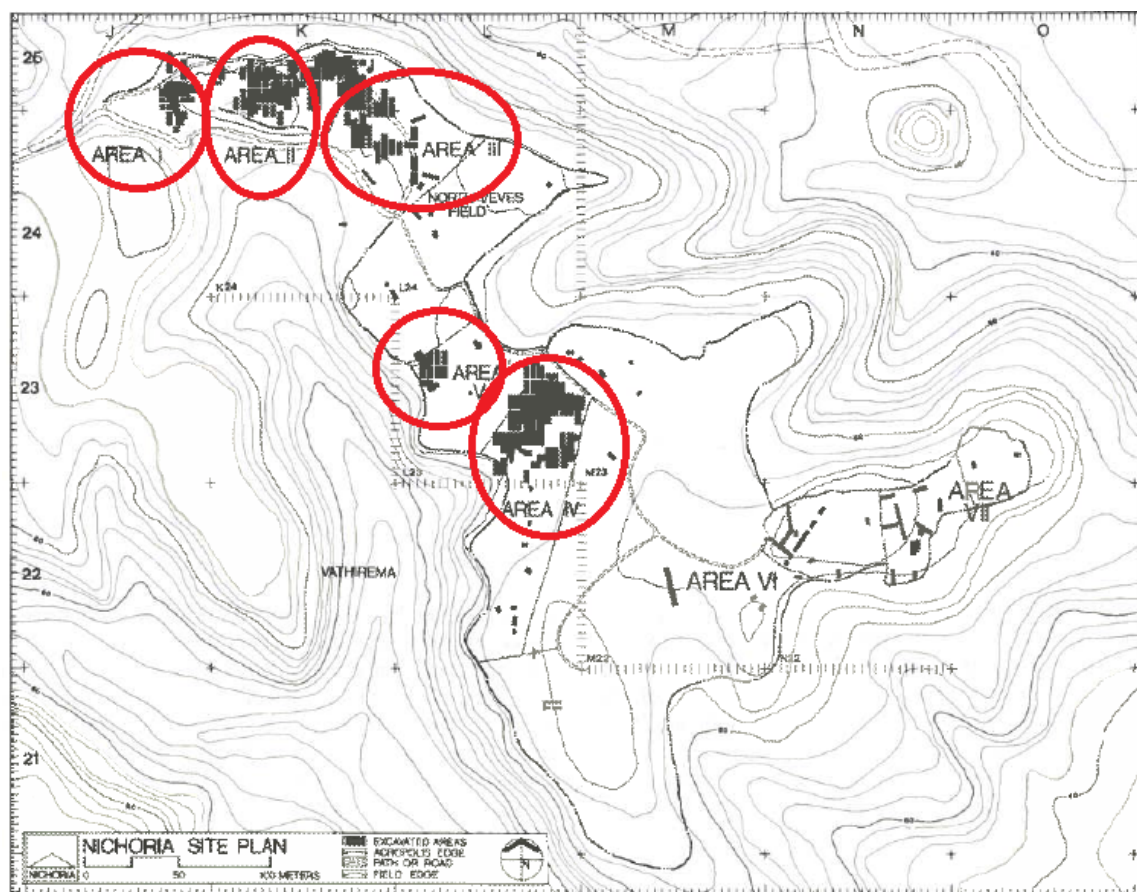
126

Indeed, most of the ridge's activities would have been thus, and the only concerted effort to concentrate the labor of the whole settlement seems to have been for the

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[125] *Nichoria I*: 287-288.
[126] *Nichoria III*: xxvi.

purposes of building Unit IV-1 and its impressive (and double in size) successor Unit V-1.[127]

Paradoxically, the community investment became more intense as the community shrank in size

and (presumably) in material resources. A notable parallel to Nichoria in this respect is

Lefkandi—by far the richer settlement in every respect.

<u>The centers of power in Lefkandi and Nichoria.</u>

Unlike the (admittedly) uncertain origins of the Nichorians in the Dark Age, Lefkandi

seems to have weathered the conflagrations which brought down the 'Palace System' and—

despite several destruction layers—settlement in the area had remained constant.[128] Compared to

Nichoria, its trade contacts were vast throughout the eastern Aegean with trade items from

Cyprus, Egypt, Crete and many gold and faience items suggest other Near-Eastern sources as

well.[129] It also managed to have its own pottery style while still being influenced by Attic and

Mycenaean conventions.[130] Unlike Nichoria, where it seems that its inhabitants might not have

had any rival local communities within a threatening difference, Lefkandi likely had many rivals

both southward in Attica and other communities in Euboia.[131] In addition to this, it had a lively

and seemingly volatile aristocratic culture as evidenced by the frequent shift in the center of

political power throughout the site's settlement history. Indeed, the famous 'Heroon' located on

Toumba Hill was one such locus, whereby the building itself functioned not only as a tomb for

the high-status but also as a domestic and religious space which seems to have been the center of

the community in its heyday.[132] Conversely, Area IV at Nichoria is also the most materially rich

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[127] *Nichoria III* : 43-52.
[128] Popham *et al.* (1988-1989) : 119-124.
[129] Popham *et al.* (1982): 171; Walker (2004): 77.
[130] Sackett and Popham (1972): 14.
[131] Popham *et al.* (1980a) : 151-160; Popham *et al.* (1988-1989) : 119-124.
[132] Popham *et al.* (1988-1989) : 119-124.

place on the ridge and certainly seems to have been the center of communal action. However,

apart from the size of the building itself, the level of wealth stratification is not as deep as in the

case of Lefkandi. For the latter, the evidence clearly points to the existence of an entire warrior

elite surrounding the 'Big Man' in the Heroön as evidenced by Lefkandi's cemeteries and the

wealth within aristocratic graves.[133] Competition between rival neighbors for control of the rich

and fertile Lelantine Plain and indeed between aristocrats from within the community seems to

have abounded and—by means of foreign trade goods and their resulting wealth—this agonistic

element could continue to be fueled by a culture of display.[134] Indeed, the building itself was

eventually filled-in and made into a funerary mound, which scholars have speculated that this

signified just such volatility.[135] Conant had even proposed that:

"An internal crisis may have resulted from a century and a half of the steady
accumulation of land by the few [aristocratic clans] […] while their less successful
contemporaries saw their lands subdivided away […] Those who lost their holdings will have
had few choices in the struggle to gain a livelihood."[136]

He also stresses the similarities between Nichoria and Lefkandi in that they both had

enough space in their surroundings which provided a sort of 'buffer'; this may have allowed for

part of the community to simply take its leave (through violence or otherwise) and establish itself

elsewhere without being hindered by adjacent communities.[137]

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[133] Sahlins, (1963): 285-303.
[134] Walker (2004): 76-81; For the later "Lelantine War", cf. Hall (2007): 1-8. For some ancient sources which allude to Chalcidian and Eretrian conflict over the plains cf. Plut. *Mor.* 760e-761b, Arist. *Pol.* 4.3.2, Strab. 10.1.12; Hesiod also alludes to travelling to Chalcis for the funeral games of a certain Amphidamas ("the wise", Hes. *Op.* 654-655) and Plutarch ties this man to early wars in the Lelantine plain with Eretria (Plut. *Mor.* 153f). Of course, all of these examples postdate our timeline for Lefkandi but the purpose of these examples is to show a longstanding history of competition over the plain.
[135] Walker (2004): 76-81.
[136] Conant (1999): 107.
[137] Conant (1999): 107-108.

