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EDICIONES COMPLUTENSE

Mycenaean Routes towards the West

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Abstract. During the Late Bronze Age, the Mediterranean was the region where a network of interactions took place as a result of the Mycenaean long-distance routes. We have chosen the microregion of the Southern Ionian Islands, Cephallenia, Ithaca and Zacynthus as part of the Mycenaean routes towards the Western Mediterranean, which is where a series of specific interactions and cultural transmission took place.
Key words: Late Bronze Age; Interactions; Cultural Transmission; Cephallenia; Ithaca; Zacynthus.

[esp] Rutas micénicas hacia Occidente

Resumen. A lo largo del Bronce Final, el Mediterráneo fue el escenario de una red de intercambios como resultado de las rutas micénicas a larga distancia. Como parte de estas rutas hacia Occidente hemos elegido la zona de las islas jónicas meridionales, Cefalonia, Ítaca y Zante, una micro región en la que se produjeron una serie de interacciones y de transmisión cultural con el mundo micénico.
Palabras clave: Bronce Final; interacciones; transmisión cultural; Cefalonia, Ítaca; Zante.

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1. Introduction[2]

As is well known, the Bronze Age was the period of greatest development in terms of communication links throughout the whole of European prehistory.[3] The aim of this work is to approach the routes that Mycenaeans covered on their way towards the West, considering the evidence that has remained in the Southern Ionian Islands, that is Zacynthus, Cephallenia, and Ithaca, in the archaeological record to date.

In the first stages of Aegean archaeology, during the first half of the 20th century, explanations of the changes recorded in the archaeological record were based on migration and dissemination between Bronze Age regions. Thereafter, in the late 20th century, other approaches and methodologies were added, using concepts such as acculturation, mobility, cross-cultural interaction, hybridity, as well as the world-system approach and core-periphery. Nowadays, studies regarding mobility are encouraged, as we can see in the themes tackled at many conferences. It is not our purpose to go through all the different positions that have been defended up until now, but it is worthwhile noting that, especially in this century, new approaches and methodologies have been used that seek to establish closer ties with other social sciences such as sociology and anthropology.[4]

An academic debate exists regarding Mycenaean long-distance contacts, their motivation, the search for raw materials and exotic objects fundamental for the maintenance of the palatial system, and the legitimization of the power of their elites. These contacts are part of a system of networks and interactions throughout the Aegean, Central Mediterranean and Northern Europe, where the flow of objects, technological innovations and ideas occurred in both directions. Another problem relates to the intensity of these contacts, namely those aspects that provide evidence of Mycenaean settlement, either permanent or at an intermediate point, along these long-distance routes towards the West, which is to say, the presence of a Mycenaean cultural horizon.[5]

Due to the principal characteristics of the three southern islands of Zacynthus, Cephallenia and Ithaca, we have chosen this "microregion", as it is a much more feasible scenario for our analysis of Mycenaean routes. The concept of microregion connectivity was defined by Horden and Purcell.[6] They emphasize that, in the long-distance networks of interaction, as occurs in the Mycenaean world, we need to also consider the links between the peripheral regions as well as those of the core centres, in our case some of the known Mycenaean kingdoms. In this regard, Tartaron also mentions how "coastscapes and small worlds are appropriate units of analysis". Therefore, we can consider microregions to be "spatially defined areas with distinctive social practices resulting from interactions with the landscape".[7]

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2 This work is part of the R&D Project of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (PID2019-108822GB-I00).

3 Kristiansen – Larson 2005a; 2005b, 975-976; Vandkilde *et alii* 2015, 5.

4 Stein 2002; Milán Quiñones de León 2021, 15 and n. 6 for references. See also Kristiansen – Larson 2005a, 25-31, particularly regarding interactions.

5 Galaty 2016.

6 Horden – Purcell 2000, 123-172.

7 Tartaron 2013, 190-198.

Very recently, Souyoudzoglou-Haywood has followed the same type of approach by analysing the maritime connections of these islands, considering them to be "small worlds", within the concept that Broodbank used in his reference to the Cycladic world.[8] It is clear that geographical proximity favours the interconnectivity between our Southern Ionian Islands and, following Tartaron's definition of "small worlds":

> *Maritime small worlds* are interaction spheres that form as aggregates of many neighboring coastscapes; they might also be called local worlds. Their cohesion results from, and they are in fact constituted by habitual face-to-face interaction based on proximity and various kinds of social and economic ties. The communities that make up a small world commonly share cultural traditions, language, social networks such as kinship ties and intermarriage, mutual protection arrangements, and dense economic relations. Often, they are united by economic interdependence if resources are unevenly distributed or if subsistence is precarious.[9]

The microregion or "small world" we have mentioned can be considered a peripheral region in relation to the Mycenaean core centres. This also brings to mind the scholarly debate on the core-periphery model.[10] As Souyoudzoglou-Haywood points out, three of these small worlds could be identified within the region of the Southern Ionian islands, in which Cephallenia and Ithaca with Zacynthus might form part of the same "small world", since they share certain geographical and tectonic conditions, whilst being situated a short distance away from the mainland.[11] In this regard, it is also worth mentioning the concept of *West Mainland Koine* coined by Tsonos and Papadopoulos[12] regarding the Mycenaean traces along the Aetoloacarnanian and Epirote coasts, since the connectivity between these "small worlds" could also constitute a cultural *koiné* that shares various elements of material culture and plays a specific role in the transmission of Mycenaean culture to the north, sharing also some terrestrial routes that could converge with the maritime nodes.[13] In this respect, it is worth highlighting the site of Glykys Limen and the key site of Ephyra[14] as the main Mycenaean locations covering the north route through Epirus and Albania.[15] Tartaron mentions that a study of pottery from Ephyra suggests that the primary contacts in LH III B and IIIC were with the Ionian Islands.[16]

Within the maritime connections of these small worlds, we must bear in mind that they were integrated within the long-distance routes to the West, Sicily and the South of Italy, and to the North towards Albania and the Adriatic.[17] Graziadio[18] outlined

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8 Broodbank 2000, 175.

9 Tartaron 2013,190.

10 Eder 2007.

11 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 2022, 118.

12 Papadopoulos 1995; Tsonos 2016, 267; 2017, 328.

13 Various regional studies have brought out the shared elements of this *koiné*. Mentioned in Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 2022, 123, with references; Metaxas 2022, 169-70.

14 Tartaron 2017, 2.

15 Tsonos 2017; Milán Quiñones de León 2021, 603-604.

16 Tartaron 2017, n. 24.

17 In this regard, the work of Kristiansen and Larson (2005a; 2005b) is interesting, offering a general vision of all long distance and commercial routes across Europe.

18 Graziadio 1998, 32. See also fig. 1, where he offers the intermediate routes of each circuit.

two separate circuits of Mycenaean trade from the Early Helladic Period: the Eastern and the Western circuits. In my opinion, these could still be valid for the Mycenaean Period in its search for raw materials. Since this publication was produced, we have gathered much more information regarding Mycenaean locations that provide evidence of Mycenaean connections and allow us to trace the routes that Mycenaeans used to travel towards the West and North of the Adriatic, most probably in their search to obtain metals and other raw materials.

