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ASSEMBLING KNOWLEDGE IN THE PAST AND PRESENT

edited by

*Emily Miller Bonney, Kathryn J. Franklin
and James A. Johnson*

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Contributors

REBECCA BEARDMORE
Ph. D. candidate
Institute of Archaeology
University College London
UK

DR CLAUDIA CHANG
Professor of Anthropology
Department of Anthropology and
Archaeology,
Sweet Briar College
Sweet Briar
VA
USA

HANNAH CHAZIN
PhD candidate,
Department of Anthropology,
University of Chicago
IL
USA

DR HANNAH COBB
Lecturer in Archaeology
School of Arts, Languages and Culture,
University of Manchester
UK

DR KATHRYN JANE FRANKLIN
Lecturer in Social Sciences
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
IL
USA

ADRIENNE FRIE
Ph.D. candidate in Archaeology,
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
WI
USA

KEVIN GARSTKI
Ph.D. candidate in Archaeology,
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
WI
USA

DR JOSEPH M. GONZALEZ
Associate Professor of Liberal Studies,
California State University Fullerton
CA
USA

DR JAMES A. JOHNSON
Lecturer,
Department of Anthropology,
University of Chicago
IL
USA

DR EMILY MILLER BONNEY
Associate Professor Liberal Studies,
California State University Fullerton
CA
USA

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2.

Reassembling Early Bronze Age tombs on Crete

Emily Miller Bonney

This paper explores the ways in which knowledge about the Cretan Prepalatial tombs has been assembled both by the academy and by the public. On the one hand scholars have dealt with the tombs as static receptacles for bodies and grave goods not as active participants in the mortuary process and the sustaining of community. The local citizenry while they have more actual physical contact with the tombs do not and cannot really understand the archaeological background for these mostly fragmentary monuments. They know them only materially. A close examination of the assemblings and reassembling at the cemetery of Lebena Yerokambos seeks a middle route that acknowledges the materiality of the tholoi and the possibilities for human engagement over their long history.

KEYWORDS: BRONZE AGE, CRETE, THOLOS

Introduction

The papers in this volume challenge traditional understandings of the archaeological assemblage as a bounded and completed entity. Provoked (in part) by recent efforts to topple that conceptual framework (Hodder 2012; Lucas 2012; Alberti *et al.* 2013; Fowler 2013a; 2013b) the authors turn to notions of incompleteness and assembling: re-framing the mortuary sphere as an extension of bureaucratic activity (Johnson this volume), destabilizing static narratives of Mesolithic people as merely a subsistence population (Cobb this volume) or revealing the repeated remaking of the monarch (Gonzalez this volume). Acknowledging the instability and contingency of the material world (*sensu* Barad 2003; 2007; Bennett 2010) the authors focus on processes and the interactions between people and things.

The epistemological consequences of this dynamic approach are critical as the papers demonstrate, and it is to this tack that this paper turns. The aim of the chapter is to reinstate the human presence at Early Bronze Age (3100–1900 BCE) Cretan tombs thereby restoring their actual history as sites of social encounter and meaning making and reinvigorating monuments that for too long have been treated as static containers. The site of Lebena



Fig. 2.1. Archaeological fence and sign at Lebena Yerokambos

Yerokambos (Yerokambos) near modern Lentas on the south coast of Crete embodies the problem. Its sturdy if not always impregnable Greek Archaeological Service fence and brown sign with yellow lettering (Figs 2.1 and 2.2) identify the site as an established monument, a “Bronze Age Tholos Tomb,” a contained (protected) and excavated archaeological site that has not served a mortuary purpose for nearly 4000 years and yet is still a tomb. The implied durability is belied (Fig. 2.3) by the structure’s contingency: aggressive grasses shooting their destructive roots into slowly deteriorating walls; bits of rock tumble on the tomb’s interior floor; fragments of plastic debris left by intruders on the site; the stubs of anterooms lost long before the site was excavated; the steady if slow disassembling and reassembling of the monument into an irregular landscape feature. Resolving the apparent conflict between the two requires recognition of the recursive relationship between people, tomb and grave goods as producing and products of each other.