As mentioned above, it is perhaps impossible to know—in Nichoria's case—why the community contracted. Moreover, I do not mean to suggest that what Conant proposed for Lefkandi should be applied in order to understand the DAII-DAIII transition. However, I *would* draw attention to something he mentioned: that in both sites the inhabitants had elected to increase communal emphasis on a central structure despite the shrinking of the community itself.[138] Indeed, it has been suggested—and I subscribe to this view—that (by far) the more consistent prevalence of the central buildings of Unit IV-1 and Unit V-1 throughout DAII and DAIII would rule out the fairly unstable element of the "Big Man" theory of anthropology as applied to Archaic and Dark Age Greece. Indeed, the "unstable settlement" which Whitley refers to is somewhat undermined here in what Conant refers to as "leadership as an entity separate from the men who filled it."[139] If the emphasis on personal power and persuasion was as prevalent at Nichoria as the anthropological theory would demand, then either (1) each leader (perhaps not by inheritance in each generation) was unusually successful in maintaining cohesion throughout or (2) the community had perhaps come to view the building and the members of its household as closer to an institution than merely a reflection of the current state of the leader's personal influence.[140]

<div align="center">Clues in the Early Texts?</div>

At this point it would be fitting to mention some of the major strains of thought which have long been held with regards to the Homeric poems and those of Hesiod. These texts had emerged in the immediate aftermath of the Dark Age as the Archaic period had begun and in the

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[138] Conant (1999): 107.
[139] Conant (1999): 57; Whitley (1991); Qviller, (1981): 117-20. Qviller describes the Homeric *Basileus* as "big-man developing into a chieftain".
[140] Conant (1999):107-109.

case of Homer, they stem from longstanding oral traditions which might provide some useful social frameworks within which life in the Dark Age might be assessed. There are some reservations, not least that considering the diversity of social organization of the Dark Ages, it would be an overestimation that the Homeric texts provide a completely coherent account of social paradigms.[141] Unlike with Lefkandi, it is not as obvious that the social organization at Nichoria was that of an ostentatious and agonistic culture of display among a warrior aristocracy. As I have already mentioned, social stratification was present yet not to such a degree that we might state with confidence the existence of some "Homeric ideal" of aristocratic competition and/or ideology.[142]

However, certain features from the poems can, I believe, be useful to assess Nichoria and in those respects they connect it to the rest of the Greek world at this period. According to Donlan's analysis, there are several designations for groups of people in Homer which might lend themselves to the setup of life on the ridge itself. Donlan assesses terms such as ἔθνος, γένος, φῦλον, φρήτρη, λαός, δῆμος, οἰκός, and so on.[143] His remarks on these terms is of special relevance here: "collective nouns that specify human groupings in Homer and Hesiod are flexible terms, having a wide range of applicability."[144] Definitions of kinship at this point in time was fluid, whereby it could include not only blood relatives but also individuals with whose family alliances and/or obligations would bind them.[145] As Donland succinctly puts it : "The Dark Age kindred was highly congruent with the system of independent households, providing an available pool of mutual aid when needed, while allowing each *oikos* wide latitude to make its

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[141] Whitley, (1991). See chapter 2.
[142] Further difficulties and challenges associated with using these texts will be explored in the following chapter.
[143] Donland (1985): 295-298.
[144] Donland (1985): 294.
[145] Pitt-Rivers (1973): 90. Kinship in this context has been described by Pitt-Rivers "a category of amity" whereby "non-kin amity loves to masquerade as kinship."

own ad hoc alliances."[146] Ultimately, what concerns me in these distinctions is the final notion of

Donland's to which I would draw attention: the intersection of neighborhood and kinship

dynamics within these societies. Neighborhood involves the common activities (cult, for

example) as well as obligations which, though not as compulsory as family ties, still permeates

said relationships nonetheless.[147] Hesiod has frequently shown the conflicts which can emerge

when neighborhood obligations clash with kinship obligations:

> "Invite your friend to the feast, but let your enemy be; and above all call whoever lives
> near to you. *For if something untoward happens on your estate, your neighbors come ungirt, but
> your in-laws gird themselves. A bad neighbor is a woe, just as much as a good one is a great
> boon:* whoever has a share in a fine neighbor has a share in good value; not even a cow would be
> lost, if the neighbor were not bad. Measure out well from your neighbor, and pay him back well,
> with the very same measure, and better if you can, so that if you are in need again you will find
> him reliable later too."[148][my italics]

On the whole, the settlement itself appears to be an extended family with the chief at the center.

One could easily picture such connections having taken place in the village life of Nichoria in

light of the clusters of dwellings across the ridge itself (see above).

On the more individual level of authority, there are certain features which would seem to

apply to Nichoria at a glance. For instance, it can be consistently found that the most powerful

and successful leaders in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were those who could reciprocate in gift-

exchange and who possessed the greatest means towards generosity.[149] Odysseus' admonition to

Antinous that he should extend hospitality is essentially the expectation that the *basileus* share

his surplus.[150] The primary buildings in DAII and DAIII would seem to have been both self-

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[146] Donland (1985): 302.
[147] Donland (1985): 302.
[148] *Op.* 343-51, also cf. 21-24, 370-71, 394-403, 407-8, 453-54, 700-701, 707-8.
[149] Qviller (1981): 120-121.
[150] *Od.* 14. 62. "you are like a king. Therefore you should give me a portion of bread and a better
one than the others." Cf. Qviller (1981): 121.

sufficient and have enough resources such that—perhaps at gatherings, they could redistribute surplus. [151] This is by no means certain, but I would argue that this was likely to have been the case on some level. It strains credulity to believe that the community, as it shrank and became less prosperous in DAIII, did not draw security (materially and in leadership) from the site's central building and its owner which it (the community) expanded and no doubt helped maintain.

