

Minoan Archaeology

Perspectives for the 21st Century

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Cultural Performances at the Beginning of the Bronze Age

Early Minoan I and II Cemeteries as Stages for Performance

Katy Soar

This paper presents a performative approach to space and the built environment, arguing that performance is an underused yet informative tool which can aid us in understanding more subtle and nuanced areas of archaeology, such as ideology, ritual and social constructs. A discussion of the usefulness of this approach is followed by a case-study from the cemetery sites of Early Bronze Age Crete.

Cemeteries are ideal areas to examine as sites of performance. Performances within the mortuary sphere are common occurrences, and cemeteries are often regarded as arenas for social and cultural interaction for the community of the living. This is especially prevalent in an analysis of Early Bronze Age Crete, where cemeteries are the primary architectural evidence, suggesting an investiture in the spaces of the dead not accorded to those of the living.

House Tombs were the prevalent burial custom of north-eastern Crete, while circular tholos tombs were common in the south-central region. The social realities – and differences – of these two areas are usually interpreted on the basis of material evidence deposited within the tombs and the energy invested in their construction. The purpose of this paper is to re-evaluate these interpretations by focusing on the use of space within the built mortuary landscape to decipher the performance of individuals within this constructed landscape. I argue that the arrangement of space, and of objects and structures within space, provides a separate category of data from which to draw conclusions about social structures within Early Minoan society. In particular, I will focus on tombs constructed in the EM I and II periods, and those from which kinesic interpretations can be discerned – namely the tholos tombs from Moni Odigitria, Hagia Kyriaki, Koumasa, and Platanos, and the house tomb from Mochlos. This approach can be used to illuminate the different ways various societies perceived themselves and reacted to the island-wide emergence of social hierarchies and differentiation.

Introduction

The Early Bronze Age on Crete is a period largely known from its burial record, which varies regionally and chronologically. It has previously been argued that the divergences in the burial record may represent differences in social structures between the communities and societies which used these cemeteries.¹ The social realities of these societies have usually been interpreted on the basis of the material evidence deposited within the tombs and the energy invested in the tomb construction. The purpose of this paper is to re-evaluate these interpretations by focusing on the use of space within the built mortuary landscape during the early part of the Bronze Age, specifically the EM II period, to decipher the performance of individuals within this constructed landscape. The paper will focus primarily on those tombs where kinesic activity can be interpreted, in order to offer up a new form of evidence for interpretation. Here I argue that the arrangements of space and of objects and structures within space can provide a separate category of data from which to draw conclusions about social structures within Early Minoan society, which can be valuable in deducing how certain communities viewed themselves and their position in the world. As Victor Turner said:

“Cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances ... A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know one another better by entering one another’s performances ...”²

By “entering into” Minoan performance, we can get to know them a little better.

¹ Xanthoudides 1924; Seager 1912; Branigan 1993.

² Turner, in Schechner and Appel 1990, 1.

Performance

Performance is an action through which humans project images of themselves and their world to an audience,³ and is a powerful way of negotiating social roles and identities. Cultural performances act as reflexive instruments of cultural expression – they are critical and inter-subjective, commenting or reflecting upon themselves and others.⁴ By self-consciously manipulating the formal features of communication, such as the physical movement in dance, language and tone in song, cultural performances make one conscious of its devices. In this respect, they objectify and lay open for scrutiny culture itself.⁵ Paradoxically for the archaeologist, however, performance is most noted for its ephemerality. But while performance itself is intangible, it does leave traces and residues in the material world. The body itself is material, as are the props used in performance. Indeed, the cemetery is a material place which may be part of the performance not only as a stage but also through the active involvement of limiting and directing practice. We can go some way to recreating past performances by examining these physical remains which humans leave in the landscape, reading them as clues to how bodies would have interacted with the site and the landscape. Viewing objects of their material culture as physical prostheses – or an extension of themselves – aids us in understanding the interaction of people with their surroundings.⁶

Performance acts can be a viable form of evidence in regard to how a community or cultural group communicates their “issues and attitudes”. As such, Minoan funerary performances become not only an aesthetic act, but also a means of learning and projecting identity and a means of thinking and talking about how culture can be enacted or created by participants. As messages are inherent within certain forms of performance, it inevitably enters the arena of ideology.⁷ Performance can then be viewed as an ideological transaction between performers and the audience. Performance materialises the ideology of an institution, translating it into readable signs, which are then interpreted by an audience.⁸ Performance, as a form and style of communication, creates and reproduces cultural values through bodily movement which is infused with meaning and social power.⁹

