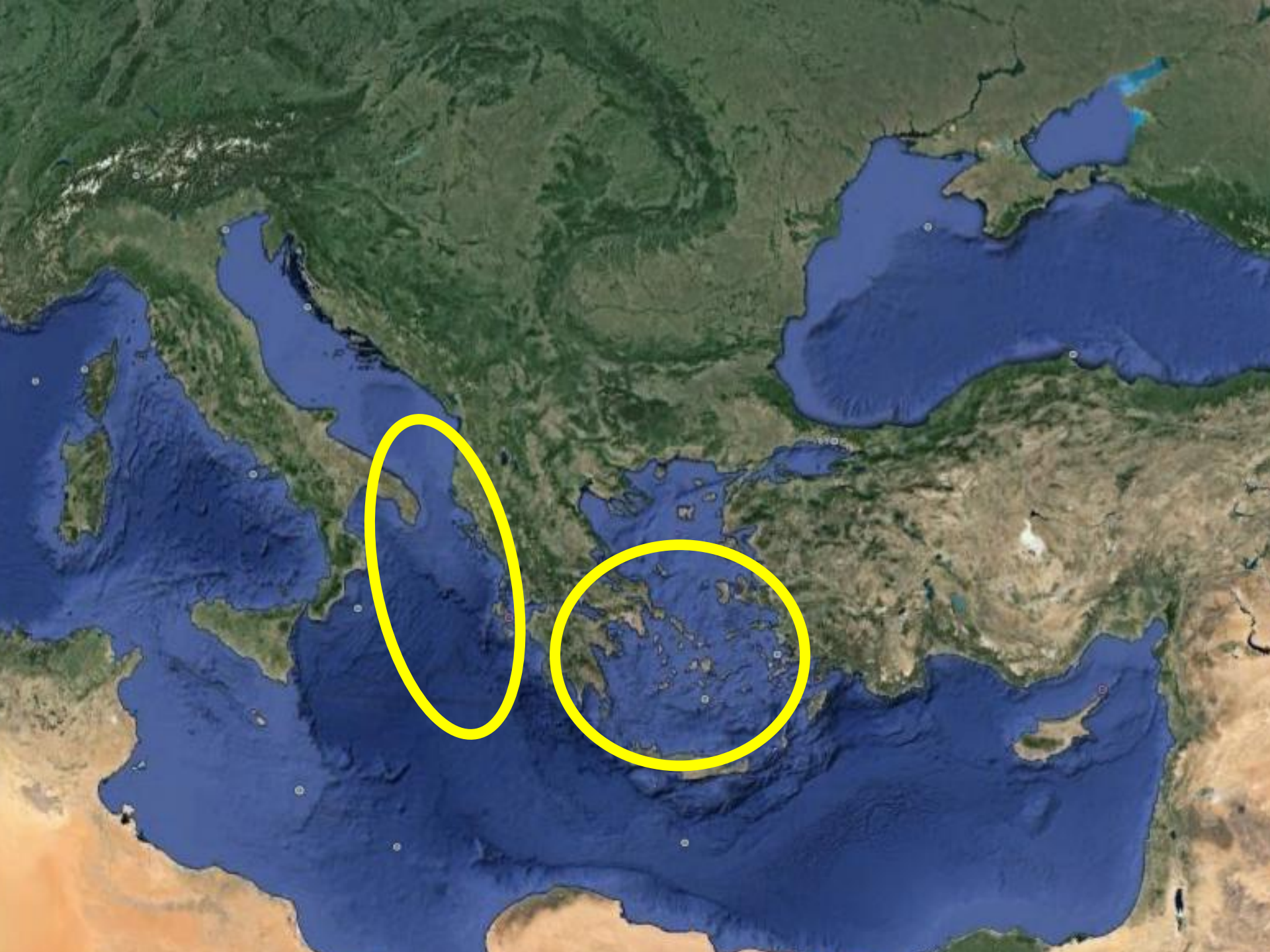




# The Visual Cultures of Classical Greece

Prof. Dimitris Plantzos







ITALY

SICILY

CRETE

RHODES

CYPRUS



# Geography and climate:

- Approx. 75% covered by mountains
- Landscape rough and uninviting
- About 30% cultivated at all
- About 20% counted as truly fertile land, suitable for agriculture.
- Overland travel very difficult in antiquity, owing to the mountainous terrain.
- Easiest way to travel was by sea, where the nearest coast is never more than 40 miles away.
- Greek climate is quite pleasant: long, hot and rather dry summers lead to quite short, fresh, and rainy winters.
- Western Greece higher rainfall rate; Aegean islands often suffer from drought.