The scope of our work forms part of this long-distance Western circuit, although we shall focus on a micro-regional approach, restricted to the south of the Ionian Islands: Zacynthus, Cephallenia and Ithaca. As Souyoudzoglou-Haywood mentions, "the cultural phenomenon, commonly called "Mycenaeanisation" of the Ionian islands, especially in Zacynthus, Cephallenia and Ithaca, was significantly more pervasive and enduring, at the same time as being an interactive and dynamic process of cultural adaptability".[19] As has been highlighted by several scholars, contacts between the Southern Ionian Islands and Mycenaean culture can be found in the South Peloponnese (Triphylia and Elis) and Messenia. [20] Recent publications have revealed new finds on the islands. Zacynthus is the site that has generated the greatest amount of evidence under the Zacynthus Archaeology Project (ZAP). It is quite plausible and seems quite evident that, in a network of contacts of all kinds, distance played an important role. From Vasilikos-Kalogeras we have 16 km directly to the North-West Peloponnese, which, in theory, would represent just three hours of sailing. From the core centre of Pylos, we have a straight distance of around 100 km, although the voyage would depend on the type of ship, skills and knowledge, not to mention the possibility of harbours and anchorages.[21]

2. Geography, Geology and Landscape

The Ionian Sea (Western Greece) is a plate-boundary region of high seismicity and complex tectonics, dominated by frequent earthquake activity along the right-lateral Cephallenia Transform Fault (CTF). Cephallenia, our area of study, is characterized by intense seismic activity, since the island is located where the African and Eurasian tectonic plates meet and, thus, the region faces strong and frequent earthquakes that not only affect settlements and archaeological remains but are responsible for significant modifications of the landscape, in particular coastlines.[22] The Hellenic Arc Subduction Zone is shifted by the Cephallenia Transform Fault that runs some kilometres off the west coast of Leucas (the Leucas segment is approximately 40 km long, whilst in the south the Cephallenia segment is 60 km long).[23] Amongst the experts, there is a consensus that the Cephallenia Transform Fault lies west of Cephallenia, but the latest information from the Odysseus Unbound team during the survey of 2017 in the Thinia Valley in

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19 Soudyouzoglou-Haywood 2022, 120. In this regard, see Knappett 2016 (for the concept of "Mycenaeanisation") and Galaty 2016, 210.

20 Soudyouzoglou-Haywood 1999, 136; 2022, 120.

21 Tartaron 2013, 192-193. For maritime distances see also Broodbank 2000, table 12.

22 Soudyouzoglou-Haywood 1999, 4; Pentedeka *et alii* 2022, 80.

23 Rondoyanni *et alii* 2012, fig. 1.

Cephallenia, would seem to indicate that the major plate boundary, the Cephallenia Transform Fault, which has traditionally been drawn as running west of Cephallenia, may be more diffuse, could affect a wider area and could be the ultimate driver for co-seismic landslides and rockfalls. This team has proposed that the Paliki Peninsula could have previously been separated from Cephallenia through a narrow channel or a seaway across the current Thinia Valley, separating Paliki from the rest of Cephallenia.[24] These geographical and geological characteristics result in major changes in coastlines and the landscape in general, making reconstruction of the ancient landscape difficult.

The Mediterranean has been navigated since Prehistoric times, and, undoubtedly, the earliest routes covered short distances, based on cabotage navigation. Maritime routes were used more than terrestrial ones, even before the Bronze Age, and the most favourable route from the western coast of the Peloponnese to the Italian Peninsula was from the Gulf of Patras to the Strait of Otranto, passing through the southern islands of the Ionian Sea, Cephallenia, Ithaca and Leucas. Going along the Epirote coast up to Albania, we can then turn to the west and, after 70 km of navigation, we reach the Italian coast. The most favourable route does not mean that, sometimes, open sea navigation was not practiced, as we know from the later Phoenician maritime routes. Probably, many crossings alternated both, cabotage and open sea navigation. As was mentioned in ancient sources, navigation was conditioned by geography, seasonality, and meteorology.[25]

The aforementioned coastal route through our Southern Ionian Islands allowed navigators to reach the Epirote coast without losing sight of the coast, featuring the availability of anchorages along the way, as was the case with Glykys Limen. The Adriatic could be crossed through the north of Corcyra or also from Vlöre Bay on the current Albanian shoreline, through the Otranto Channel. Another possibility, mentioned by Prontera, is an open-sea direct route towards Sicily, which is much shorter, and quite feasible, testimony of which has been found in later ancient sources of different periods.[26]

The Ionian islands do not have archaeological evidence of maritime activity. There are no harbour structures and no representations of seafaring. However, the discovery of an Early Helladic II – III shipwreck in Giagana, in the north of the Sami Gulf, in the strait between Cephallenia and Ithaca, is significant, since it indicates the importance of this circuit in the network of maritime communications.[27]

One of the most challenging aspects is to determine the existence of ancient harbours or natural anchorages, especially when we wish to identify maritime routes. We can find a good example in Cephallenia, where the already mentioned Odysseus Unbound team has also studied the palaeo-geographical development of the Livadi Marsh on the Peninsula of Paliki.[28] Different geophysical investigations have determined the possible existence of an ancient harbour, one that can be dated back to the Bronze Age. In addition, multiple geoscience readings reveal the presence of anthropogenic remains *in situ*, which merit further investigation in the future. On

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24 Underhill *et alii* 2018.

25 Hes. *Op*. 664-669, 679-687.

26 See Milán Quiñones de León 2013, 98, 100-102, with references. Prontera 1996, 201.

27 Tsonos 2016, 262; Soudyouzoglou-Haywood 2022,118.

28 Styles *et alii* 2022.

Zacynthus, it is very probable that in the south-western part of the island, in the area of Limni Keriou, there could have been a natural harbour, whilst the existence of other anchorages on the western coast of the island is very plausible, in the area of Vasilikos and the Alikes Lagoon.[29] In the north-west of Ithaca, Polis Bay provided easy access and, undoubtedly, good anchorage.[30]

On the southern coastline of the Corinthian and Patraic Gulf, strategic sites have been identified that could be the point of departure of the maritime routes towards the Ionian Sea and the West, as is the case of the Aigeria Citadel on the border between Achaea and Corinth, and the Mycenaean Citadel of Teichos Dymaion, the last point before turning north to the Ionian Sea.[31] In addition, along the Aetolian shoreline, in the north of the Patraic Gulf, we might mention Agia Triada in Kato Vassiliki.[32]

3. The Southern Ionian Islands

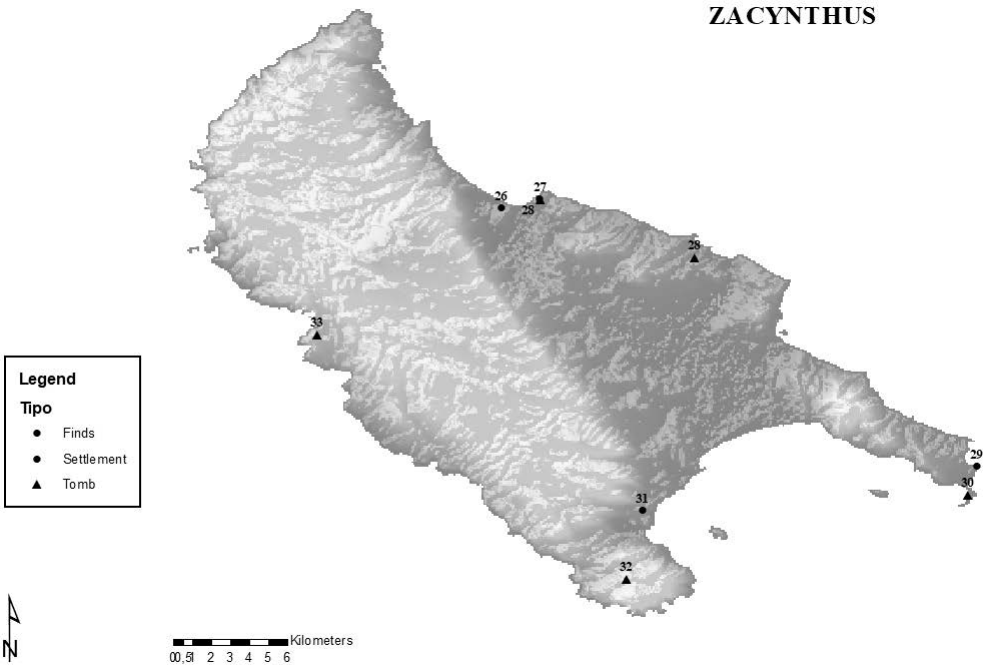

Figure 1. Map of Zacynthus with sites mentioned in the text (see **Table 1** for names of sites; author's elaboration).

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29 Avramidis *et alii* 2017, 340-354.