A focus on the materiality of performance allows for its archaeological investigation. The physical manifestations of performance are revealed through topography, material culture, and – crucially – architecture.¹⁰ Architectural (and/or topographic) layout affects the relationship between performer and audience, and regulates, co-ordinates and choreographs movement and access, allowing a kinesic and experiential understanding of the built environment.¹¹

Cemeteries as Sites of Performance

Cemeteries are in many ways ideal contexts to examine as sites of performance. Not only are performances within the mortuary sphere common occurrences, both temporally and spatially, but cemeteries are often regarded as arenas for social and cultural interaction for the community of the living.¹² As locations for social gathering they would have been sites of intense social interaction, and for the negotiation of social roles and identities.¹³ As a result, funerary performances would have been powerful public events, which would have impacted on both the participants and the spectators. This is especially prevalent in an analysis of Early Bronze Age Crete, where cemeteries are the primary architectural evidence, suggesting an investiture in the spaces of the dead which does not seem to have been accorded to that of the living. The durability of mortuary architecture also suggests that its builders were interested in creating “sets” for future performances, through the facilitation and inhibition of certain kinds of practice.¹⁴

³ Palmer and Jankowiak 1996, 226.

⁴ Palmer and Jankowiak 1996, 240.

⁵ Bauman 1992, 47.

⁶ Gillam 2005, 11.

⁷ Counsell and Wolf 2001, 31; Soar 2014, 226.

⁸ Kershaw 1992, 16.

⁹ Briggs 1994, 152.

¹⁰ Boyd 2014, 194.

¹¹ DeMarrais 2014, 156.

¹² Laneri 2007, 1.

¹³ Hamilakis 2007, 1091.

¹⁴ Boyd 1994, 87.

Minoan Tomb-Types

Two of the most prominent funerary monuments from the EM I and II periods on Crete are either circular or rectangular.¹⁵ Circular tombs, known as tholoi, are prevalent in the most fertile area of the island, the Mesara as well as Asterousia, and rectangular, or house, tombs, are more frequently attested in the eastern part of the island, particularly in the Mirabello Bay.

Tholos tombs are circular built tombs, first constructed in the EM I period. These served as communal graves for families or clans for a long period of time, often up to eight or nine centuries. During this early part of the Bronze Age, the Cretan tholos tombs vary in size from an interior diameter around 4 m (Koumasa A) to larger than 13 m (Platanos A). The tombs consist primarily of a circular shaped main burial chamber, and annexe rooms were added at some of the tombs in EM II. Geographically, in EM IIA, tholoi expand outwards from their original location in the Asterousia mountains into the Mesara plain, and two-tholoi cemeteries become more common than in the previous EM I period.

In the North and East parts of the island, we find a different form of communal tomb, the house tomb. These are rectangular built tombs, which can be free-standing buildings with no more than two rooms (although in later periods they are more complex). They developed in the EM II period.

Burial Ritual

While ritual practices from this early period are notoriously hard to reconstruct, it seems that the burial procedures in both forms of tomb appear to be similar, involving a multiple-stage process. The body was initially laid out in the antechamber of the tholos¹⁶ or within the house tomb itself¹⁷ until the flesh had decayed, at which point it was interred in the tholos or, in the case of the house tombs, re-collected and manipulated (the skulls in particular seem to have special importance).¹⁸

Despite these similarities in burial ritual, the architectural settings for these activities are quite different, which may suggest a difference in this regard to attitudes towards the living, rather than attitudes towards the dead. It is these differences, and their expression through performance, I wish to examine in this paper.

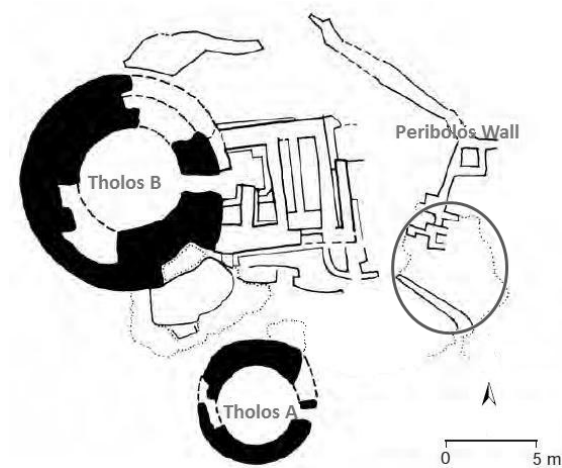


FIG. 1 Plan of the Moni Odigitria cemetery (after Vasilakis 1992).