Another similarity can be found with the *basileis*' relationship to labour—both that which they extracted from the communities they ruled and their own. If we take the case of the *Odyssey*, it is mentioned on various occasions that those who were led by the king were to contribute to his wealth and his ability to offer gifts and guest friendship.[152] However, it was certainly possible for there to be a friction. Homer alludes to this with the example of Odysseus' herdsman who complains that the *basileus*' exaction went too far: "Long since, believe me, would I have fled and come to some other of the powerful kings, for now things are no longer to be borne."[153]

This did not mean that labor was not the province of the *basileis*, as Qviller has pointed out. Indeed, at differing times and contexts and at differing levels of status among them, *basileis* have been mentioned to engage in agricultural and pastoral work. For example, Odysseus had dared Eurymachus to "have a contest in working in the season of spring, when the long days come, in the hayfield, I with a curved scythe in my hands and you with another like it, and that the grass might be in plenty so we might test our work, fasting till late evening."[154]

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[151] It has been suggested that symposiums had evolved from banquets which *basileis* used to put their status and generosity on display. Cf. Murray (1983): 195-199; Murray (1994).

[152] Alkinous appeals to others in his circle to provide Odysseus with gifts in this way: "come now, let us give him a great tripod and a cauldron, and we in turn will gather goods among the people and get us recompense". Cf. *Od.* 13.13; translation taken from Qviller (1985): 123.

[153] *Od*. 20, 222.

[154] *Od*. 18, 366; Also cf. *Il*. 5, 313; *Od*. 24, 205.

At a glance, this would seem to invoke the "Big Man" theory of self-made leadership. However, this would not be the entire story neither in the epics of Homer nor at Nichoria.[155] In the case of the former, there are some aspects of rule which are not merely self-made. For instance, there are functions of elite life—such as the assemblies in the *Iliad*—which appear to be more akin to institutions.[156] The assembly of heroes is not inclusive and speakers had to be of appropriate social status in order to be eligible to receive the scepter which recognized the hero's right to speak.[157] Likewise, I would suggest that the apparent permanence of the building—or rather its function (considering that it was rebuilt and expanded)—which suggests that Nichoria had approached an organization which perhaps approached that of a chiefdom, whereby leadership was more institutionalised. Indeed, due to the apparent isolation of the community, there may not have been the option fleeing "and come to some other of the powerful kings" (see note 52).

In sum, the fall of the Palatial System had created conditions in which the people at Nichoria could survive with relative (albeit not prosperous) self-sufficiency. Both in resources and in its material record, Nichoria was able to make due while being largely secluded from the broader developments of Greece. Nevertheless, like the rest of the Greek world, Nichorians had inherited certain continuities from the Mycenaean world and therefore they certainly were likely to have shared many concerns on kinship and authority which were not entirely dissimilar to those espoused by Hesiod and the Homeric epics. However, Nichoria's social organization was primarily self-referential. In place of trade, many dependents and a vibrant warrior aristocracy of the sort which probably prevailed at Lefkandi, Nichoria had more ample space without (it seems)

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[155] This topic will be more comprehensively assessed in the following chapter.
[156] *Il.* 2.243-271.
[157] *Il.* 2.243-271

any viable alternate communities in the area with leaders to provide their generosity and/or animosity. Local conditions, I argue, made the difference; they were what allowed Nichoria to develop along lines which respected the strictly necessary. This may indeed have been in turn what ultimately prevented Nichoria from ever becoming a *polis*.

Chapter 4:
Homeric Echoes?

[Photo Taken By Author]

"The ambiguities and multiple stories of the Greeks are keys to understanding how the past functioned for them: a source of authority, a fertile field for the ever-shifting definitions of power, identity, and authenticity."—Carla M. Antonaccio, (1994): 410.

In the last chapter I had briefly covered Homeric and Hesiodic echoes to be found in Nichoria and life on the ridge. In this chapter, I will attempt to further explore the parallels to be found in the literary record. Though not exactly contemporaneous, both Hesiod and Homer are considered to have been within a generation of each other and the final habitation phase of Nichoria had terminated in 750 BCE (DAIII); only some decades prior to these texts and the staples of Greek life they describe. Of course, using this evidence is not without its problems. With respect to Homer, the oral tradition whence it came presents its own challenges and limitations; even in the broader context of the Greek world. These would have been performed by bards—travelling or otherwise—to differing audiences with different and disparate traditions.[158] As a result the stories, inflections and issues covered would have suited and appealed to the community in which it would have been recited. With deliberately (or perhaps inherited) archaic language designed for meter and its stock phrases[159], the poet would improvise as well as recite from memory—delivering a story which is familiar as well as 'far away' with a special appeal towards the aristocracy and its values.[160] As has been described by other scholars, the poems were an explanation and attempt at justification of the value of the *polis* (see note 158). Its emergence was recent after all, and its definition was still evolving. As aforementioned, the distinction between *polis* and town were often interchangeable and there is a debate about whether the terms themselves carry 'hard' distinctions. However, the seems to be an overall consensus that the *polis* as it was found in Homer was a *physical* place far more than a political

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[158] For the purposes of this chapter, the issue of authorship for the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* will not be discussed.

[159] For example: "Agamemnon, King of Men; Achilles Swift of Foot, etc."

[160] Morris (1986); Renfrew (1982); Finley (1954); Long (1970); Greenhalgh (1972), to name only a few.

entity in the Aristotelian sense of the word.[161] It was 'physical' in the sense that it was the bedrock of the community in terms of habitation and communal action and was the place of refuge in case of an attack. In this respect, Nichoria could qualify. However, the *polis* as it emerged in the mid to late 8th century BCE had distinguishing features to its makeup for which Nichoria does not qualify. Within its (albeit not always) walled confines, discriminations of space, function and mental landscape materialised. These included separations of the living and the dead within the community, sanctuaries for religious ceremonies and spaces demarcated for the purpose of community action (i.e. *agora*).[162] Of course, all these categories are porous despite the primary emphasis that each spatial configuration carried. In all places, cult had a role to a lesser or greater extent and the politics of elite display were present throughout. This can be easily established with Homer's famous depiction on the shield of Achilles:

"And he forged on the shield two noble cities filled
with mortal men. With weddings and wedding feasts in one
and under glowing torches *they brought forth the brides*
from the women's chambers, marching through the streets
while choir on choir the wedding song rose high
and the young men came dancing, whirling round in rings
and among them flutes and harps kept up their stirring call—
women rushed to the doors and each stood moved with wonder.
And the *people massed, streaming into the marketplace*
where a quarrel had broken out and two men struggled
over the blood-price for a kinsman just murdered.
One declaimed in public, vowing payment in full—
the other spurned him, he would not take a thing—
so both men pressed for a judge to cut the knot.