30 Pentedeka *et alii* 2022, 79.

31 Aegium, at the entrance to the Gulf of Patras, featured a strong Mycenaean presence, and it is also mentioned in the "integral unit of the district" (Tsonos 2016, 264, with references to the three centres mentioned in n. 35 and 36). Teichos Dymaion, on Cape Araxos, is an excellent strategic promontory at which to stop off on the routes towards Italy, as well as towards the north-west (Gazis 2017, 463-471; Papadopoulos 2017, 420).

32 Tsonos 2016, 264.

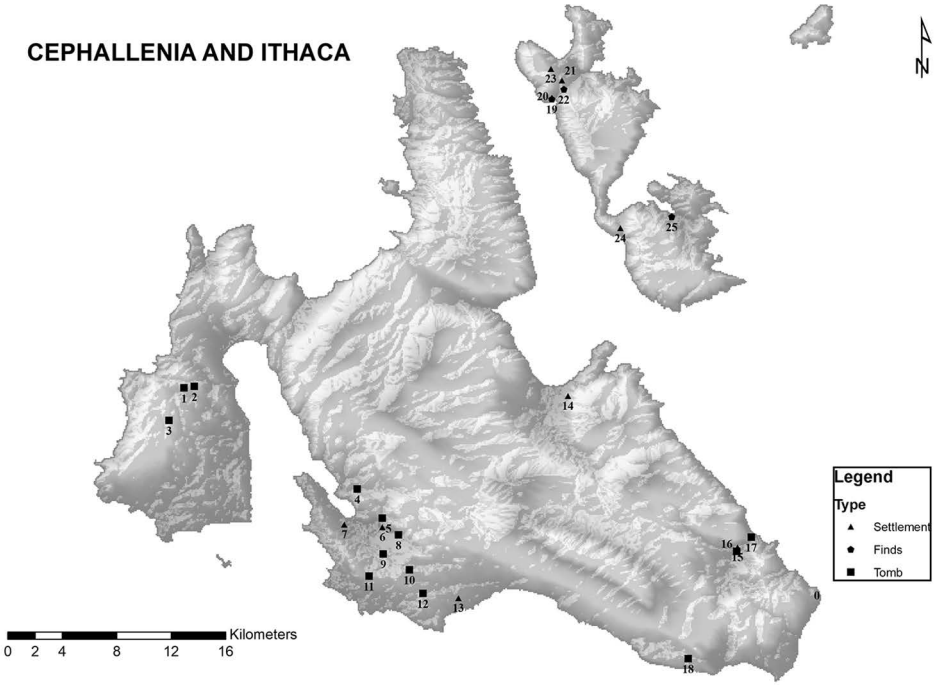

Figure 2. Map of Cephallenia and Ithaca with sites mentioned in the text (see **Table 1** for names of sites; author's elaboration).

1	Kontogenada	18	Mavrata
2	Oikopeda	19	Polis cave
3	Parisata	20	Tris Langadas
4	Prokopata	21	Pilikata
5	Riza Alafonos	22	Stavros
6	Starochorafa	23	Ayios Athanassios
7	Prospholeika	24	Aetos
8	Diakata	25	Vathy
9	Kokolata	26	Katastari
10	Mazarakata	27	Alikanas
11	Lakkithra	28	Alikanas
12	Metaxata	28	Palos
13	Pesada	29	Kalogeras
14	Vounias-Ay.Theodoro	30	Triodi-Gerakas
15	Tzannata-Riza	31	Kamaroti Lithakia
16	Tzannata Borzi	32	Keri
17	Litharia	33	Kambi

Table 1. Sites shown in the maps.

3.1. Zacynthus

Zacynthus (**Fig. 1**) is the southernmost island in the Ionian Sea and the third largest island after Cephallenia and Corfu, measuring c. 406 km^2. In terms of size, Cephallenia (c. 760 km^2) is the largest. The Vrachionas Mountain Range runs from north-west to

south-east, dividing the island into two different territories. The eastern part features lowlands, while the western part has continuous plateaux that end directly in the sea. It is also the closest island to the Peloponnese coastline, featuring good visibility between them. Zacynthus, situated along the Hellenic Trench system, is particularly affected by seismic activity, and since the Holocene Period it has been affected by tectonic events with catastrophic results and changes in sea level and severe processes of subsidence. The island has the highest rate of seismicity in Greece, featuring frequent earthquakes, which has, no doubt, affected the archaeological data.[33]

As confirmed by research in 2017, during Prehistory, in around 4100-3500 BP (that is, in the Middle Helladic and earlier Late Helladic Periods), the current Vasilikos Peninsula was separated from the rest of the island, being defined as a "palaeoisland". A water lagoon was formed, and the process was completed with the drainage of the lake in 1974, which is where the airport is now located that separates the two parts.[34]

Unfortunately, the archaeology of the island is less known than that of the other two islands, primarily because of the main research interest in confirming the location of Odysseus' homeland and because there has been a lack of archaeological research. This situation has been mitigated somewhat thanks to the Zacynthus Archaeology Project (ZAP) in the last few years. From 2006 through 2018, the Netherlands Institute at Athens, with its 35th Ephorate for Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, has headed the above-mentioned project.[35]

Zacynthus was important in the Mycenaean Period, although we have limited archaeological research from this period. Indeed, the island played a major role in the connectivity of the main Mycenaean centres, being located on the maritime routes both coming from the Corinth Channel and from the south-west of the Peloponnese. Important evidence of this connection is the presence of the toponym in three Lineal B tablets, two from Pylos (Sa 751 and Sa 787) with the word *za-ku-si-ja* ("of Zacynthus"), used to describe, in each case, 32 pairs of chariot wheels, which are "of Zakynthian type". In addition, in the known Mycenaean catalogue of rowers that appear in the An 610, the masculine ethnic is used to describe a group of rowers (*e-re-ta*), and also in MY Oe 122, *za-ku-si-jo* also appears as a man's name.[36] Incidentally, Zacynthus is also mentioned in the Homeric Catalogue of Ships.[37]

The Late Bronze Age has yielded six sites, of which only two have habitation remains, Kalogeros and Alikanas-Akrotiri. Dating from the Late Bronze Age, the

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33 Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2014b, 442.

34 Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2014b, 446; 2021, 604; Avramidis *et alii* 2017.

35 The Zacynthus Archaeology Project is an interdisciplinary research initiative that seeks to relate the distribution of archaeological finds to the dynamic landscape of the island. In order to achieve this, scholars and students from various Dutch and Greek universities carry out a range of research measures: intensive archaeological surveys, remote sensing, geological prospection, limited archaeological excavations (test trenches), the study of materials, and reconnaissance surveys. The project is a collaboration initiative between the Netherlands Institute in Athens and the Ephorate for Antiquities at Zacynthus. It is directed by Gert Jan van Wijngaarden (University of Amsterdam) and by Christina Merkouri (Ephorate for Antiquities at Zacynthus). Seasons have been taking place from 2005 through 2018 (https://www.uva.nl/en/discipline/archaeology/research/Zacynthus/the-Zacynthus-archaeology-project-2006-2010.html, viewed June 2022). Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2010; 2012; 2013; 2014a.

36 Palaima 1991, 281-282; Killen 2006, 75; Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2013, 138; Landenius Enegren 2019, 297.

37 Hom. *Il*. 2.634.

house of Alikanas-Akrotiri (LH III) and the two houses at Kalogeros (LH I-IIIB), both sites excavated in 1934 by S. Benton and H. Lorimer, were never published; the house at Alikanas is located near a tholos tomb (LH IIIA-B), and thus, as suggested by Souyoudzoglou-Haywood,[38]they were connected. Four tholos tombs have been excavated, and two of them are the earliest on the Ionian islands (Keri and Planos). These tombs are like others from the Western Peloponnese, in particular Messenia and Triphylia.