# The Visual Cultures of Classical Greece

- Introduction [1/10]
- What is “Greek” about Greek art [8/10]
- Narrativity and story-telling [15/10]
- **Nemea – Olympia – Delphi field trip [19-20/10]**
- Monumentality [22/10]
- The visual cultures of Greek pottery [29/10]
- **National Museum class [8/11; 11:00-13:00]**
- **Midterms [12/11]**
- **Acropolis Museum class [22/11; 15:00-17:00]**
- Materiality [26/11]
- Agency [3/12]
- *Mimesis* [10/12]
- Realism [17/12]

# Key dates:

- Beginning of semester: September 30
- Delphi-Olympia field trip: October 19-20
- Midterm test: November 12
- Term-paper topics chosen by: by November 22
- Cut-off date: January 12
- Term-paper deadline: February 9



**Greek Art** Dimitris Plantzos  
**and Archaeology**  
c. 1200–30 BC




Dimitris Plantzos,  
*Greek Art and Archaeology* c. 1200-30 BC  
(Athens and Atlanta GA, 2016)

# Reading List:

- Beard, M. and J. Henderson. *Classical Art. From Greece to Rome*. Oxford 2001.
- Biers, W.R. *The Archaeology of Greece*. Ithaca & London 1996.
- Boardman, *Greek Art*. London & New York 2016.
- Hurwit, J.M. *The Art and Culture of Early Greece*. Ithaca & London 1985.
- Knigge, U. *The Athenian Kerameikos*. Athens 1991.
- Neer, R.T. *Greek Art and Archaeology: A New History, c. 2500-c. 150 BCE*. London & New York 2011.
- Osborne, R. *Greece in the Making 1200 – 479 BC*. London 1996.
- Pomeroy, S.B., S.M. Burnstein, W. Donlan, and J.T. Roberts. *A Brief History of Ancient Greece. Politics, Society and Culture*. Oxford 2004.
- Plantzos, D. *The Art of Painting in Ancient Greece*. Athens and Atlanta, GA 2018.
- Robertson, M. *A History of Greek Art*. Cambridge 1975.
- Whitley, J. *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece*. Cambridge 2001.

# https://eclass.uoa.gr/courses/ARCH667/



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Πανεπιστήμιον Ἀθηνῶν  
— ΙΔΡΥΘΕΝ ΤΟ 1837 —

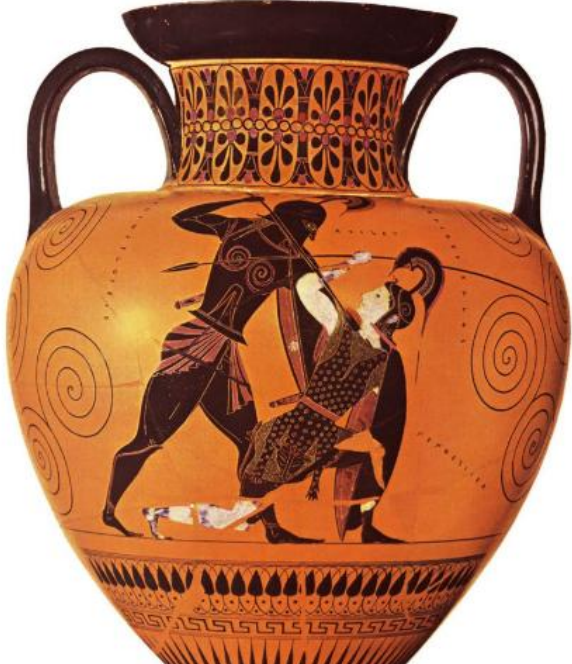
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The Visual Cultures of Classical Greece  
Dimitris Plantzos

Description



*Outline*

This course offers a comprehensive account of ancient Greek art, from c. 1200 to c. 30 BC, with an emphasis on its content, interpretation, and cultural significance. Several key themes will be pursued throughout the course: human figure and its representation; Greek art in its religious and political settings; materials and techniques; pictorial themes; and so on. Besides the better-known monumental arts of ancient Greece (chiefly: architecture; sculpture; painting), and the ever-popular vase painting, the course will also cover some relatively neglected aspects of Greek art such as decorative or luxury arts and coinage. After a short introduction on the arts of the Late Bronze Age (c. 1600-1100 BC), the course will cover the art and archaeology of the Early Iron Age (c. 1100-700 BC), and that of the Archaic (c. 700-480 BC), Classical (. 480-336 BC) and Hellenistic periods (c. 336-30 BC).