The crowd cheered on both, they took both sides,
but heralds held them back as the city elders sat
on polished stone benches, forming the sacred circle,
grasping in hand the staffs of dear-voiced heralds,
and each leapt to his feet to plead the case in turn,
Two bars of solid gold shone on the ground before them,

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[161] Hölkeskamp (2004): 28-29.
[162] Hölkeskamp (2004): 26-29.

a prize for the judge who'd speak the straightest verdict."[163] (my italics)

What is important to take into account is the discriminations made at the level of roles and places as well as their intersection. Here we witness public gatherings—one a marriage and the other a legal dispute—where the actors are clearly defined and their places are reserved. In the case of the marriage, the event is a procession which the whole community seems to enjoy where men and women carry different but complementary roles (see above) as the bride is escorted by parade to her new home.[164] Luce commented that the description of women stepping out of their doors to witness the procession was "a nice small-town touch"; this comment was perceptive in more ways than one.[165] The event certainly gives the impression that the idealised *polis* in question was of a size that processions of this kind were possible—that is to say, that neighbours who all knew each other could bear witness to a marriage and still feel connected on a level which is part and parcel of a holistic and " small self-contained community".[166] In this sense, Nichoria would certainly have qualified since the community was of a size that any event of similar importance or scope occurring on the ridge would easily involve the witnessing and (more than likely) participation of the rest of the community. Likewise Nichoria does not seem to meet Homer's ideal of the small community in that there seems to be indication here of gendered spaces within the *polis*—more specifically, the description of "women's chambers" and that "women rushed to the doors" during this special occasion.[167]

The other event is a lawsuit for the settlement of a deadly dispute whereby one party desires to pay the "blood price" for the victim. As Luce pointed out, the contrast to the wartime

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[163] *Il.* 18.490-508. In Fagles (trans.) (1991).
[164] Luce (1978): 1-2.
[165] Luce (1978): 2.
[166] *Ibid.*: 2.
[167] This might imply a more rigid respect for these space separations when no such event occurred, though this is admittedly speculative.

polis is clear: disputes are settled via third party arbitration. The arbitration was carried out by community elders with the king and his heralds at the very top of society. The council in the *agora* was undertaken much like the assembly in the *Iliad*: the *basileis* perform the deliberations and the *demos* can approve or disapprove by vocal clamor; whatever the case, the final decision is left with the elite.[168] Again the whole community was involved and the elite could find opportunity to gain prestige ("Two bars of solid gold shone on the ground before them, a *prize for the judge who'd speak the straightest verdict.*"(my italics)).

In Nichoria, any vaguely equivalent event probably took place in the only conspicuous locus of communal activity: the Chieftain's Dwelling. However, as I have indicated in past chapters, there is no evidence that such a dynamic aristocratic culture existed in Nichoria and it might even be likely that the central building and its occupant became more or less 'institutionalized' as time went by. Indeed, if anything the example of Lefkandi seems to hold more parallels to the Shield's depictions of an ideal community at peace.[169] The narrative of the harvest, the competition among nobles and the mapping (*not* in the sense of deliberate urban planning) of purpose—or a sense of what Hölkeskamp termed "urbanity"[170]—can be far more easily discerned in Lefkandi's urban layout and proximity to (and harvest of) the Lelantine plain than in Nichoria's hilly surrounds and community sustained mainly by pastoralism and arboriculture.[171]

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[168] Luce (1978): 3-5; *Il.* 18.
[169] This is shown with the lack of temples, the prominence of the harvest, the king and the absence of the king. Cf. Luce (1978): 3-4. For Lefkandi see Popham *et al.* (1988-1989), Popham *et al.* (1980a), Popham *et al.* (1982), Sackett and Popham (1972).
[170] Hölkeskamp (2004): 27.
[171] See chapter 2.

There are other problems which arise from trying to use our nearest literary sources to explain the Dark Ages and Nichoria. As studies on oral culture have revealed, there may be some chronological and geographic restrictions to what the Homeric poems can reveal about the far past. Foremost among these difficulties is the very nature of preliterate societies and of oral poetry within such cultures. It is right of Morris to emphasize that oral societies did not necessarily live in a sort of 'eternal present'.[172] By necessity oral *tradition* has an outlook vis-à-vis some kind of past. The difference, however, lies in the demands that *literate* and *non/pre-literate* societies have for the past and its 'accuracy'. In oral poetry and tradition, memorization of facts and lines are not nearly as important as the *spontaneous composition* involved in the bard's performance.[173] The result of this is that the story, details and concerns can change drastically within only a generation or two as studies of oral cultures have demonstrated.[174] The dubious proposition of immutability has long been debunked from scholarly discussion on the epics and the implications have also been variously explored. Among them is the distinction that memorisation was only a demand that was strictly made (and met) in *literate* cultures—which distinguishes the epics of Homer from examples such as the *Song of Roland*.[175] The latter renders a severely distorted account of events some centuries before while containing contemporary concerns (12th century CE). However, in oral societies, the institutional memory from a vanished society (in our case, the Late Bronze Age) do *not* remain, as investigations into modern

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[172] Morris (1986): 87.

[173] "No graver mistake could be made than to think that the art of the singer calls only for memory ... the oral poem even in the mouth of the same singer is ever in a state of change, and it is the same when his poetry is sung by others." In Parry (1971): 335.

[174] Ong (1982) 66-68; Parry (1971), 133-38; cf. Parry *et al.* (1974) and Lord 1948 on Slavic and Serbian-Croat modern parallels with Homeric aspects of memorisation and improvisation.

[175] "there is a fundamental difference between the Greek bard and the nameless medieval poets of epics such as El Cid and Roland: the latter were almost certainly literate clerics […]who belong within an entirely different tradition of writing, as opposed to recitation" in Morris (1986): 95-96; See Mireaux (1943) for the likelihood of literary sources behind the *Song of Roland*.

comparative evidence have made clear. It has been most succinctly put by Ong: "oral societies live very much in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium by sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance... *oral traditions reflect a society's present cultural values rather than idle curiosity about the past*." (my italics) and Finnegan as well: "an oral poem is an essentially ephemeral work of art, and has no existence or continuity apart from its performance [. . .] oral literature is [...] dependent on its social context."[176] This presents many difficulties both in chronology and the epics' applicability to Nichoria and the Messenian context of the 10th-8th centuries.

Even in embracing the date of the late 8th century, if we take seriously the notion that Homer would have reflected largely contemporary concerns (when it was finally put to writing) along with the device of epic distance to convey a sense of the 'distant past', it then seems that Nichoria does not lend itself to easy comparative analysis. However, as I showed with Lefkandi in the last chapter, some Dark Age communities were not so removed as to bear *no* resemblance to the Homeric world. Inconsistencies with them are likely to be found throughout the Greek world in the DA period and even afterward. Either orally or in text, the epics of Homer posit and assert a worldview with a coherence which cannot be totally conformed to by what the archaeology or even quasi-contemporary texts such as the *Works and Days* can relate.[177] Morris is right to emphasize the limitations of institutional memory or extrapolation thereof from the texts into the deep past. Nevertheless, because of Greece's emphasis on local and parochial concerns, it would seem premature to judge that all these values and institutions (or their

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[176] Ong (1982), 46-48; Finnegan (1977), 28-29; Morris (1986): 87.