Planos, a tholos tomb located on the eastern side of the island, was excavated, but no details were ever published. Two vases (LH IIB) and a bronze phiale were found together with a bronze razor and some beads of sardonyx.[39] The tholos tomb of Keri, located in the south-west, has been called a monumental tomb by Souyoudzoglou-Haywood. It has two burials (possible secondary ones). Both tholoi of Keri and Planos are isolated ones. The tholos tomb at Akrotiri, larger than that of Keri, had three pits with five burials and, considering the long period of use (LH IIIA-B), more than one generation was interred there. The pottery dates from LH IIIA-B and is also handmade. Other finds include some discoveries of faience and amber, steatite buttons, a violin-bow fibula and a bronze ring.[40]

Regarding the Kambi cemetery, on the north-west side of the island, this site had fourteen pit and shaft pit graves (LH IIIA1-IIIB). The grave types at Kambi are not from any Mycenaean tradition; the excavator mentions that the rock in which they were carved was too hard for the digging of chamber tombs.[41] Another unique feature at Kambi is that the pits were used for several burials, which recalls some chamber tombs of Cephallenia.

Concerning the settlements on Zacynthus, as has been mentioned, and as of today, only two houses have been excavated, although no details have been published. In the south-east of the island, Kalogeros was the earliest Mycenaean settlement, located on the eastern side of the Bay of Porto Roma and, thus, very suitable for harbouring; pottery finds date from the Late Helladic I to III (A-B), with the larger quantity dated LH III.[42] Several fragments of a Vapheio cup (LH I-II) decorated with tentacles of an Argonaut have been reported.[43]

Alikanas, on the Hill of Akrotiri on the eastern side of the Bay of Alikais, was initially explored by S. Benton and H. Lorimer, who also later excavated the nearby tholos tomb, which had been destroyed and produced LH III and local pottery. In the same region, two kilometres west of Alikanas, S. Benton also explored an ancient well in Katastari that appeared when the peasants were digging a new one, which she reported as "full of pottery about four spans down" and collected some of them "round the mouth of the well".[44] The pottery can be dated to LH IIIA-B and most not earlier than Late Helladic IIIA2.[45] Both Alikanas and Katastari also have good access to the sea.

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38 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 122.

39 Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2013, 122-123; 2021, 606.

40 Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2013, 121 and n. 18, 138.

41 Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2013, 124 and n. 37.

42 Excavated by S. Benton and H. Lorimer and not published, with the finds being lost after the 1953 earthquake (Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 121-123).

43 Van Wijngaarden 2013 *et alii*, 138.

44 Benton 1931-1932, 218 and plate 39.

45 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 122.

The area of Vasilikos-Kalogeros, also prospected by S. Benton and H. Lorimer in 1930, is subject to severe marine erosion and is one of the areas of research of the ZAP Project. The campaigns of 2005, 2006 and 2010 have confirmed that it was a "multiperiod site" where Mycenaean pottery ranges from LH I to LH III B. Due to the erosion of the cape and tourist construction, it seems that it is not possible to conduct further research.[46] From the very beginning, the ZAP Project, in its pilot survey of 2005, noticed the importance of the site, due to the quantity and quality of archaeological evidence.[47] In addition, it has been reported that one kilometre south-west of the structure were discovered several fragments of Mycenaean pottery, probably a tomb and, thus, located near the possible settlement of Kalogeros.[48] In the 2010 summer campaign, the ZAP team discovered the structure of a tholos tomb near Triodi beach that could be the one mentioned by S. Benton.[49]

Another area that has been subject to research by the ZAP Project is Kamaroti-Lithakia; in the area LH I-LH II material and "large quantities" of LH IIIA2-LH IIIB material have been discovered on the surface.[50] The early Mycenaean pottery shows stylistic affinities with Messenia and Elis and are clearly imports. Local production has a later date (LH IIIA); Mycenaean pottery evidence has been found mainly along coastal sites.[51] Kamaroti-Litakia is the only site on the island where we can find evidence of the Post Palatial Period; the surface survey carried out by ZAP has reported at least two buildings on top of the hill that could belong to a Mycenaean settlement, featuring a significant amount of decorated fine wares.[52] The Hill of Kamaroti seems to be an important archaeological site.[53]

3.2. Cephallenia

Cephallenia (**Fig. 2**) is the largest of the Ionian Isles, featuring an area of c.760 km^2. To the north, it is ten kilometres away from the southern point of Leucas, and five kilometres from Zacynthus, whilst only two to three kilometres separate the Erissos Peninsula from Ithaca through the Strait of Cephallenia. The island has a rugged relief, with extensive mountainous areas such as the Peninsula of Erissos, the eastern coastal area of Sami and, particularly, the central body of the island, with a mountain crest formed by Mt. Ainos, featuring a height of 1,628 meters, followed by two other mountains (Megas Soros and Mavro Vouni), both over 1,600 meters high.[54]

As occurs with the other islands, it witnesses intense tectonic activity, since it lies in the region of the Hellenic Arc with a subducting boundary on its western side (the Cephallenia Transform Fault, CTF) that affects the western part of Cephallenia, and the island suffers from significant earthquakes as well as tsunamis.[55] One of the most distinct relief features is Mount Aenos, which rises up to over 1,600 meters above

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46 Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2012; 2013, 138.
47 Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2005, 69-71.
48 Van Wijngaarden *et alii* 2013, 138.
49 Van Wijnagaarden *et alii* 2012, 48-49.
50 Van Wijnagaarden *et alii* 2010, 75-78; 2014.
51 Van Wijnagaarden – Pieters 2017, 378.
52 Van Wijnagaarden *et alii* 2010, 78; 2014; 2021, 610.
53 Van Wijnagaarden *et alii* 2010, 80.
54 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 3-4.
55 Styles *et alii* 2022, 139.

sea-level, featuring views of Etna and Sicily on clear days; to the east, we can see the island of Ithaca, with the coast of mainland Greece separated by the Gulf of Corinth to the north and Elis, in the Peloponnese, to the south.[56] Over the last 15 years, an extensive research program has been undertaken, based on a variety of geoscience studies headed by Prof. Underhill and the Odysseus Unbound team, in conjunction with Furgo, the Netherlands geoscience services company, and the National Technical University of Athens. The results of these studies include the hypothesis that the Paliki Peninsula could have formerly been an island, whilst, more recently, studies on the Livadi Marsh, at the north end of Argostoli, suggest the existence of an ancient harbour.[57]

The island can be divided into three regions: Argostoli-Livatho, the Paliki Peninsula and Koroni, where we have considerable evidence of a Mycenaean presence. In fact, Cephallenia has yielded several types of Mycenaean tombs: chamber tombs, tholoi, pit graves, and tumuli. The most numerous are the chamber tombs, amounting to thirty-five, with some other three pending excavation, thirty in the Argostoli-Livatho area and five on the Paliki Peninsula. The most important site is Mazarakata, which has seventeen chamber tombs. These chamber tombs are clustered in cemeteries of two or more. They are dug into soft sandstone and limestone and are situated in accessible places, not far from settlements. The seminal work of Souyoudzoglou-Haywood gives us comprehensive information on the features of these chamber tombs.[58] More recently, two more chamber tombs were discovered in Skineas, in the Paliki area, with the possibility that there could be some more in the area.[59]

One of the main questions relates to the connections and origins of this type of tomb. Although the use of burial pits is considered an MH tradition, it seems that in the later period (LH), this was also characteristic of some Peloponnese regions such as Laconia and Achaia.[60] In particular, Cephallenia chamber tombs, before LH IIIC, can be connected with those of Elis, Messenia, Achaia, and also Zacynthus; these outside influences can be dated to the LH IIIA2-B1 and reproduce the same burial practices that we know from the Mycenaean world. As various archaeological records show, sacrifices and funeral meals accompanied some of the funerals in the chamber tombs of Cephallenia.[61]

As far as the tholos tombs are concerned, six tombs have been excavated, four in the Argostoli-Livatho region and two in Koroni. The largest tholos is the spectacular Tzannata-Borzi tholos in the Koroni region. Influences from Messenia can be detected, as well as from Zacynthus.[62]

Regarding pits, these are not significant for this period and appear at sites where we have other types of tombs. The only tumulus is the structure of Oikopeda, located on the Paliki Peninsula, excavated by Marinatos.[63]

In Cephallenia, two classes of tomb content can be identified, before and during the Late Helladic IIIC Period, one consisting of open-shaped vessels (kylikes, kraters

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56 Randsborg 2002, 65.