*Learning outcomes:*

By the end of this course students should be familiar with

- the main pr

More ↓

# <https://eclass.uoa.gr/courses/ARCH667/>

## ▼ Syllabus

### Course Syllabus

#### Fall 2024

**Module:** The Visual Cultures of Classical Greece

Tuesdays 13:00-15:00; Library Auditorium

**Instructor:** Prof. Dimitris Plantzos (dkplantzos@arch.uoa.gr)

**Available:** Mon 12:00-14:00; Tue 12:00-13:00 (Philosophy School, Main Building, 4th Floor, Suite 404)

#### Description/Objectives

This course offers a comprehensive account of ancient Greek art, from c. 1200 to c. 30 BC, with an emphasis on its content, interpretation, and cultural significance. Several key themes will be pursued throughout the course: human figure and its representation; Greek art in its religious and political settings; materials and techniques; pictorial themes; and so on.

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#### Required text books

- Plantzos, D. *Greek Art and Archaeology, 1200-30 BC*. Athens 2016.
- Smith, T.J. and D. Plantzos (eds). *A Companion to Greek Art*. Malden MA 2012<sup>8</sup>.

#### Additional literature

- Beard, M. and J. Henderson. *Classical Art. From Greece to Rome*. Oxford 2001.
- Biers, W.R. *The Archaeology of Greece*. Ithaca & London 1996.
- Boardman, *Greek Art*. London & New York 2016.
- Hurwit, J.M. *The Art and Culture of Early Greece*. Ithaca & London 1985.
- Knigge, U. *The Athenian Kerameikos*. Athens 1991.
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- Plantzos, D. *The Art of Painting in Ancient Greece*. Athens and Atlanta, GA 2018.
- Robertson, M. *A History of Greek Art*. Cambridge 1975.
- Whitley, J. *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece*. Cambridge 2001.

There are now a number of good scholarly websites with information on classical art:

- *Classical Art Research Centre*, University of Oxford:  
<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/index.htm> (databases, bibliography, images)
- *Perseus Digital Library*, Tufts University USA:



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— THE MUSEUMS CYCLE

Since 1997, with financing by the Latsis Group and Eurobank Banking Group and then with financing by the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, a volume dedicated to an archaeological museum of the country is published each year, aiming to create a series of albums which, with their scientific validity and their aesthetic approach, contribute to the deeper knowledge and understanding of the individual pages of the history of Greek culture.