[177] Redfield (1975): 23, described it thus: "In telling a story the poet employs and persuades us to certain assumptions about the sources and conditions of action. He thus (in effect) takes a view of culture. And further: since he is telling his story to an audience, the meaning he conveys must be a meaning to them."

remnants and variants) from the pre-archaic period had vanished or endured at the same rate.[178] In other words, despite the limitations inherent to the process of probing these texts, there are some commonalities which might be found to better situate Nichoria within the larger tract of Greek history.

For all that, such commonalities would be unlikely to be on the institutional level (see above). Whether one can argue at all that such elements can be found rests on the assumption that certain aspects of life in the Greek mainland remained more or less similar and/or constant in the 10-8th centuries BCE. Morris and others stressed the uncanny emergence of the poems in textual form in (probably) the mid-late 8th century just as writing itself (re)appeared in Greece— such an undertaking could not have been made absent a tremendous incentive.[179] Particularly salient is the need of institutions and power structures to justify themselves along with the notion of the *polis* itself (see above). When posing the question *cui bono* (?), community elites who could have commissioned the text in the first place become obvious candidates and it has not passed unnoticed from scholars that Homer tends to hold a particularly pro-*aristos* stance.[180] The rise in foreign and elite contacts between communities likely presented a need to cement the current order by conceiving a past in which 'eternal' values promoting aristocratic interests were adhered to in the age of heroes and therefore had to be maintained as vaunted traditions.[181] The need which the 8th century socio-political climate created for these texts cannot be overstated in its implications. The evidence at Nichoria leaves no indication of such political and institutional dynamism and certainly no need to go beyond the purely oral dissemination of tradition (see its

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[178] As Morris (1986) acknowledges in several instances. See p.116: "Any work of art is necessarily an imitation of culture and is only one of an infinite number of possible models of society."

[179] Morris (1986): 121.

[180] See note 3.

[181] See Starr (1961b), Snodgrass (1980a), de Polignac (1984), Morris (2006a), Morris (2004b) and Scheidel (2007) (this list is by no means exhaustive) for these phenomena sprouting in the 8th century.

limitations above).[182] As a reminder of what was discussed in chapter 2, Messenia saw virtually

no discernible nucleated settlements and synoikisms in the Dark Age and early Archaic Period

with only marginal indications of wealth stratification in Nichoria's own material record.[183] This,

regrettably, does not bode well for a straightforward 'grafting' of text to archaeology.

As for Hesiod, the comparison reveals similar challenges. For one thing, Hesiod himself

and the history of his family adumbrate a world which was wider and more far reaching than

what the evidence at Nichoria suggests. Unlike the limited circulation of the population at

Nichoria, Hesiod's father came from Asia Minor and reflects in part the socio-political churnings

of the 8th century in its foundations and migrations. Ascra itself was a small town, not a proper

polis, yet it may very well be that it was within the larger sphere of influence of Thespia, whose

basileis Hesiod bemoans for their "crooked judgements".[184] Yet Hesiod's conception of the

kosmos and the parochialisms of Ascra present the same challenges as the Homeric texts. They

are the fossilizations of ideas and institutions (albeit traceable to a single individual as opposed

to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey's* uncertain authorship) which—if they reveal anything at all about

Nichoria—it would be incidental and not the confirmation of parallel social developments in

Messenia.

Indeed, an alternative for Nichoria in the exercise of authority may have been the

Mycenaean ruins and tombs themselves. Carla Antonaccio and others have pointed to the

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[182] This should not be taken as meaning that there was no elite to speak of at Nichoria but is rather an evaluation of the *character* of the elite which the evidence seems to communicate (see chapter 3 for a comparison between Lefkandi and Nichoria).

[183] See also Luraghi & Kennell (2009): 249-250.

[184] As Wade-Gery (1978): 11 and later Luce (1978):3 have noticed, Hesiod refers to Ascra as a *kome* (*Op.* 639) and the *polis* which he mentions earlier in the text (*Op.* 269) might in fact be Thespia since it lies in its immediate surroundings and (perhaps later) sphere of influence.

importance of these structures in the fashioning of a shared past by the elite.[185] Emerging *poleis*

would associate a heroic and primordial past to these landmarks and—just as the later writings of

Homer indicate—the institutions which produced these tombs and ruins did not survive and they

fulfilled whatever function which was required of them by the contemporary needs of 8th century

Greeks. Once again, exact parallels with early literature are not entirely actionable, but in this

case the evidence may allow for some plausible speculation. If we briefly return to Hesiod, he

provides the example of personally visiting Chalcis and participating in the funeral games of

Amphidamas (organized by his son).[186] In this context, ancestral (and/or hero) worship was

being exercised not only in the context of an emerging *polis* but was apparently part of a larger

circle of elites who were engaging in exponentially more interaction than before and such events

were platforms for the development of elite pedigrees. In Nichoria, the Vathirema *Tholos*

(marked as the "Chamber Tomb" by the authors) is situated directly by the ridgetop itself. It

would strain credulity that the community would not make use of the tomb in some way or

another and I view it as suggestive that there seems to have been 'imitation' *tholoi* in the nearby

Lakkoules cemetery (see chapter 2).

In chapter 3, I made the contention that the site's central structure may point to a more

well-established or 'institutionalised' social order due to its longevity even as the settlement

deteriorated. Whether it was an oral tradition or a propping of Mycenaean structures—and these

are not mutually exclusive—both were possible tools for justifying whatever authority may have

held sway on the ridge. Of course, this is complete speculation and this recapitulates the main

thrust of this chapter. Nichoria was not in a position—geographically and culturally—for these

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[185] Antonaccio (1994): 400-402.
[186] Hes. *Op.* 654-659.

early texts to possess any outstanding explanatory power for non-contingent factors such as institutions. Nichoria's differences with what came only a few decades later are indicative of Dark Age social diversity. The needs of the *status quo* in Nichoria and those in a budding 8th century *polis* were substantially different. The poems' provenance from the latter explains their inability to elucidate the former.