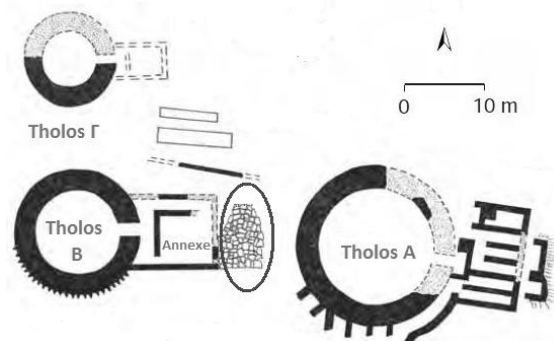


FIG. 2 Plan of the Platanos cemetery (after Branigan 1970).

¹⁵ For the most recent discussion on Early Minoan tomb types, see Legarra Herrero 2014.

¹⁶ Branigan 1970.

¹⁷ Soles 1992.

¹⁸ See Papadatos 2005, 39–61 for Tholos Tomb Gamma at Archanes, Triantaphyllou 2010, 229–50 for Moni Odigitria, and Soles 1992 for skull retention at Mochlos.

Architectural Differences

Tholoi

My main argument here is that the relationship between architecture and performance also suggests a divide between the two regions, or at least a difference in the social structure and varieties of social interactions which define these different social groups who used specific cemeteries.¹⁹ In regard to the tholos tombs, several of these see the introduction of paved or enclosed external courts in the EM II period. While not all of the known tholos



FIG. 3 Paved area at Platanos (photo: author's own).

tombs in the Mesara region have specific paved courtyards, many still have some kind of open area for performance, and it should be noted that other examples may no longer be archaeologically visible, or were overlooked during the original excavations. However, they are an important feature worth investigating in order to reconstruct performative acts. Not part of the original tholos tomb architecture, the paved area may have first appeared in EM I, at Tholos B at Moni Odigitria (fig. 1), where the enclosed areas appear not to have been paved, rather a pebble surface was laid down within a boundary wall.²⁰ EM II examples are known from the tomb Platanos B (fig. 2),²¹ where the enclosure, whose paving consists of slabs of green slate above a foundation of stones and clay (fig. 3), extends between the two largest tombs, A and B,²² as well as EM II Koumasa,

where bluish slate paving extended over an area of 6.5 m in diameter, a size which suggests considerable effort was put into its construction.²³ At Hagia Kyriaki, the enclosed area is similar to Moni Odigitria in that it is not paved, and a surface of levelled and beaten soil was found within an enclosure wall.²⁴

During the EM II period these paved or enclosed areas do not appear at every tholos tomb site, but wherever they appear, they are large enough to accommodate a gathering of considerable numbers of people, possibly the entire community. It should also be noted that the lack of these sites at certain cemeteries may be due to preservation and recovery issues, and as such they may have been present at many, if not all, cemeteries in this period, underlining the importance of specific areas for performance and ritual, as well as performance itself, to these communities.

House Tombs

At the house tombs, the architectural use of space choreographs a different form of movement. For example, at Mochlos, the more elaborate tombs (I/II/III and IV/V/VI) are located separate from the majority of the tombs further down the slope on the west side of the islet. At tomb IV/V/VI, dated to EM IIA, a small court complex was discovered outside the tomb (fig. 4). Four steps led to a paved area, a walkway or pavement, which lay along the façade of the tomb. This paved avenue ends at a corner stand, a small rectangular platform, on which fragments of stone vases were found. This platform is situated directly outside the entrance to the tomb, and has been interpreted as an altar.²⁵ A raised terrace, perhaps intended to accommodate spectators, overlooked this small court. Thus what we appear to have at this tomb is a paved avenue of approach (fig. 5), possibly a ceremonial entrance, leading to the tombs. There is an ascending ramp, a raised terrace for spectators and an altar, which may have been the objective of those following the path.

¹⁹ See also Legarra Herrero 2009.

²⁰ Branigan and Campbell-Green 2010, 129.

²¹ Branigan 1993, 129.

²² Murphy 2003, 269.

²³ Xanthoudides 1971, 6.

²⁴ Bardsley 2004, 22.

²⁵ Soles 1992, 57.

The paved area which lies alongside the façade of the tomb is between 1.40 and 1.64 m in width, while the terrace which overlooks the tomb is 1.80–2.00 m wide. This suggests that a slightly larger group could assemble on the terrace at any one time than could approach the tomb along the pavements. This evidence indicates that processions, a form of performance in which participants move through a given space in a defined order, were the form of performance which occurred here.

Similar architectural structures and layouts have been found at other House Tomb sites. At Myrtos Pyrgos, a flight of steps descends from the top of a hill to the end of a paved road, which culminates in a small courtyard in front of an EM III/MM IA tomb.²⁶ Inside the courtyard were found a bench and kernoï.²⁷ Similar architectural features – a designated route or way, culminating at a specific spot or feature – appear at Archanes-Phourni (Burial Building 6),²⁸ Chrysolakkos²⁹ and Gournia (House Tomb B),³⁰ albeit later than EM II. As with the tholos tombs, the areas which are set aside or built specifically for performance are not standard features of all the tombs, although again this may be an issue of erosion or recovery.