Prehistoric Thera  
2016



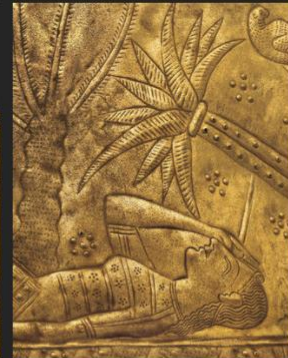
Mycenae  
2015



Kerameikos  
2014



Aigai: The royal  
metropolis of the  
Macedonians  
2013

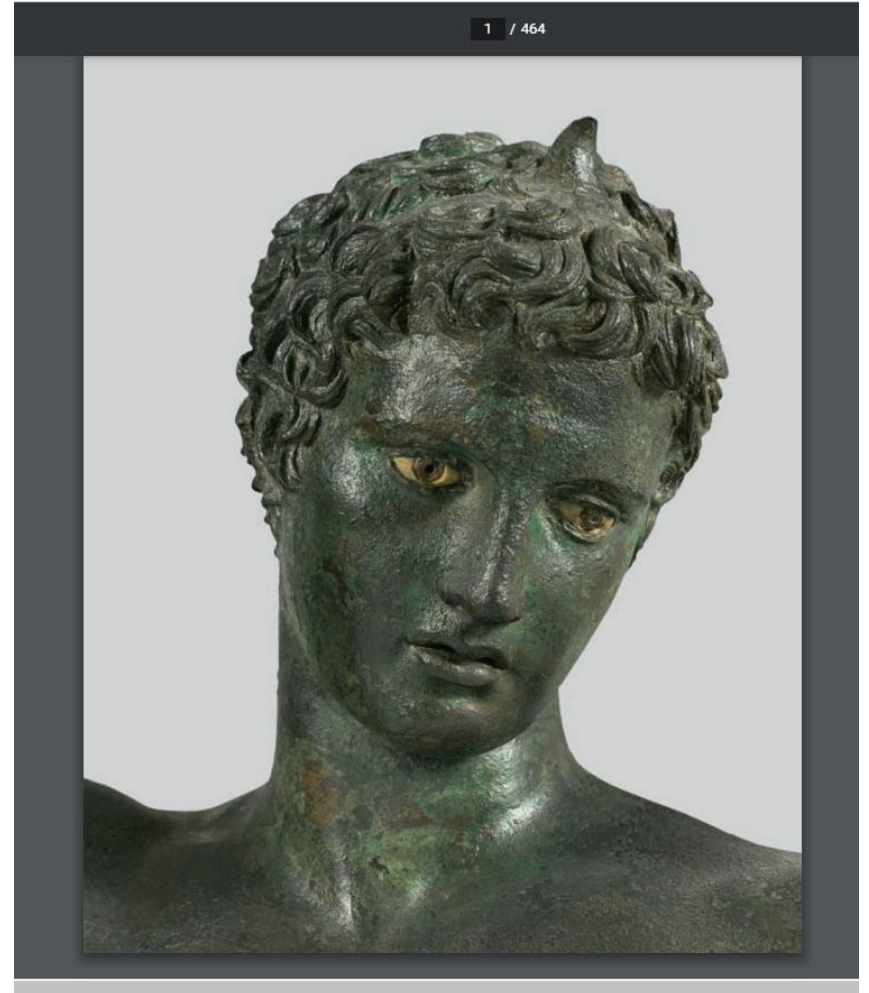


Samos: The  
archaeological  
museums  
2012

[https://www.latsis-foundation.org/content/elib/book\\_14/nam\\_en.pdf](https://www.latsis-foundation.org/content/elib/book_14/nam_en.pdf)

N. Kaltsas, *The National Archaeological Museum* (2007).

Midterm exam:  
pp. 153-257.



# **Bronze Age (3200-1100 BCE)**

- **Early Bronze Age (3200-2000 BCE)**
- **Middle Bronze Age (2000-1600 BCE)**
- **Late Bronze Age “Mycenaean” (1600-1100 BCE)**

Reading:

Plantzos 2016: 37-41

# Mycenae





**Mycenae,  
The Lion Gate (13<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**



**Mycenae,  
Bronze dagger with hunting scene (16<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**

**Mycenae,  
Tomb of Atreus (13<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**







**Pylos,  
Linear B tablet (13<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**

# The “coming of the Greeks”

- Population movements and the destruction of settlements a little before 2000 BCE
- New racial groups gradually settling in Greece having come over land from the north
- Changes in the culture of the period include:
  - apsidal rather than rectangular buildings
  - new burial structures
  - new styles of pottery
  - the use of horses
  - an early form of the Greek language
- A new cultural amalgam: gods old and new, ‘pre-Hellenic’ place names (such as Corinth, Hymettus, Parnassus and so on), new myths and a new social order.



**Mycenae,  
Gold burial mask (16<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**

**Mycenae,  
Gold signet ring (15<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**



· Mycenae,  
Goddess fresco (13<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)