Conclusion

At the start of this research, I proposed to examine Nichoria in such a way as to limit teleological assumptions (e.g. that Nichoria 'anticipates' the *polis*). In my first chapter, I had made an overview of the site and its immediate surroundings in order to assess some of the debates and issues at stake on the top of the ridge itself. Overall, it was concluded that, although some continuity from the BA remained, the necessities of life on the ridge itself are what we see primarily reflected at Nichoria. In the second chapter, I broadened my analysis to that of Messenia itself, and compared/contrasted its living patterns to previous configurations which were likely to have been operative in the BA as well. BA sites were probably more self-sufficient than has often been emphasized and as such the destruction of the kingdom of Pylos would not have automatically signified the death of those sites who could manage without the palace. For various reasons, I argued that the Messenians (as far as they can be detected in the archaeological record) stuck closely to BA ruins (Nichoria in particular) and were not induced to change or move far away from their previous BA settlements because of the natural benefits and barriers characteristic of Messenia. Messenian settlement patterns did not change because they did not *need* to change.

Nichoria primarily based its 'locality' on its physical surroundings and its ostensible isolation fossilized their *modus vivandi*, even in the face of diminution and apparent decline[187]. It may have been because of its lack of knowledge of—or refusal to engage with—other communities and their social structures which may have permitted this fossilization. Compounding this dynamic were the conditions of Messenia itself, whose benefits and territorial confinement by various natural barriers allowed Nichoria's communal life to ensue seemingly

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[187] Consider the expansion of the "Chieftain's Dwelling" from Unit IV-1 to Unit IV-5.

undisturbed. By communal life, I mean that which includes not only the quotidian routines of survival and pastoral activities, but also whatever discourses and cultural products which inevitably accrued around the Messenian landscape. More specifically, I would draw attention to the myriad remains of Mycenaean structures, tombs and cemeteries of which some evidence exists (covered in chapter 2) for reuse from Nichorians. Such emblems from the past would have obliged Nichorians, as Iron Age Messenians, to create associations and an imagined past. Indeed, I would posit those regional features as the metaphorical space or 'ideascape' which emerged as a matter of course. Ultimately, unlike what came later, Nichoria's particular brand of parochialism was not reinforced and/or juxtaposed to outside examples. For instance, in the 8th-6th centuries many *poleis* had managed to appropriate and encode outside ideas or norms such that they became intelligible for local discourse. Messenia's Dark Age seems to have lasted longer than most other areas in mainland Greece[188],and Nichoria's isolation seems to attest to the extent to which the Greek world was still sequestered both culturally and socially.

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[188] Consider the near contemporary emergence of Homer and Literacy (~750 BCE) along with the termination of settlement on Nichoria ridge.
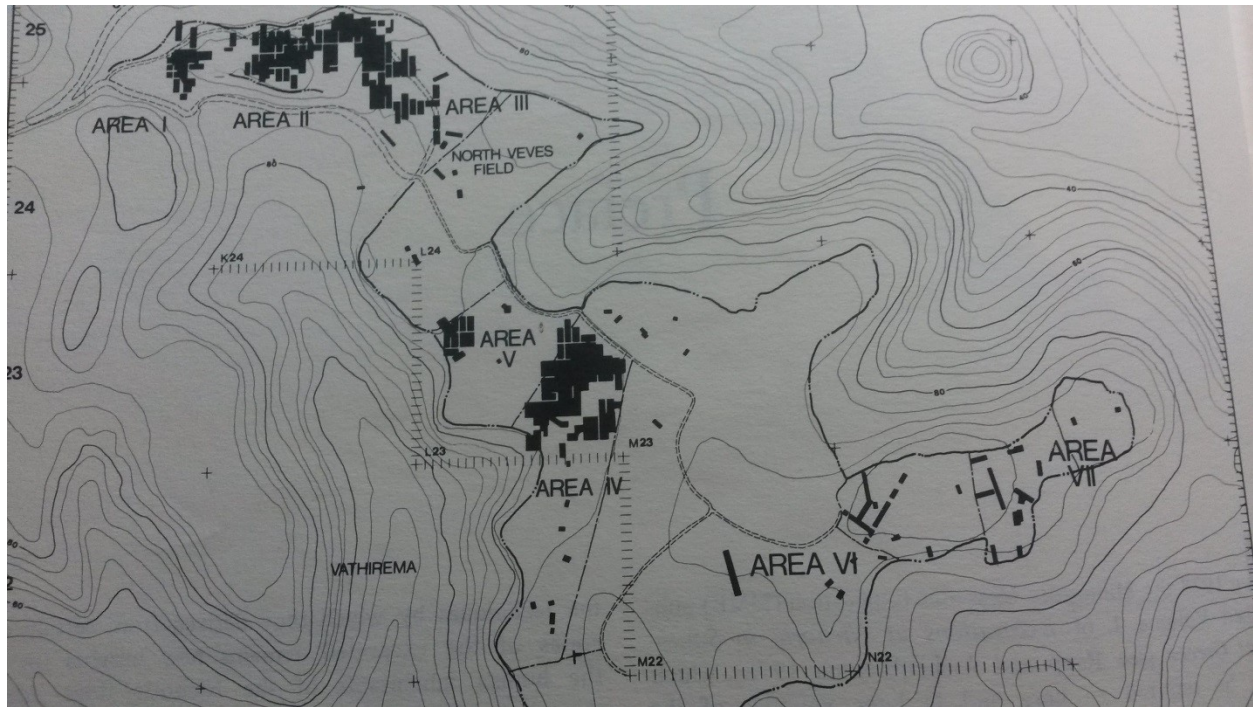
Appendix--Chapter 1

Fig. 1: Plan excavated areas of Nichoria Ridge. (Rapp (1978): 78. [= *Nichoria I*])