Cemeteries and Performance

As the setting of performance, the paved or enclosed areas of the tholos tombs represent a space with very little internal division, if any, between spectator and performer. Tombs are intimately linked with settlement sites, as the distance between the two will attest – the furthest distance known between settlement and cemetery is around 400 m, at Lebena Papoura.³¹ The intimacy of tomb and settlement site suggests that these tombs were very much an integral part of the settlement and incorporated into its worldview. At Koumasa, for example, the paving extended over approximately 300 m², bounded by a straight wall.³² The enclosed area at Hagia Kyriaki, which, while not paved, showed evidence of trampled ground within a space enclosed by a peribolos wall, measured approximately 45 m². It has been argued that the tomb at Hagia Kyriaki was used by three nuclear families each with an approximate size of five to six persons, for a period of 800 to 900 years.³³ Although it is notoriously difficult to deduce prehistoric population densities, and this estimate is for but one of the several tholos tombs discussed here, nonetheless if this is correct, the paved and enclosed spaces were more than sufficient to hold this number of people, suggesting that the paved or enclosed areas of the cemetery sites were intended for

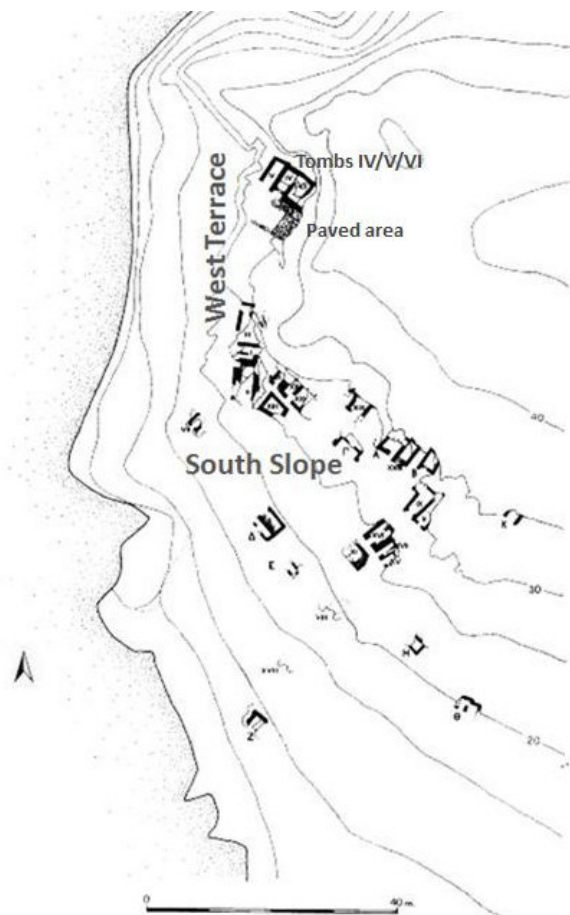


Fig. 4 Plan of the cemetery at Mochlos (after Soles 1992).

²⁶ Cadogan 1977, 71.

²⁷ Soles 1992, 221.

²⁸ Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1991, 98.

²⁹ Pelon et al. 1992, 82.

³⁰ Soles 1979, 161.

³¹ See Branigan 1998, 17.

³² Branigan 1998, 21.

³³ Murphy 1997, 31.



FIG. 5 Approach to tomb IV/V/VI at Mochlos (photo: author's own).

ining as it provides a link between these open, communal spaces and a specific form of performance. This clay model depicts four people who hold each other by the arms and shoulders surrounded by a low wall decorated with Horns of Consecration. All the figures are nude. Their heads are either covered in peaked caps³⁸ or have a lock of hair projecting from the top of their heads.³⁹ The latter seems more likely as hairstyles carry important symbolic significance in Minoan iconography, albeit in figural art which developed in later periods of Minoan prehistory.⁴⁰ The use of this model for reconstructing Early Minoan performance activities is controversial, due to its later date – however, it provides a link between these community spaces and the idea of circular dance. It should also be pointed out that during the period when these models were created and presumably placed inside the tombs, the Kamilari tholos was still in active use, this particular tholos being used during the periods MM IB–MM III and LM I.⁴¹ While this is obviously later than the initial use of the tholoi and enclosed areas, it should be noted that tholoi have been used near Kamilari since the EM period, suggesting a continuity of action at this site since the early Prepalatial period.⁴² Certainly, the shape of many of the paved areas lends credence to the idea of circular dances. Further to this, mourning dances have been reported in various ethnographic researches.⁴³ Contextual analysis associates dancing activities with burials. In ancient Egypt mourning dances appeared on tomb wall paintings.⁴⁴ In the Mycenaean and Philistine cultures of the second half of the second millennium BC, mourning female figurines

the community as a whole, acting as the focus of communal life.³⁴ This communal aspect is shown by the location of the paved or enclosed areas within the cemetery. For example at Platanos, the location of the paved area between tombs A and B suggests it was a common area belonging to all the tombs, rather than for one specific tomb.³⁵