57 Underhill *et alii* 2018; Styles *et alii* 2022.

58 See Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 48-49, 165-166, for details in Tabs C1-3.

59 Sotiriou 2013, 3.

60 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 54.

61 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 55, 57.

62 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 59; Morgan 2011-2012.

63 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 59 and n. 144.

and krateriskoi), with Lakkithra being the cemetery with the largest number of these items, and the second category of contents consisting of luxury and exotic items of different types, such as jewellery, possibly in old recycled materials and made locally, prestigious imported Mycenaean items and foreign luxuries not included in Mycenaean culture. All these grave items, plus the drinking equipment, could indicate a significant social position.[64] In addition, some of these kraters and kylikes may have not only been offered as grave contents, but may have been used for drinking and toasting ceremonies, adding prestige to the funeral.[65] The presence of weapons, although small, might also suggest that certain individuals merited being buried with their warrior equipment.[66] In the Argostoli Museum catalog, the number of vases listed is 1,010, of which 584-585 originally came from the published tombs, whilst part of them did not survive after the earthquake of 1953. Mycenaean pottery accounts for 88% of the published pottery from the tombs.[67]

Cephallenia, in contrast to the great number of tombs, has only a small number of settlements. The earliest Mycenaean settlement is located on the Paliki Peninsula, Oikopeda, dating from the LHII-IIIA1, and during the LH IIIA2-B there could have been a period of expansion, along with the cemeteries. Two settlement sites were excavated by Marinatos: two Mycenaean houses in Starochorafa (LH IIIC) and the other in Vounias near Sami (Agioi Theodoroi). Another resulted from the Livatho Valley Survey (LVS), [68]whilst another in Palia Stane-Prospholeika identified a significant Mycenaean component (dated exclusively LH IIIC) in a rescue excavation of 2009.[69] Another has been located near the village of Pesada in the south-east of the region.

The presence of cemeteries indicates the continuation of settlements during LH III C on the island, although a larger population increase took place in the Argostoli-Livatho region.[70]

As Voskos has highlighted when analysing the process of "Mycenaenisation", Cephallenia is in a very favourable position in the Southern Ionian Sea when it comes to controlling principal maritime routes and trade networks. Besides this, the island has a notable amount of archaeological remains from the Mycenaean Period and, furthermore, a long history of excavations since the nineteenth century. Research has highlighted the incoherence between the number of cemeteries and settlements that have come to light up until now.[71]

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64 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood *et alii* 2017, 387-388.

65 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood *et alii* 2017, 388.

66 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood *et alii* 2017, 390.

67 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 60-61.

68 The Livatho Valley Survey (LVS) project covers of 35 km^2 in the south of the island of Cephallenia, extending across the district of Livatho and part of the district of Krania, south of the acropolis of the ancient city of Krane and the modern capital of the island, Argostoli directed by Christina Souyoudzoglou-Haywood. The project, which is ongoing, has been conducted as a "*synergasía*" of the Irish Institute and the 35th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities since 2003, and was preceded by a pilot excavation and survey in 2001-2 (Souyoudjoglou-Haywood 2003). Most primary fieldwalking was carried out up to 2009, and has been followed by a mixture of targeted fieldwork and study season (www.iihsa.ie/projects/kephalonia-survey); Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 2008; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood *et alii* 2017, 386.

69 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood *et alii* 2017, 386.

70 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 59.

71 Voskos 2022, 181, with references.

The concept of Mycenaenisation has also been approached by Souyoudzoglou-Haywood by analysing aspects such as acculturation and the differences in status between Mycenaeans as opposed to local culture, contrasting with previous positions such as that of Desborough. This approach considers the developments in the Livatho region, which show that locals adopted some features of Mycenaean culture without any proof of Mycenaean control.[72] On the contrary, as mentioned by Voskos in a recent publication, the early imitation of mainland wares, local production of Mycenaean pottery, handmade copies of Mycenaean shares and the adoption of Mycenaean tomb architecture and rituals imply a long process of cultural contacts between the Southern Ionian Islands and the Mycenaean core centres.[73] In addition, Kokolata-Kangelisses and Tzannata-Borzi could be proof of a relationship between local groups and mainland Mycenaean centres, which might also include the elite groups that adopted Mycenaean features, as in the case of the tholos tomb at Tzannata, who would have effectively strengthened their control over the population and increased their wealth.

3.3. Ithaca

Ithaca is the smallest of our islands, with an extension of c. 107 km^2. It is formed by two peninsulas (north and south) connected by an isthmus. It is very mountainous, with two ranges on each peninsula, although the Northern Peninsula has the highest altitude with Mt. Neritos (809 m). On the Northern Peninsula we can find a landscape of hills and valleys, while in the south, only around Kambos and coastal plain of Vathy can we find suitable arable land.[74]

Archaeological research has been constrained by the search for Homer's Ithaca and the general debate regarding the location of the Homeric Palace, either on Ithaca or Cephallenia, a debate that continues today.[75] Nearly all sites corresponding to the Late Bronze Age are located on the Northern Peninsula. To the south of Mt. Aetos, the site of the *ásty* of the polis has produced some evidence from the Late Bronze Age, although visitors to the area during the 19th century, including travellers and archaeologists, did not find any archaeological remains. In 1985 a "Cyclopean"-type wall was cleared, [76] although it has not been confirmed that it belongs to the Bronze Age. In addition, more recently, in 2007, Mycenaean pottery, including kylikes, appeared in the eastern part of modern Vathy.[77] There has been other archaeological research in the north and the south, apart from Mt. Aetos and some rescue campaigns around Vathy. The south is awaiting new surveys.[78]

The Mycenaean settlements date back to the Late Helladic III A-B. On the Northern Peninsula there are five sites with occupation evidence: Tris Langades, Pilikata, Stavros, the Cave of Polis and Agios Athanassios, although some are small

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72 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood *et alii* 2017, 386; Voskos 2022, 187.

73 Voskos 2022, 187-188.

74 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 3.

75 For the history of this debate since the eighth century, see Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 2018, Table 1, which presents the proposed locations of the centre of Homeric Ithaca on Ithaki and Cephallenia so far. For a synthesis of archaeological works, see Livitsanis 2013.

76 Symeonoglou 1986, 36, figs. 35-36; 1987, 78; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 95.

77 Morgan 2010; Pendeteka *et alii* 2022, 80, with references.

78 Morgan 2007, 74.

and none of the settlements can be considered a large centre. The only site that has any remains of structures is Tris Langades.

In the north, these settlements were not occupied in the Late Helladic IIIC Period, since only the Cave of Polis yielded some pottery dating from this time.[79] Regarding pottery, all sites yielded some Mycenaean pottery, but only a small number of complete vases. Tris Langades produced most of the Pre-Late Helladic IIIC pottery and Polis most of the Late Helladic IIIC. Both Polis and Tris Langades produced large volumes of coarse and domestic ware, and these sites also produced some small bronzes, although some larger tools and weapons have no definitive provenance or context.[80]

The Hill of Pilikata, located in the northern part of the peninsula, is a strategic point that overlooks the Bays of Afales, Frikes and Polis. Excavated by W. Heurtley in 1930-1931,[81] it was occupied during the Early Bronze Age through the Later Bronze Age. No structures were found except for a few blocks of a wall that excavators defined as Cyclopean. Only one of the areas (VI) produced Mycenaean pottery.[82]

Stavros was excavated by the British School in 1930, 1936 and 1937.[83] In the first campaign, they found the remains of a rectangular building. The Mycenaean pottery was badly preserved, and it included kylikes and alabaster/piriform jars. This site also produced coarse ware resembling that from other sites such as Pilikata, Polis and Tris Langades.[84]

The site of Polis, also known as the Cave of the Nymphs, is in the Bay of Polis, an excellent natural harbour for access from the west and the northern part of the island. The cave was first excavated by the owner of the land in the 19th century, and after some research in 1905, was excavated by S. Benton, the most important period stretching from the Late Geometric to the Roman Period.[85] There were scarce remains of Early Mycenaean pottery, consisting of a few sherds from the Late Helladic I-II.