Fig. 2: Item **N701**, possibly representing the form which huts on the DA ridge took. (*Nichoria III*, 16, 490.)
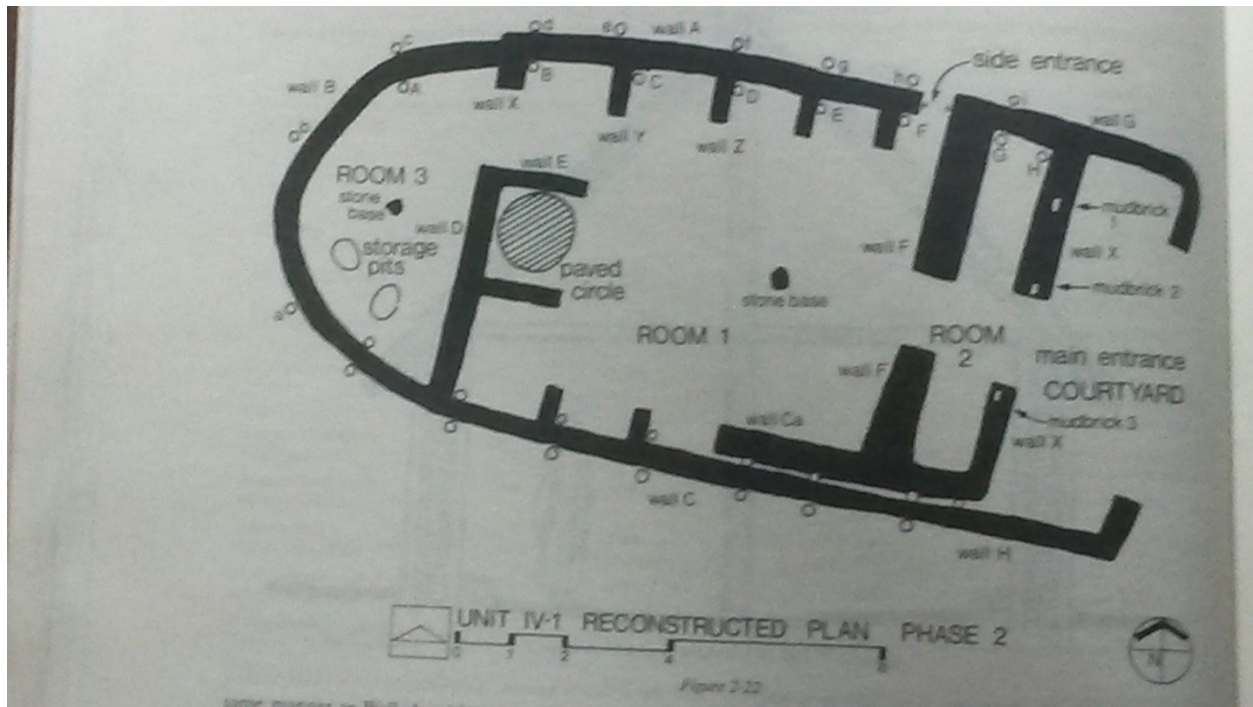
Fig. 3: Unit IV-1 Phase 1 according to Coulson. (*Nichoria III*, 29)

Fig. 4: Unit IV-1 in with both phases 1 & 2 represented. (*Nichoria III*, 22)

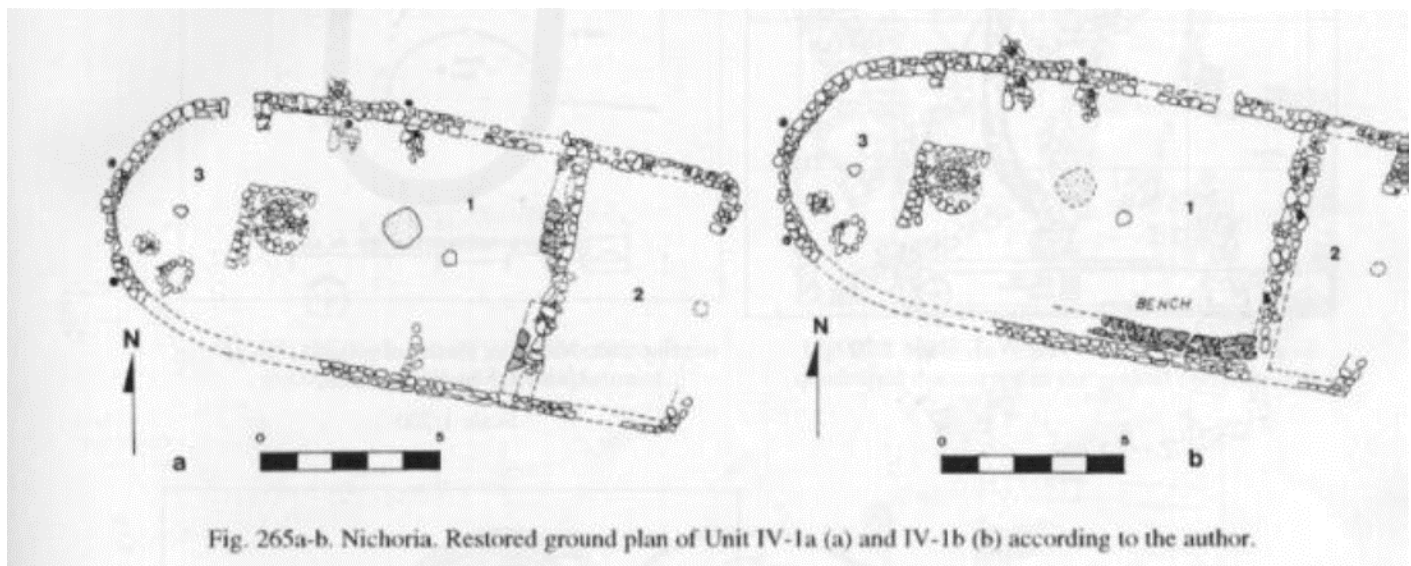Fig. 5: Unit IV-1 phase 2. (*Nichoria III*, 36)