Achieving this is critical for the larger category to which this cemetery belongs, long frozen in time by the academics and misunderstood by the modern population. The cemetery at Yerokambos comprises two tombs that are among the 58 extant examples of the tholos, a circular stone built collective tomb characteristic of the Cretan Prepalatial period (3100–1900 BCE), spanning the Early Bronze Age (EBA) and extending into the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) (Manning 2010, 14, 23). Until recently Prepalatial settlements, other than the major sites of Knossos and Phaistos, were sparse so the tholoi and their contents provided most of the information for the process by which the Cretan landscape, once dotted with egalitarian hamlets and villages, came to be dominated by hierarchically ordered cities. The pottery, seals and other objects deposited in the tombs revealed the emergence of craft



Fig. 2.2. Archaeological sign at Lebena Yerokambos



Fig. 2.3. Lebena Yerokambos Detail

specialization, social differentiation and other indicia of complexity associated with elite presence and action behind this transformation (Branigan 1970; 1993; 1998; Soles 1992; Murphy 1998; 2011; Panagiotopoulos 2002; Legarra Herrero 2009; 2011; 2014) while the increasingly complex floor plans alluded to social stratification and control of access. Absent from these conversations was any reference to the materiality of the tombs themselves, aside from Papadopoulos's (2010) computer reconstruction of Tholos C and Burial Building 19, the occasional excavation report photograph, and rare references to the size of the stones (Branigan 1993; Legarra Herrero 2012).

Thus the tombs' assertive materiality may surprise the visitor who knows them only from the literature (Figs 2.4 and 2.5). Yet each tomb emerged from a series of community decisions on the location, construction, and the use, re-use, modification and ultimate abandonment all producing material effects. Subsequent choices by looters, archaeologists and local farmers building walls and clearing fields have produced what remains today. In each case the assembling of the things and the people produced a particular meaning that appeared to define the result – tomb under construction, tomb in use, abandoned tomb, looted tomb, preserved tomb, *trokhaloi* (pile of rubble) – but was in fact also subject to change as the structure was always drawn into the present. Any effort to use the tombs as a vehicle for creating knowledge about Prepalatial Crete must include consideration of this essential materiality.

This is so because engaging with and acknowledging the architectural reality of the tomb allows us to transcend the traditional epistemologies and to see the Prepalatial tomb as a commemorative site that always was becoming through the actions of the users. Recent scholarship demands that we direct attention to the material world and the intra-action (*sensu* Barad 2007) between people and things (e.g. Jones 2007; 2012; Webmoor 2007; Witmore 2007; Webmoor and Witmore 2008; Bennet 2010; Knappett 2011; Johansen 2012; Lucas 2012; Alberti *et al.* 2013; Fowler 2013a; 2013b; Malafouris 2013). These assertions reflect the recognition of the materiality of the mind (e.g. Clark 2001; 2008; Noe 2009) and the impact of notions of material agency (Latour 2005; Knappett and Malafouris 2011). It is not that we only now recognize the importance of the materiality of the monument: the works just listed provide ample evidence in the texts and in the references to a long-standing understanding of that point. It is that we now perceive more clearly the dynamism and restlessness of this relationship, the vibrancy of once seemingly inert matter (Bennett 2010). The multiscalar nature of the archaeological record noted throughout this volume applies here as well as the durability and extended use-life of the tombs brought them into contact with generation after generation of users so that they served as the site for gradual changes in the performance of mortuary ritual and for the renegotiation of the relationships among the living and between the living and the dead as I have argued elsewhere (Miller Bonney 2013).

As will be clear scholars have not engaged with the Prepalatial tombs in the manner proposed here. For example, explorations of the relationship between the tombs and the landscape (Murphy 2011) or the sensory experiences in the tombs (Hamilakis 2013) have not addressed the contingency of the tombs and their continuing unfolding over time through the continued depositions of people and things at the sites. The reliance on the plans does not take proper account of practices of construction (Jones 2012; McFadyen 2013) or, I would argue, of the practices of use that form memories and in particular the ways in which the



Fig. 2.4. Tomb at Ayia Kyriaki



Fig. 2.5. Tomb at Kaloï Limenes

architecture structures performance in the process of commemoration (Jones 2007, 45–7). Similarly treating the tomb artefacts in isolation does not acknowledge their participation in the assembling of the tholos. Tholoi and objects and people always were entangled (Hodder 2012), and we cannot draw out their enmeshed narrative unless we acknowledge the dependencies among them.