Tris Langades, above the Bay of Polis was also excavated by the British School in 1937 and 1938 and the results were published in 1973. This revealed the remains of walls and the main building, which produced most of the Late Helladic pottery but none from the Late Helladic IIIC. As Waterhouse has mentioned, "persons of ordinary Mycenae culture were established in fourteenth century B.C." [86] Excavations have continued recently in 1994-1995.

Agios Athanassios, situated near Pilikata, has been investigated by Schliemann, Benton, and C.R. Watson. Papadopoulos refers to the evidence of walls of Cyclopean type on the hill and the foundations of a rectangular building with three rooms that he recognised as a megaron type; another room to the north consisting of three rooms yielded important finds, such as two triton shells, a Minoan lead votive idol, a stone altar-shaped seal, two stone feet and a model column in ivory that lead Papodopoulos

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79 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 102-103.

80 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 107; Pendekata *et alii* 2022, 79.

81 Heurtley 1934-1935.

82 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 93; Pendekata *et alii* 2022, 79.

83 Waterhouse 1952; Pendekata *et alii* 2022, 79.

84 Waterhouse 1952; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 93.

85 Benton 1934-1935; 1938-1939; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 94.

86 Benton – Waterhouse 1973, 24; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 93-94.

to suggest that it could be a sanctuary of the Late Bronze Age and the Palace of Odysseus.[87] Visiting the site, it seems more a Hellenistic site with some remains of the Bronze Age.

In the south part of the island, although it has been assumed that the Bay of Vathy featured scarce occupation in antiquity, rescue excavations in the modern town have brought to light important evidence of occupation in the Late Neolithic Period. Some Mycenaean sherds were also found corresponding to kylikes. Vathy, indeed, was a natural harbour and we should expect new research in the region.[88] Another site, in the south-east of Mt. Aetos, where Alalcomenae, the *asty*, is located, has yielded some Prehistoric finds. The hill of Mt. Aetos (387 m.) was visited by travellers and early archaeologists, whilst, in 1985, S. Symeonoglou cleared a "Cyclopean"-type wall and, in 1992, what he called a Mycenaean building inside the geometric open-air sanctuary, with no pottery; later on fragments of a Mycenaean krater were found in the wall of another building.[89]

As we have seen, a Mycenaean expansion took place on the islands as of the earliest settlement at Kalogeros in Zacynthus dating from the Late Helladic I-II and the earliest tombs, such as those of Planos and Keri. In Ithaca the settlement of Tris Langades was also present at that time, and we can note this presence also on Cephallenia on the Paliki Peninsula and in the region of Poros at Tzannata. The major expansion took place in the 14th century when tholos and chamber tombs appeared in Cephallenia, and LH IIIA2-B/C was the period of major consolidation, in particular, the areas of Argostoli-Livatho, the Paliki Peninsula and Poros. This expansion falls in line with the rest of Western Greece; in Messenia we can observe an increase in sites during this period (Late Helladic IIIA2-B1) as well as in Elis and Achaia.

Mycenaean culture arrived on the islands from different core areas, Messenia, Triphylia, and Southern Elis, as has been evidenced in the archaeological record, in particular in the prototypes of the tholos tombs of Zacynthus and Cephallenia that constitute the earliest evidence of Mycenaean presence. Thus, as mentioned by Souyouglozou-Haywood, this type of burial would most probably have been introduced by the elite class, islanders or immigrants.[90] Some settlements, such as the houses of Vounias or Tris Langades, were built with curved walls and used a large quantity of local handmade pottery together with fine Mycenaean ware of an indigenous character.

4. Routes and Connectivity

The Ionian Islands, due to their geographical position, maintained strong contacts with Mycenaean culture, and this led them to establish a "peripheral" culture. It is important to identify the archaeological evidence along these routes that can suggest cultural contacts, the presence of primary centres that could act as "gateway communities" or "ports of call", and, the availability of good anchorages and

87 Papadopoulos 2017, 423- 424.
88 Livitsanis 2013, 126.
89 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 95.
90 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 136-137.

harbours, that the Southern Ionian Islands offered to the Mycenaeans on their way to the West.

Two sea routes can be identified, one through the Gulf of Corinth, with the starting point originating at the core centre of Mycenae, and the other from Messenia, from the centre of Pylos.

There have been various attempts to identify the possible Mycenaean routes towards the West, especially on their way to Italy.[91] Marazzi already mentioned a direct route connecting the West Peloponnesian coast with the Straits of Messina, that could follow on to the South Tyrrhenian, and another from Cythera and the Aegean, following the Western Peloponnesian coasts and then the west coast of Zacynthus and Cephallenia and then on to the Otranto Channel.[92] New data from sites on Vivara Island, the study of archaeological evidence from the Aeolian Islands archipelago, new discoveries in Acragas, evidence from the Ionian coast of Calabria, plus a review of some sites along the Adriatic coast of Apulia, led Marazzi to the conclusion that the date of creation of a network of contacts between the Greek-Aegean world and the West could be around the second half of the 17th century.[93] It is very possible, as stated by Marazzi, that Helladic sea-routes were incorporated following previous sea-contact networks and, between them, linking the South Tyrrhenian Sea area with the islands. The Mycenaeans travelled to new markets in search of raw materials such as copper, tin and luxury materials such as amber and ivory, and, as we have mentioned above, needed some favourable places to trade or exchange, along their routes.[94]

Graziadio, considering the archaeological evidence, cultural differences and the exchange of goods, identifies two main circuits, the Eastern Circuit and the Western Circuit, each of them covering a network of sea-routes in the shaft graves period.[95] The Western Circuit is the one that includes our "small world" of the three Ionian Islands. He includes Crete, Cythera and the Western Peloponnese. One of the principal differences that Graziadio mentions is related to Late Helladic I pottery. In the Western Peloponnese, a major part of the ceramics is hand-made and presents local shapes.[96] The Island of Cythera, with the possible Minoan colony of Kastri, can be included within Crete-Cythera-mainland connections. The route could come from the western region of Crete and along the Western Peloponnese. It seems that we can find a strong Cytherean/Minoan influence along the Western Peloponnesian route;[97] Cytherean potters resident in Messenia could be the principal actors in the expansion of Mycenaean pottery. We can also observe the presence of Minoan prestige objects and weaponry.[98] The above is noteworthy and complies with the archaeological evidence found on the Southern Ionian Islands in the LBA Period.[99] The Mycenaean finds at Vassiliko-Kalogeros, on the eastern coast of Zacynthus, could be associated

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91 For Mycenaean presence in Italy: Marazzi *et alii* 1986; Vagnetti 1993; 1999; 2010; Marazzi 2003; Blake 2008; Cazzella – Recchia 2009.

92 Marazzi 1988, 6.

93 Marazzi 2003, 108-109.

94 Marazzi 2003.

95 Graziadio 1998, 32 and fig. 1.

96 Graziadio 1998, 48, with references.

97 Graziadio 1998, 50; Lólos 1987.

98 Graziadio 1998, with references to Lólos 1987 (see n. 66 for further references).

99 As is the case of the Tzannata tomb in Cephallenia.

with the northward route along the Western Peloponnese.[100] He also refers to another route, along the coasts of the Corinthian Gulf from the core centre of Mycenae, which, besides the Gulf of Argolis, offers another way to the sea through the Mycenaean road system that leads to the Corinthian shores.[101]

In the Bronze Age, and even before this period, maritime routes were much more used than terrestrial ones, the latter being a supplement to sea routes. In summary, we can detect two long distance routes from some of the Mycenaean core centres that directly connect with the Southern Ionian Islands, this being part of the Mycenaean network of trade and exchange towards the West (Italy) as well as towards the North, namely the Albanian coasts.