Fig. 265a-b. Nichoria. Restored ground plan of Unit IV-1a (a) and IV-1b (b) according to the author.
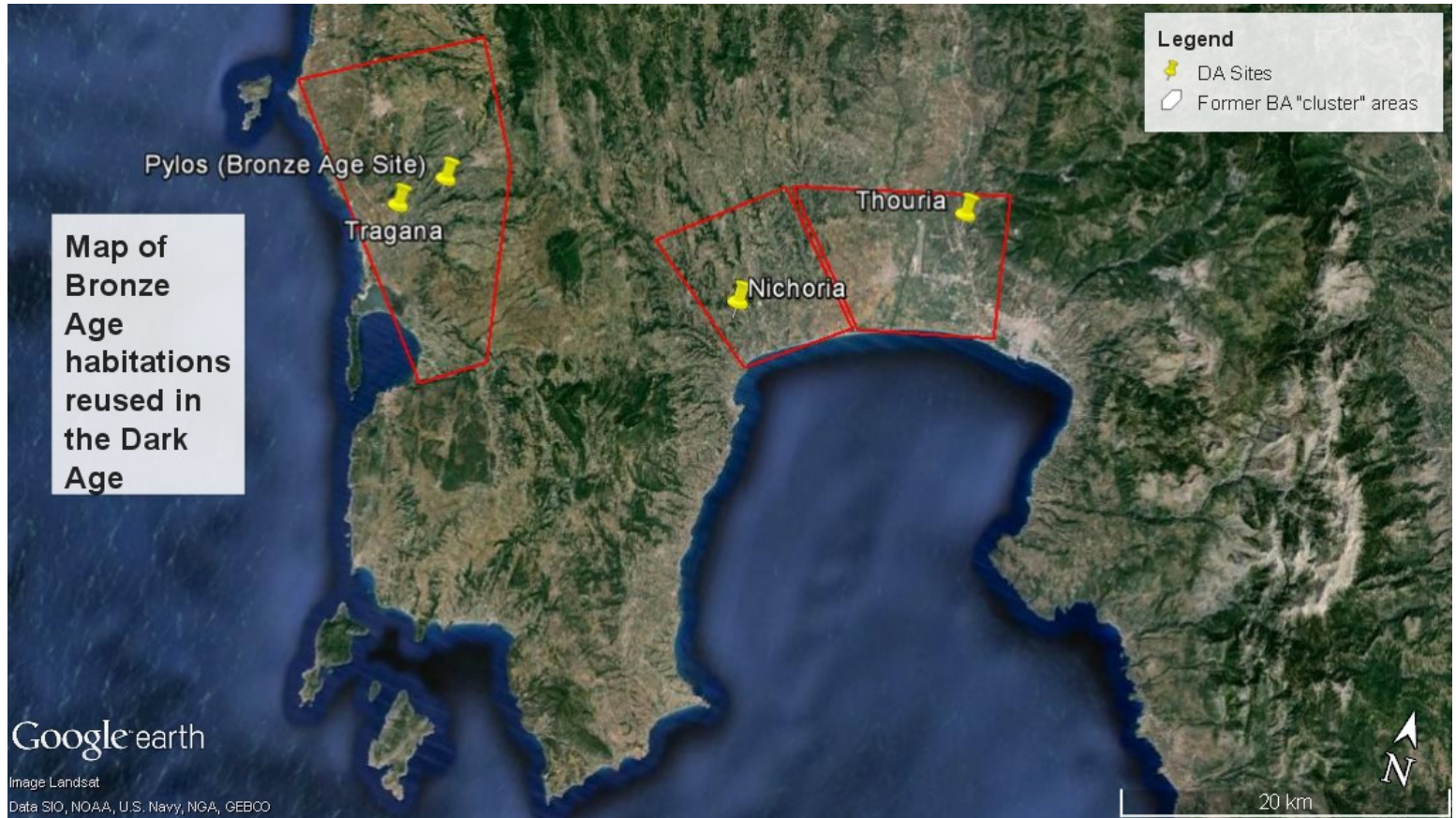
Fig. 6: Reconstruction of Unit IV-1 according to Ainian. (Ainian: 1997, 539)

Fig. 7: The ground of clay, sand and brown silt around Nichoria ridge (photo taken by author)
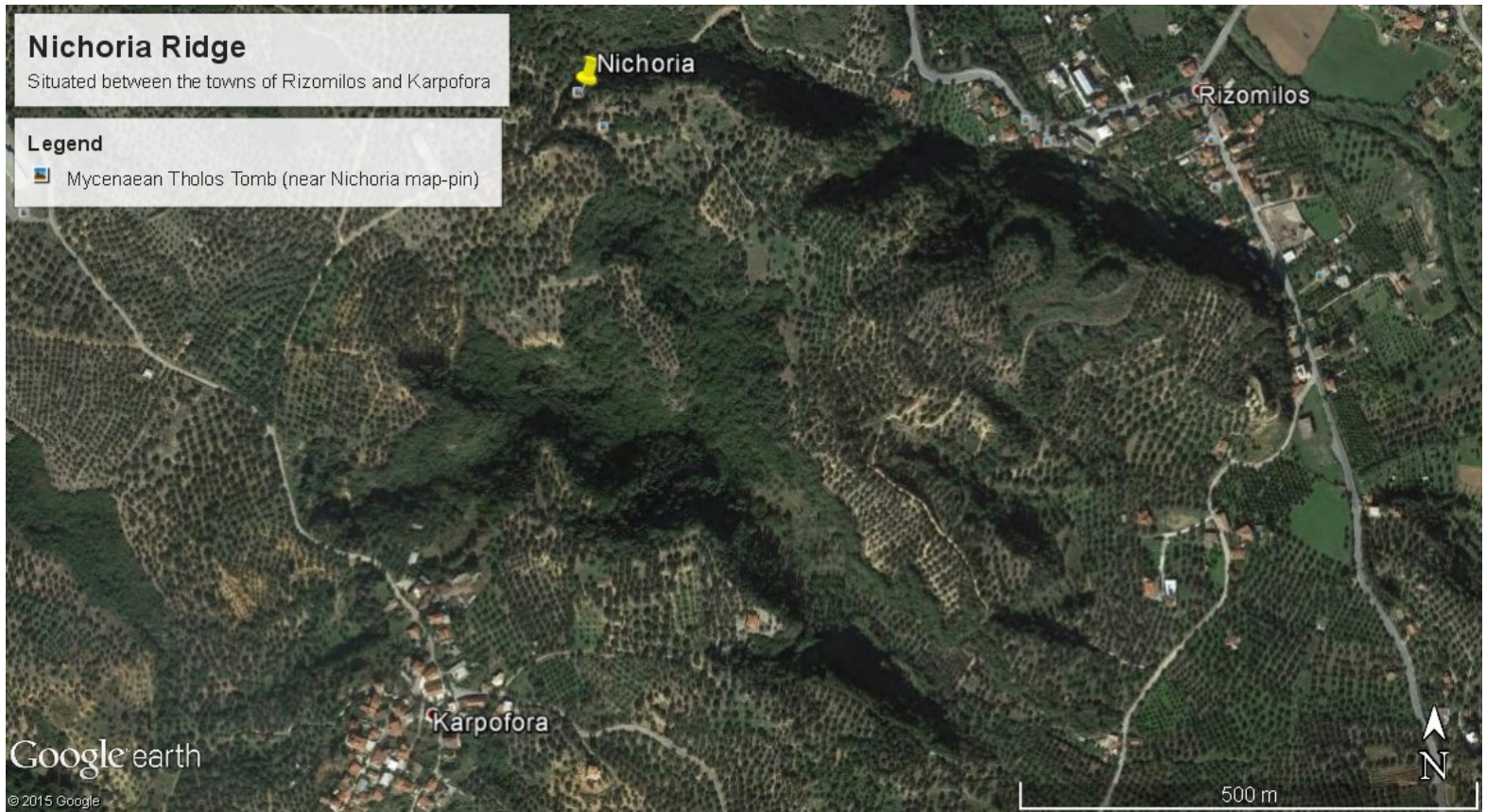
Appendix—Chapter 2

<u>Map 1</u> (Created by Author.)

Map 2 (Created by Author.)

Former BA Sites and "Settlement Clusters" Juxtaposed to Major DA Sites

Legend
- "Settlement Clusters" as proposed by MacDonald et al. (1978)
- Rough Kingdom Boundary (?) (line in Blue)

Thouria

Pylos (Bronze Age Site)

Tragana

Nichoria

Google earth

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image Landsat

N

20 km

Map 3 (Created by Author).

Chamber Tomb on Nichoria Ridge (Picture Taken by Author)

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