

Carina A. IEZZI
The Mycenaean Women of Central Greece

A detailed bioarchaeological examination of Late Bronze Age Mycenaean (Late Helladic III B and C) skeletons from the East Locris region of Central Greece represents the first analysis of a large-scale sample of human remains from this time period and geographic area. The burials were derived from twenty-nine rock cut chamber tombs spanning four different environmental zones (coastal, plain, mountain, and valley) and were recovered by the Greek Archaeological Service during rescue excavations subsequent to discovery and damage done by modern tomb looters. The majority of the excavated individuals are from secondary commingled burials, although several incomplete primary burials are also present.

While the archaeological study of burial customs can offer important information about prehistoric cultures and their social structure and can be used to *predict* a number of things about the people once buried within graves, it is imperative to consider the biological dimension of the individuals who occupy these graves. After all, it is these humans who created the material culture that is studied.

The physical anthropological examination of skeletonized remains provides *direct* evidence for what life held for past populations. This data, when coupled with other avenues of study, including archaeology, provides an integrated approach that can coax more information out of archaeological contexts than any one method could alone.

This paper describes and discusses health levels of each of the four, aforementioned, excavated sites by comparing and contrasting them to one another. The contrasting environments are used as predictors of biological well-being and to detect potential health differences between age groups or the sexes. Archaeological and environmental data from the region provide estimates of social status and potential inter-site connections. For purposes of this investigation, the term "health" refers to a combination of six variables, each of which leave telltale indicators on bone: anemia, osteoporosis, flattening of the upper leg bone (platymeria), osteoarthritis, femoral neck reaction area, and age at death. Together, these factors represent and contribute to different aspects of health status.

Osteological analysis of the Locrian burials indicates that the remains represent a minimum of 186 individuals of all age ranges and both sexes. There were 61 women, 62 men, 20 individuals of indeterminate sex, and 43 subadults. A brief overview of the entire collection will be presented, followed by a focus on specific health factors affecting the women. Skeletal variables indicating health levels within and between each of the sites were assessed and compared statistically to determine the strength of each relationship.

Results of the statistical analyses indicate that, overall, there is a significant (95% likelihood) difference in health levels between coastal and inland sites. When "health" is broken down into its component parts, it becomes clear that the frequency of certain variables is higher at some sites than others. Specifically, there are significantly higher frequencies of anemia, platymeria, and osteoarthritis at both of the inland sites. When the

data are investigated in terms of health differences between the sexes, variables, such as anemia and osteoporosis, are significantly more frequent among women, while others- osteoarthritis and femoral neck conditions- are consistently associated with men. The potential significance of these findings- and what was not found- are then discussed in terms of the roles environment and culture of the Mycenaean era may have played.