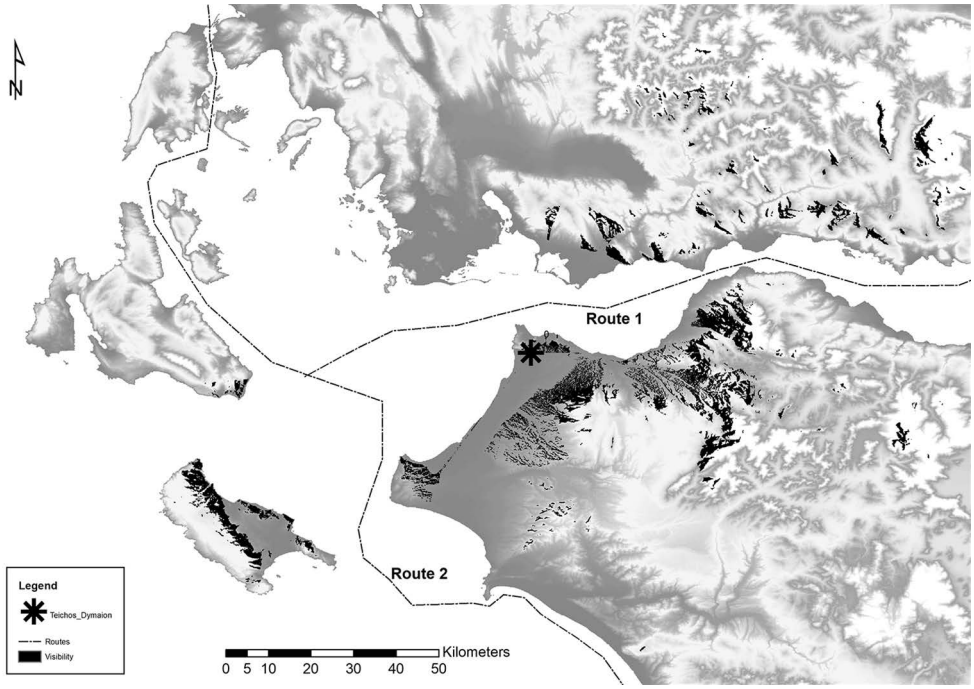

Figure 3. Mycenaean routes (author's elaboration).

4.1. Route 1

One of the most favourable routes from the Western Peloponnesian coast towards the Italic Peninsula was navigated from the Patraic Gulf northwards through the islands of Cephallenia, Ithaca and Leucas, following the Epirote coast up to the Albanese Bay of Vlorë where, after approximately 70 km, the ships could reach the Italian coast through the Otranto Channel (**Fig. 3**).[102] Once we turn northwards, several islands could have played an important role in the long-distance route: Echinades, Cephallenia

[100] Graziadio 1998, 60 and Fig. 5.
[101] Graziadio 1998, 60, with references.
[102] Milán Quiñones de León 2013, 98; 2020, 603; Tsonos 2016, 261.

and Ithaca. The Ionian Islands, very near to the mainland coast, facilitated navigation and offered certain points of anchorage and natural harbours.[103] From there the Mycenaean ships could reach the Ambracian Gulf, where we have evidence of a Mycenaean presence.[104] A special point is Glykys Limen, the bay in the Acheron delta mentioned by Strabo,[105] and the important site of Ephyra (Xylokastron Hill), from which the route could connect with terrestrial routes towards the north of Epirus.[106]

There were other possibilities on the way to Italy over and above cabotage navigation: a direct route by open sea, as advocated by Prontera and others beforehand. We have some ancient sources that mention the open sea routes, such as Plutarch or Strabo.[107] Despite the inherent difficulties of a direct maritime route through open sea from the Corinthian Gulf towards the Southern Italian coasts, this route was feasible and probably more effective than navigation via cabotage. We have some information for certain historical periods, in addition to some known myths.[108] Bilić explains how Greek sailors may have used astronomical navigation techniques on direct routes to Italy by following the latitude and taking advantage of favourable winds, guided by the stars. As an example, from the Port of Pylos ships could have navigated along the 37th parallel to Syracuse, and from the mouth of the Alpheus River to Syracuse the distance would have been approximately 450/600 nautical miles following the route described above through the Ionian Islands and the Otranto Channel whilst, if the voyage had been straight by open sea, it would have been around 300 nautical miles.[109] The easiest way is to follow the elevation of the pole. As Bilić reports, in the Mycenaean Period, the nearest star to the pole was the star κ Draconis at 4° 40', while Kochab was at a distance of 6° 38'. Fresa indicated that it could be possible to sail from Cephallenia to the south of Italy following the altitude of the star Kochab.[110] Another method mentioned by Bilić is to observe the lower culmination of the circumpolar stars.[111]

Crossing the Ionian Sea between Greece and Sicily with favourable winds could be completed in two and a half days. These routes were used in the Classical Period and were well known, as well as during the Archaic Period.[112]

On the route along the south coast of the Corinthian Gulf we can find a number of strategic sites along the way: the citadel of Aigeira, between Achaea and Corinthia, the settlement of Aegium in the passage from the Corinthian to the Patraic Gulf, and Teichos Dymaion, the check point where the Patraic and the Ionian Sea connect,

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103 Tsonos 2016, 264.

104 See Tsonos 2016, 265: Aetoloacanarnia was another Mycenaean "peripheral region".

105 Str. 7.7.5.

106 Tartaron 2005, 156; Milán Quiñones de León 2020, 604-605; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood, 2022, 123.

107 Plu. *Dio*, 25; Str. 6.1.11-12. Prontera 1996, 205; Milán Quiñones de León 2013, 99.

108 There is a very interesting work by Bilić (2009), which, through an interpretation of the myth of Alpheus and Arethousa, demonstrates that direct open sea navigation between the Peloponnese and Sicily was possible, not only following the latitude, but also by observing the stars at night. Bilić 2009, 116-132; Milán Quiñones de León 2013, 99-101.

109 Bilić 2009, 123.

110 The Greeks could have made the voyage between Cephallenia and the Straits of Messina in two days and two nights travelling at an average speed of five knots. Out of this, roughly 24 hours were on the open sea (Fresa 1969, 253-254).

111 Bilić 2009, 124.

112 Bilić 2009, 117.

namely the citadel of Teichos Dymaion at Araxos,[113] of special interest due to its strategic position, enabling supervision of both routes, with direct visibility of Cephallenia and Zacynthus (see visibility map, **Fig. 4**) and the Corinthian Gulf. On the northern side, Cirrha may have served as a "gateway community" to connect with the mainland territory.

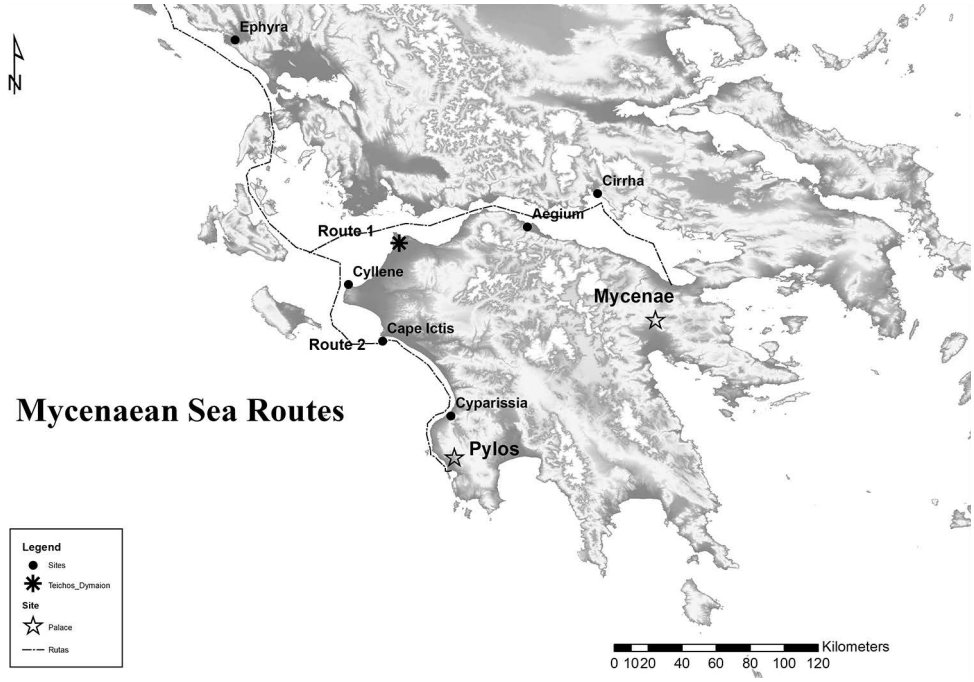

Figure 4. Visibility map from Teichos Dymaion (author's elaboration).