Internally, the paved or enclosed areas are relatively spacious, in the sense that there is little architectural material inside them – they are simply open spaces, enclosed by a wall. There is no division within the space – no causeways or internal walls. The enclosed spaces are not overlooked by any platforms or grandstands, and are in most cases located on relatively flat land, visible to anyone approaching the tomb or viewing it from the nearby settlement. Any person or people performing on these enclosed spaces would have been visible not only to those also performing, but perhaps to anyone who could view the performance from the settlement.

Circumstantial evidence, in the form of a clay model found at Kamilari but of a MM II–IIIB date, has meant that these paved areas have generally been considered to have been used for dancing.³⁶ While later in date than the creation of the tholos tombs – the Kamilari figures date either from the end of the Protopalatial or from an early Neopalatial phase³⁷ – it is worth exam-

³⁴ Branigan 1970, 138.

³⁵ Murphy 2003, 228.

³⁶ See, for example, Branigan 1993, 180; 2008, 21.

³⁷ Kanta and Tzigounaki 2001, 154.

³⁸ Marinatos 1993, 22.

³⁹ Lefevre-Novaro 2001, 90.

⁴⁰ See Davis 1986; Koehl 1986.

⁴¹ Levi 1963.

⁴² Goodison and Guarita 2005, 185.

⁴³ Bloch and Parry 1982; Metcalf and Huntington 1991.

⁴⁴ Brunner-Traut 1958, 61.

were applied to the rims of round clay vessels,⁴⁵ indicating that the ceremony was carried out in the form of a circle dance. These items were found in graves.⁴⁶ Elaborate depictions of burial ceremonies were often painted on large burial vessels of Greek Geometric pottery. Here we see a clear connection between the function of the vessel and its decoration. Sections of the scene include friezes with rows of male or female figures in formalized body gesture which indicate rhythmical movement in dance.⁴⁷

At the house tombs, what we see is a spatial layout which suggests processional performance. Despite the ephemeral nature of such performance, certain characteristics of procession are manifest in the material record. If procession can be defined as ritual movement of a number of participants through a given space, from a starting point to a goal,⁴⁸ then it is either this starting point or the goal that would be the most visible to us in the archaeological record. The culmination or terminal point of a procession is the most obvious physical manifestation of this form of performance, as the completion of the procession occurs at some specified place of sacrifice, offering, burial or existing monumental or natural feature which has a particular resonance for people.⁴⁹ This terminal point should be able to help us distinguish a processional way from a regular corridor or passage for transportation, or from regular, non-symbolic movement. In the case of these house tomb sites, the tomb itself acts as the culminating point for the procession, with some tombs also having altars for dedications and offerings at their entrances.

Due to the act of procession involving specific numbers of participants, usually in some orderly manner, the processional way probably also occurs in a restricted physical space.⁵⁰ The narrow approaches to the house tombs agree with this definition – at Mochlos, the path leading to the tombs is between 1.40 and 1.64 m in width, while the terrace which overlooks the tomb is 1.80–2.00 m wide, meaning more people could watch the event than could participate. At Gournia, the corridor separating the tombs and leading to the kernos outside the tomb is 1.02–1.26 m wide.⁵¹ The paved approach to the tomb at Myrtos Pyrgos is only approximately 1 m wide.

Visibility from settlement is also a distinguishing feature between Mochlos and the tholos tombs discussed. The cemetery at Mochlos is only 80 m from the settlement, but there is no visual contact between the two. Also, while the trajectory of the path towards tomb IV/V/VI at Mochlos was in part a result of the natural topography, its placement was presumably a deliberate action intended to intensify the experience⁵² – when one's point of view is forced upward it becomes more difficult to both look around and walk; it limits one's mobility.⁵³ As mentioned above, however, the paved areas of specific tholoi would have been clearly visible from the settlement sites; for example, those at Koumasa, Platanos and Hagia Kyriaki, were located on flat land, with no walls or natural outcrops obstructing the view between settlement and tomb.

So what we have at these sites is a defined processional area, signalled by a determinate area of passage or movement, which culminates in an area that would have had some meaning to those involved and to the society as a whole. This may be familiar from later periods, where the paved causeways of the west courts of the palaces of Knossos and Malia, as well as the first palace at Phaistos, show similar functions.