This paper argues for a new epistemology of the tombs that recognizes the processes and intra-actions that always were drawing the tholoi into the present. We first examine the ways in which scholars and the public have interacted with the tombs and the different types of knowledge that have resulted. We then turn to a case study where we investigate more thoroughly how this new, materially grounded approach would produce a more full-bodied narrative in which the people, the grave goods and the tomb architecture all are brought together to reveal the assembling and reassembling of the cemetery at Yerokambos by which people and things and tombs always were reproducing each other (Webmoor and Witmore 2008).

Assembling the Tholoi archaeologically

Making lists as making knowledge

Archaeologists first became aware of the tombs just after 1900, more than 50 years before the discovery and excavation of the complex at Yerokambos and at a time when the history of the EBA was not well understood. At first the tholoi appeared to be concentrated in south central Crete. The early discoveries (Paribeni 1904; 1913; Xanthoudides 1916; 1918) astonished excavators with evidence of hundreds of burials and masses of pottery from collective interments carried out in some instances over hundreds of years accompanied by secondary manipulation of the remains. Xanthoudides, the ephor of Crete and a particularly adept detector of the tholoi, assembled the fifteen he had excavated into the foundational work *Vaulted Tombs of the Mesara* (1924) which included an introduction by Arthur Evans, the excavator of the Late Bronze Age Palace at Knossos. The publication established the diagnostic features of a tholos: a circular stone structure with thick walls and a narrow entrance often framed by a trilithon post-and-lintel with a corbeled vault different from the beehive vaults of Mycenaean tholoi and more like those on Cretan cheese dairies. Thick deposits of bones and pottery spoke to the collectivity of the mortuary practices, although Xanthoudides posited that larnakes (clay coffins) used in some later tombs signaled the emergence of social hierarchies (but see Papadatos 2014). Both Evans and Xanthoudides looked to North Africa, Libya and Egypt respectively, for the origins of the tombs. While the excavator meticulously recorded measurements of the tomb he was, like most after him, more interested in the contents of the tombs – the masses of pottery, small finds and skeletal material. So he included photographs of only five of the 15 tombs in the report – Koumasa A and B, Platanos A and B, and Kalathiana – ironically as these well-preserved examples are less in need of documentation. The others – Hagia Eirene E and ε, Salame, Koutsokera, and Drakones Δ and Z – all have been destroyed, reduced to rubble by local residents and Porti now is completely covered in vegetation while Xanthoudides himself filled in Platanos C. So while he was well-positioned to document the construction of the tombs in fact he published only generalized descriptions, focusing on their commonalities: the occasional

presence of small annexes or paved areas and the fact that in general the interior floors are slightly lower than the external ground level.

By the time Branigan assembled the tholoi in *The Tombs of Mesara: A study of funerary architecture and ritual in southern Crete, 2800–1700 BC* (Branigan 1970; completed in 1968) archaeologists had excavated or identified an additional 34 tombs (Marinatos 1924–5, 1929, 1930–1; Evans 1928; Banti 1930–1; Karo 1930; Schörgendorfer 1951; Platon 1955; 1956; 1959; Alexiou 1958; 1960a; 1960b; 1967; Hood 1957; Levi 1961–2; Davaras 1964; 1968; Sakellarakis 1965; 1968; Faure 1969), nearly always previously looted although whether in the Bronze Age or later is unclear, and at least one of which (Marinatos 1929) lay outside the south central region. These finds substantially increased the data about tholos construction. Branigan's book established a template for thinking about the tombs: each tholos was an assemblage, containing evidence for Cretan mortuary practices and beliefs but also for broader social developments such as emerging social differentiation, key to the development of palatial hierarchies, with the paved areas outside the tomb serving as arenas for social negotiation and competitive display. In the appendices Branigan provided a list of 75 tombs (many of which he himself had not visited and knew only indirectly from the publications) as well as tables of grave good types, tomb diameters, and a table of architectural features: paved area, projecting slabs, and annexes. By *Dancing with Death: Life and Death in Southern Crete c. 3000–2000 BC* (Branigan 1993), the list had grown to 94 tombs, enriched by the discovery and emergency excavation of the tholos at Ayia Kyriaki A (Blackman and Branigan 1982), Branigan's survey with Blackman in the western Asterousia Massif (Blackman and Branigan 1975; 1978) and an expanded discussion of Prepalatial Cretan mortuary practices.