Considering the data regarding Mycenaean culture on our three islands, we can confirm what Tsonos defined for the region as a "'noisy' network of maritime communication"[114] and Cephallenia was the first point to connect this route with the Ionian Sea. Ithaca could also have offered an important stopping-point along the route with its northern anchorages through the strait between both islands.[115] Zacynthus would have played the same role on the next route coming from the Southern Peloponnese.

4.2. Route 2

The second route corresponds to the one that comes from the Southern Peloponnese, more precisely from the Port of the Nestor Palace in Messenia (**Fig. 3**). The Pylos Archaeological Project has studied the landscape evolution of Western Messenia and confirmed that the

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113 Tsonos 2016, 264 and n. 39 for references.

114 Tsonos 2016, 265.

115 As already mentioned, sites on the west side of the Northern Peninsula: Pilikata, Stavros, Tris Langades and the Cave of Polis. And on the Southern Peninsula, the region of Aetos.

Port of Pylos, mentioned in the Lineal B tables as *ro-o-wa*, was an artificial port constructed by the Mycenaeans in an inland basin near Romanou, which must have served as the port for the palace, this being the first evidence of a port installation.[116]

From the core centre of Messenia, travelling northwards Mycenaean ships would have found some stopping points before arriving at the mouth of the Patraic Gulf, that we show along our route: Cyparissia, Capa Ictis (Katakolon) and Cyllene,[117] before reaching Zacynthus at Vasilikos-Kalogeros. From Pylos to Zacynthus the route ran approximately 120 km (64.6 nautical miles). After Zacynthus, ships may have stopped at the citadel of Teichos Dymaion (183 km / 98.8 nautical miles) or navigated directly to the south-east of Cephallenia. (170 km / 91.7 nautical miles).

Achaea played an important role on this route and could be considered a "port of call", together with other important stopping points on the routes with good harbours, as could be the case of Teichos Dymaion.[118]

This second route would have merged with the first route and probably would have continued through the Strait of Ithaca, Leucas and then reached Glykys Limen, with the site of Ephyra being an important stopping point before continuing towards the north to the Bay of Vlöre and then crossing the Otranto Strait towards Italy.

It is worth mentioning the citadel of Teichos Dymaion, which could be an important control point for both routes (**Fig. 3**). The site of Teichos Dymaion is a strategic site located on the promontory of Araxos, forming part of the networks of all maritime routes to the West. From this citadel, the mouth of the Corinthian Gulf, the eastern side of Zacynthus, and the south-west of Cephallenia could all be monitored, in fact all communications with the Ionian, Adriatic and the Central Mediterranean. In the words of M. Gazis, it was "the naval gateway to the west".[119] Teichos Dymaion is a fortified citadel on a small hill that rises up 60 meters above sea level. The first excavations were performed by Mastrokostas in 1962.[120] Occupied since the Neolithic Period, during the Early Bronze Age a permanent settlement was established here. The first data corresponded to the initial excavations, and the pottery that came to light was not associated with any building. The possible data of the construction of the Cyclopean fortification dates from the 13th/12th century and the site remained in use until late Antiquity, with some modifications.[121] The latest research has documented some settlement remains, and some of the stones of the foundations are associated with the Cyclopean fortification and have yielded some scarce fragments from Cetina culture. Excavation of these buildings is very important since it has confirmed the existence of a settlement since the third millennium before the period of Mycenaean expansion.[122]

5. Conclusions

The three Southern Ionian Islands, due to their strategic position in the Ionian Sea, did indeed take part in the maritime network of connections between the Aegean and

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116 Zangger *et alii* 1997, 619-626 and fig. 46; Hope Simpson 2014, 57.
117 Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 141.
118 Papadopoulos 2017, 425-427; Tartaron 2017a, 9.
119 Gazis 2018, 463.
120 Gazis 2018, 463.
121 Gazis 2016.
122 Gazis 2018, 38, with references.

the Peloponnese with the Central Mediterranean and the Adriatic. During the Bronze Age, maritime routes were used more intensively than terrestrial ones for connections that involved trade and exchange between different communities and, from the Middle Bronze Age, the same occurred when the palatial societies emerged. These long-distance routes needed station points/emplacements with natural anchorages and ports.

It is important to distinguish between Western Greek elements that have been found in those places where interactions took place and the foreign elements that can be found on the route to Western Greece. The inhabitants of Western Greece desired, in return, some of the items that travelled long distances from Italy, Central Europe and the Baltic. It is also worth addressing the question of what types of goods were exchanged between the centre of Pylos and the countries of the West and the North, of which we have testimony in the Lineal B tablets and the imports that arrived at the palace, mainly raw materials.

The Southern Ionian Islands offered good harbours to Mycenaeans, featuring the possibility of obtaining supplies and services from locals. The islands have yielded evidence of these interactions, as we have seen above, including imports from abroad. These contacts reached their climax during the Late Helladic IIIA-B. The relationship created by these interactions led to cultural transmission. The archaeological evidence has shown the common elements in tomb architecture and burial customs, as in pottery and other objects, revealing the importance of these interactions and resulting in the engagement of the islands in the Western *koiné* mentioned above.[123]

Mycenaean culture was transmitted to the Ionian Islands, which are considered peripheral centres, but were favoured principally for their strategic location, as witnessed by the Mycenaean features that we find in the archaeological record, in the handmade pottery, tombs, and the adaptation of Mycenaean features in the LH IIIA-B Period. As we have seen, we have evidence from the earliest dates of the Mycenaean Period and probably even before that. The relationship with Italy seems to have been significant during the LH II-III,[124] although it can be traced to the 17th century. It is interesting to delve into Mycenaean ceramic imports in Italy to gather the sites of provenance and increase the extension of our routes.[125] In addition, data originating from the north of the Adriatic should be considered, as is the case of the Illyrian coast and the Italian side of the Adriatic. This would not only confirm the Mycenaean connections, but also the raw materials sought after by Mycenaeans, such as amber, metals etc. The LH IIIC period is considered the one of greatest "cultural independence". [126] At the end of the Palatial Period, the violin bow fibula, of Italian provenance, appears on Cephallenia and probably on Zacynthus, in addition to the evidence of the Baltic amber route, which is particularly present in Cephallenia, not to mention the Italian connections of the "Urnfield bronzes".

The closest connections were short-distance contacts with coastal regions of the mainland, which were included amongst the points of anchorage of the maritime routes we have mentioned. Our small world of the Southern Ionian Islands was

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123 Papadopoulos 1995, 208; 2017, 426-427.

124 Souyouzouglou-Haywood 2022, 126.

125 Following those already delineated by Graziadio 1998.

126 Souyouzouglou-Haywood 1999, 141.

integrated into a broader long-distance network in which the Mycenaean maritime network operated, one that required nodes or intermediate points at a lower scale. This process fits the multi-scalar and qualitative network model developed by Tartaron to address Mycenaean maritime networks.[127]

Thus, the interaction network undoubtedly had an impact on the culture and society of the three islands, featuring the transmission not only of objects, but also of ideas and technologies. This cultural transmission influenced the different local elite groups. In this regard, it is essential to scrutinize the material culture and influences coming through these interactions to evaluate the current data available. We have seen recent updates from the seminal work of Souyouzouglou-Haywood,[128] but, indeed, there is much more information to come in the future that will throw further light on this acculturation process and the type of relationship and interactions that existed between Mycenaeans and the inhabitants of the Southern Ionian Islands.

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127 Tartaron 2018, 72.

128 Souyouzouglou-Haywood 1999.

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