Meanings of Performance

We have seen that there is a difference between house tombs and tholos tombs in the way they choreograph human movement. The paved areas of the tholos tombs are open; house tombs involved differential access to ritual activity and performance. The paved areas of the tholos tombs allowed the community to come together and enact performances in a communal space; performances at house tombs would have precluded certain members of the community. The house tomb architecture makes a much more visible effort to prescribe and choreograph human movement than do the more open tholos tomb spaces. We have seen how house tomb architecture prescribes movement so that processions are the form of performance which occur in front of and approaching the tombs. Whilst procession may be purely a means of moving from site A to site B, it may also indicate “meaning through

⁴⁵ Iakovidis 1966; Dothan 1982, 237–45.

⁴⁶ Iakovidis 1966.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Schweitzer 1971, 37–52, pls. 30–36, 40–41, 46–50.

⁴⁸ Hägg 2001, 143.

⁴⁹ Coles 2003, 212.

⁵⁰ Johnston 1999, 40.

⁵¹ Soles 1979, 161.

⁵² Vavouranakis 2007, 108.

⁵³ Adams 2007, 365.

movement".⁵⁴ It is an act of movement embedded with ceremonial or symbolic importance, and it is this importance that distinguishes it from everyday movement through space. While many types of procession exist, I refer specifically here to the work of David Wiles, who defined two different forms of processional space, parade and pilgrimage, the former being a form of organisation which depicts socio-cultural themes,⁵⁵ how it displays, actually or symbolically, an ordering of power⁵⁶ – which is what I am interested in here.

Because procession involves specific numbers of participants, normally in some orderly manner, the processional way usually moves through a restricted physical space. In keeping with the idea of restriction and accessibility seen at the house tomb sites, a procession can be naturally hierarchical by its very nature and arrangement, rather than a mere succession of figures.⁵⁷ Within processions, distinctions can be made: there are those who are included and those who are excluded, as well as those who lead and those who follow,⁵⁸ creating a form of performance which is bound up in strategies which can reinforce status and knowledge difference.⁵⁹ People can coordinate their hierarchical personal relationships through a set of stylised social cues, which may involve a choreography of time and space.⁶⁰ As the path towards the tomb itself narrows this becomes a filter which defines the shape of the performance, from amorphous to linear. This is especially emphasised at the site of Mochlos, where the topography itself necessitated a linear progression towards the west terrace and tomb IV/V/VI, while at the same time the hierarchical nature of this progression was emphasised by the move from more simple tombs to more impressive monumental burials.⁶¹ Although the architectural elaboration of the tombs on the South Slope may have been higher than generally thought,⁶² the distinction between the architectural elaboration⁶³ is further confirmed via orientation and movement. The circulation patterns facilitated by these architectural forms would have established a complex organisation of space and movement.⁶⁴ Those who watched from the terrace (such as the one at Mochlos) would be excluded from those who approached up the processional way. The small size of the courts beside the tombs at Mochlos and Myrtos Pyrgos would have created distinctions between those who could enter and those who could not. These distinctions would have been generated and confirmed by where a person stood and how they moved, and these distinctions between participants would have been maintained by the exclusion of those who partook and those who watched, and also between those who led and those who followed.⁶⁵ Processions which moved from one place to another will have established an order between the participants at the beginning of the proceedings, and this would have been reaffirmed at their close.⁶⁶ Overall, we can read processions as performances which act as expressions of order – representations in which varying levels of social and political importance are located in a hierarchy.

If we consider the tholos tomb architecture and the possible example of representational art, we can see an altogether different form of locale and performance. If we view the paved open areas as settings for performances, whose form is further suggested both by the shape of these areas and the figural art found at Kamilari, circular dances may well have been practised at these sites. Dance is a primary method of emotional bonding – through rhythmic muscular movement participants are affected independently of how they are connected or divided external to the dance performance. As such, dance is a method by which groups of people define themselves.⁶⁷ Circle dances in particular create a feeling of solidarity amongst the participants, uniformity of movement being crucial to the harmonious performance of the act and ensuring that everything outside of the circle remains unimportant or even forgotten.⁶⁸ Circle dances can be interpreted on several different levels, namely the individual and the community, as well as the cosmological. On an individual level, a circle dance is created by the participation of each individual, who creates the circle with their body.⁶⁹ Thus, the individual becomes something greater than

⁵⁴ Pearson and Shanks 2001, 128.

⁵⁵ Morinis 1992, 15.

⁵⁶ Wiles 2003, 64.

⁵⁷ Holliday 1990, 73.

⁵⁸ Barrett 1994, 29.

⁵⁹ Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 105.