**Mycenae,  
Plaster head of a woman  
(13<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**



**Mycenae,  
Ivory head of a soldier  
(14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**



**Mycenae,  
Stone slab with chariot scene (16<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**

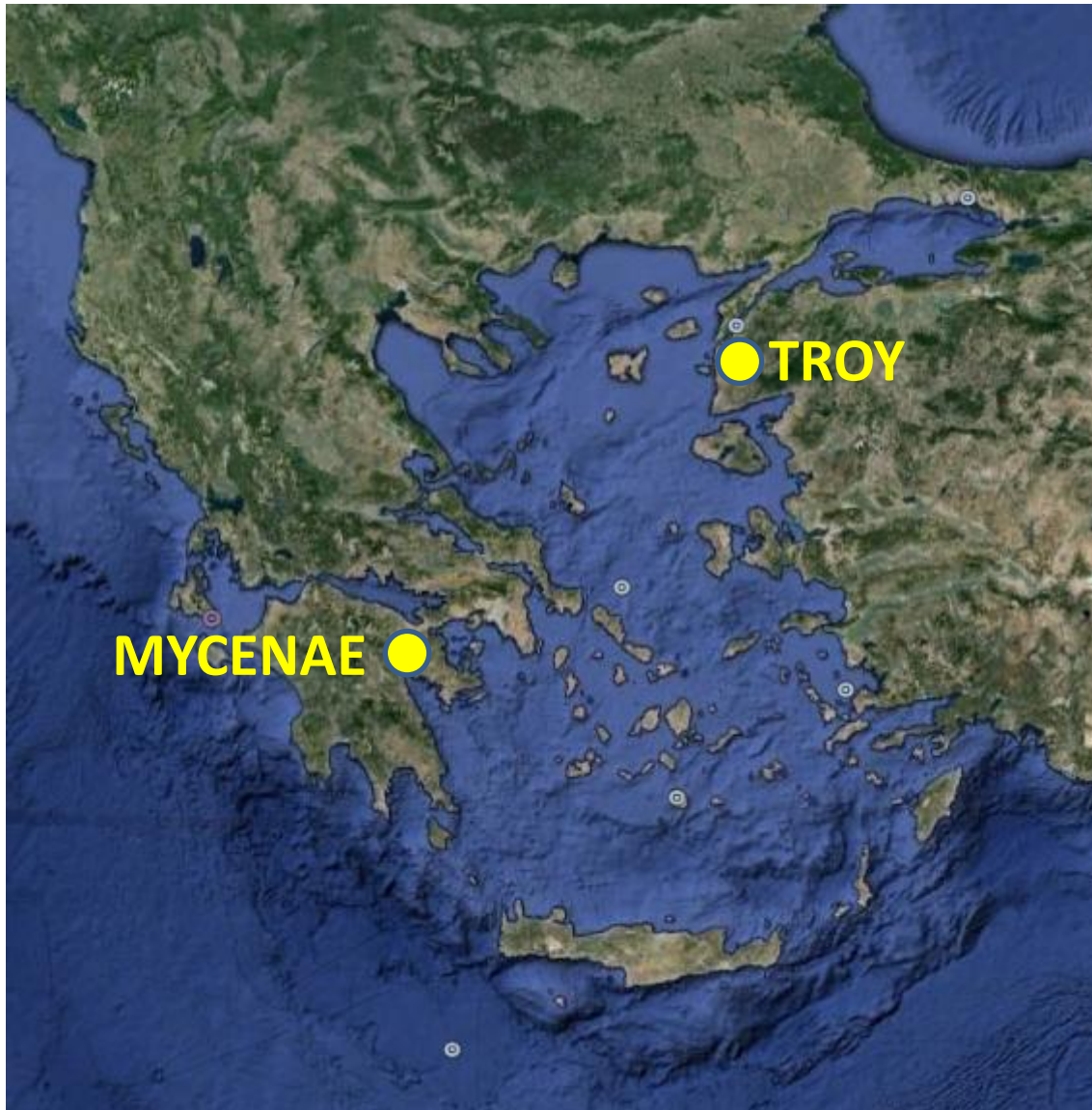
# Submycenaean Period (1100-1050 BCE)

- 1200 BCE: the Mycenaean palace centres collapsed and were never again rebuilt.
- Crafts forgotten, including writing.
- Late Helladic followed by a period of political and social decline called “Submycenaean”
- Economic downturn.
- “Dark Ages” (1200-700 BCE).





● HATTUSA



# Why did Mycenae fall?

- “Dorian invasion”
- Widespread drought and famine
- Earthquake or other natural disasters
- Attacks by hostile tribes
- Rebellion
- “Systems collapse”



**Mycenae,  
Pot with scene of soldiers marching (12<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)**