⁶⁰ Bevan 2010, 29.

⁶¹ Vavouranakis 2007, 109.

⁶² See Karacic, this volume.

⁶³ As well as the burial goods, see Branigan 1991 and Soles 1998 for more detail.

⁶⁴ Barrett 1994, 15.

⁶⁵ Barrett 1994, 15.

⁶⁶ Barrett 1994, 17.

⁶⁷ McNeill 1995, 52.

⁶⁸ Brandes 1990, 32.

⁶⁹ Garfinkel 1998, 228.

them, and contributes to the group dynamic. However, the main focus of the circular dance is the community – in the act of moving in a circle, possibly holding hands, the individual is fused into the group, which becomes one entity.⁷⁰ To dance together in a circle also implies mutual trust.⁷¹ The degree of co-ordination required would mean the community had to gather at specific times, at specific places, and that members of the community would have to perform the same actions at the same time and in the same direction.⁷² The circle delineates territory and the participants are disconnected from the outside world, and focusing solely on the event which is taking place within the circle.⁷³

Early Minoan II – The Chronological Context

It appears that these features first appeared in the archaeological record in the EM I and EM II periods. This is not to say that these performances did not occur before this, but that by EM II they had achieved a significance which meant they would have been incorporated permanently into the tomb architecture. Thus EM II would seem to have a key role in the development of these performances. This leads to the question – why? What is happening in EM II that would lead to these developments, and does this help us understand why they arose? Changes in the social structure begin to appear across Crete during this period. If these performances are in some way a reaction to these developments, then what does the form of the specific performance tell us about the ideologies of these social groupings?

EM II can be divided into two periods, IIA and IIB. Most of the evidence I have previously discussed in regard to the tholos cemeteries and the main tombs at Mochlos and Gournia comes from EM IIA, as does the majority of the following evidence. EM IIB is much less well known in the ceramic record, making the history of certain tombs and cemeteries harder to understand. While some cemeteries in the northern part of the island disappeared, the Mesaran tholoi appear to have continued with less trouble, and Mochlos thrived during this period.

The EM IIA period in Crete seems to be a watershed period. There are major socio-political developments that lead to changes in the infrastructure and social organisation of society. Generally, we appear to be seeing an increase in economic activity as well as the development of monumentality and the beginnings of the institutionalisation of ritual.

There is evidence for the development of trade networks from EM I–EM IIA onwards, both internal and external. Internally, this is the first time there is a sizeable exchange in pottery, with sporadic Mesaran imports, such as fine grey ware pyxides, at Knossos and Poros Katsambas in the EM I period⁷⁴ intensifying into large-scale inter-regional distribution networks.⁷⁵ External trade is exemplified by the appearance of some of the first foreign contacts with the Cyclades, based on a small group of imported wares found at Knossos.⁷⁶ Ivory is also first attested in the EM IIA period at Knossos, where a small segment of a hippopotamus tusk was found, presumably imported from Egypt.⁷⁷

In relation to this, the first evidence for seals appears in EM IIA, in burial contexts, such as Lebena, and also the settlement site of Myrtos Fournou Korifi.⁷⁸ It has been argued that the development of sealstones marks a rise in the social role of the individual, at least for certain members of EBA society.⁷⁹ Another factor which may bear this out is the change from large-sized, communal drinking vessels to the smaller, individual stemmed goblet. This has been interpreted as a development from communal, group feasting and drinking activities wherein the group would share the same cup, to ceremonies where the participants would have their own drinking vessel.⁸⁰

This development in drinking activities is also related to an increase in the appearance of “drinking sets”, found in large numbers at Knossos, which may suggest large-scale ritualised drinking (and eating) practices.⁸¹ This de-

⁷⁰ Garfinkel 1998, 226.

⁷¹ Brandes 1990, 32.

⁷² Garfinkel 2003, 87.

⁷³ Garfinkel 1998, 228.

⁷⁴ Wilson and Day 2000; Dimopoulou 1997.

⁷⁵ Wilson and Day 1994, 85.

⁷⁶ Wilson and Day 1994, 85.

⁷⁷ Krzyszkowska 2005, 63.

⁷⁸ Krzyszkowska 2005, 60.

⁷⁹ Branigan 1995, 38.

⁸⁰ Day and Wilson 2002, 151.

⁸¹ Driessen 2007, 89.

velopment in ritualised practice may be related to the development of monumental architecture which is attested in the EM IIB period. Although in the Mesara region the tholos tombs are the most monumental form of architecture, elsewhere in Crete there is evidence for impressive building works. During EM IIB, a monumental L-shaped platform was built at Knossos,⁸² as well as levelling at the site, undertaken in EM IIA to promote an ambitious building programme and large-scale reorganisation of the settlement, wherein the hilltop was levelled for further building and houses for settlement terraced on the slopes around it.⁸³ A thin layer of white material, probably of EM IIB date, has been discovered in certain areas of the later palace, such as over the Central and West Courts as well as beneath the Throne Room complex, which could have been ritual in nature.⁸⁴ Elsewhere on Crete, monumental walls have been found in buildings at Palaikastro and possibly Tylissos.⁸⁵ At Malia, the earliest monumental architecture dates to EM IIB, including walls of the later West Magazines and an intriguing construction, finds from which include a gold bead and a sealing, found under the Hypostyle Hall.⁸⁶ EM IIB at Vasiliki saw the introduction of a paved court measuring 20 by 20 m.⁸⁷

These developments may be the result of population growth and settlement of new sites in EM II, and they may attest to the possible emergence of a form of central authority.⁸⁸ In relation, the development of specific ritual “kits” and the introduction of gathering areas and ritual installations may also suggest an institutionalisation of ritual which corresponded with these social changes.⁸⁹

All these developments – the introduction of new tomb types in north Crete, the expansion of tholoi into other regions in south Crete, the development in external and internal relations on the island – may have created significant changes in the relations between social units, and interregional dynamics. The use and meaning of burial sites may have had to adapt to new circumstances, and the links between tomb community and kinship groups may have been reworked.⁹⁰ At tomb sites, ideology was manipulated within funerary rituals via performance acts such as dance or procession, to either promote the development of social stratification or mask it under an outwardly unifying message. The growing population of this long chronological period meant that eventually such diverse ideologies would be subsumed as growing relations between settlements developed.

Conclusion

By analysing the performances inherent within these different social groupings, I would conclude that these social differentiations were not only visible in the material record, but were played out ideologically and cognitively through the use of dance and procession. Performance is closely linked to social and ideological structures, and as such an analysis of these can help us develop a more complex understanding of Early Minoan social practice and reality. In the face of growing social and political division and hierarchy and the institutionalisation of ritual practice that began to manifest in EM II, the social groupings of both South-Central and Northern and Eastern Crete reacted to this differently in regard to performative practice. In the south-central region of Crete, this growing divide was masked by performances that were reflective of a cosmological order which celebrated the group over the individual. In the north and east of Crete, however, these differences were embraced and embellished by performances which emphasised the individual over the group.

However, performance has been noted for what Finnegan has called “registers of artfulness”⁹¹ – meaning that performance may not truly represent social reality, but instead may be called upon to reproduce an idealised representation of reality. Thus, whether or not the communities of the Mesara or of northern and central Crete were truly egalitarian or hierarchical, institutionalised performances certainly intended to give the impression that they were, creating an embodied manifestation of prevalent ideologies, even though these ideologies may not have been truly representative of the *status quo*. As such, performances can give us a clue as to the mindset of these communities, showing us how they saw themselves, which has important implications regarding how we understand past

⁸² Branigan 1995, 35.

⁸³ Schoep 1999, 270.

⁸⁴ Driessen 2007, 79.

⁸⁵ Schoep 1999, 270.

⁸⁶ Driessen 2010, 558.

⁸⁷ Driessen 2007, 88.

⁸⁸ Wilson and Day 1994, 85.

⁸⁹ Driessen 2007, 91.

⁹⁰ Legarra Herrero 2009, 41.

⁹¹ Finnegan 1992, 91–111.

Cretan societies, and gives us an insight into their worldviews and ideologies that other analyses cannot bring. As the Turner quote at the start of this paper suggested, by looking at, or “entering into”, performance acts at Early Minoan cemetery sites, we can learn more about how they saw the world and their place in it – perhaps we can get to know the Minoans a little better.

When combined with the traditional archaeological evidence from the two regions discussed in this paper – such as grave goods and tomb architecture – we can see how a performative approach to the past helps to create a more dynamic reading of the differences between the two regions. In one region, architectural space choreographs performances designed to minimise the growing social differentiation manifest elsewhere in the material culture; in the other, these differences are emphasised. By positioning the ideology reflected in the performative practices which emerge from an analysis of space and architecture against the material culture found in these locales, we can begin to unpack a more nuanced reading of the attitudes and identities of these communities. While performance does not hold up a mirror to these societies and reflect how they truly are, it perhaps gives us a more important reading of the past – through its reflexivity, performance allows us to see aspects of how past societies may have seen themselves. The durability of these performances – the tombs were used in these forms for nearly a thousand years – hints at the durability of these ideologies, that they were continually performed and articulated at these sites, and that these tombs and their architectural layout, combined with the physicality of the human body, continued to condition and effect social reality as it was perceived and acted out by the participants.

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