Branigan had created two assemblages of tombs. The first was typological, embodied in the lists whose enumeration of tombs and tomb features contributed to an emphasis on the number and distribution of tholoi and their architectural features. The second assemblage was the tombs as repositories for the evidence of early Cretan civilization. According to Branigan's typology the actual tomb architectures presented three sets of issues. Functionally the tomb complex was divided into two realms: the circular space served for the deposit of bodies and grave goods, the annexes in front, when present, used for rituals, mortuary or perhaps otherwise. The nature of the roof was more problematic, and Branigan could not resolve this issue since at some sites, e.g. Platanos with an internal diameter of 10 m, a corbeled vault seemed structurally impossible (see Papadopoulos 2010 for a review of the arguments; see also Warren 2007). Finally, Branigan was interested in the tomb's situation in the landscape solely with respect to the orientation of the tomb entrance and its position (always lower in altitude) and distance (never more than 150 m) from the settlement. The lists of tombs became canonical assemblages reproduced with only occasional attempts (Pelon 1976) to verify the contents but more frequently (Sbonias 1995; Panagiotopoulos 2002) reproduced with few if any changes. Belli (1984) examined many of the tombs on Branigan's 1970 list, creating drawings and photographs and updating the status of the tombs, reassembling the tholoi into three geographic groupings – the western Asterousia and the coast, the eastern Asterousia, and the Mesara proper. Only Goodison and Guarita (2005) actually attempted to verify the 1993 list, going beyond what Branigan had done, and examining every identifiable site over the course of a decade. They eliminated duplications caused by archaeologists using different names for the same site and sites for which there was no evidence of mortuary use or for which the architectural details did not conform to

the typology. They concluded that archaeologists had excavated or identified 78 tholos tombs since the beginning of the 20th century, and of those 13 had been destroyed. By shrinking the list they affirmed Branigan's criteria and demanded they be applied consistently: there were just too many tholoi in the landscape. Legarra Herrero (2014) has acknowledged their work while retaining some of the earlier names they had changed and incorporating sites they had discounted but identifying them as of dubious character in his compendium of tombs and including a compendium of all the lists.

These lists conveyed a sense of completeness unrelated to the material structures themselves which had become abstracted, dematerialized and collectivized by the reassembling and list-making. Reduced to floor plans and tables of dimensions the tholoi had lost all reference to the builders and users and to the processes surrounding their assembling and disassembling. Notable exceptions were the publications by Goodison and Guarita and by Belli. Belli looked more closely at the tombs themselves than had anyone else as revealed by his descriptions and even more by his drawings in which he captured the condition of some tombs in the 1980s. Comparing the drawings with the extant structures emphasizes the ongoing decay of the sites. Goodison and Guarita's descriptions also highlight the tombs' contingency as they emphasize the extent to which the tombs as they found them in the late 1990s had changed looking to the original descriptions and photographs. Both publications highlight how the tombs in their fragmentary state still provide information about the tombs. In their brokenness the structures disclose the way in which the builders had assembled them with wall joins revealing sequences of construction and the steady stream of decisions by the builders as to how and where to place the blocks. They convey a sense of the processes by which users shaped them. By contrast, assembled into lists and floor plans each tomb is frozen in what appears to be its final stage as even tombs now lost. The list and plans conform to modernist expectations about determining common threads for analysis.

Assembling tombs as containers

Branigan's second assemblage was of tombs as repositories of evidence for the emergence of civilization on Prepalatial Crete, a narrative that contradicted the then prevailing view of the period as a time of simple egalitarian culture (e.g. Cherry 1986), economic complexity and social differentiation appearing only after the beginning of the MBA. Branigan's investigation of the objects in the tombs revealed their diversity and richness and allowed archaeologists to push the roots of palatial social and economic structures, and with them the origins of European civilization, back nearly to the Neolithic: "In the continent that would later be named Europe, the set of complex urban experiences we call 'civilization' began on the island of Crete" (Betancourt 2008, 3). Tomkins (in press), remarking on the Prepalatial transformation of the Cretan landscape from one of egalitarian hamlets and farmsteads to one with cities that served as the centers for activities that accentuated difference and consumption, writes, "In other words, during the space of a millennium Crete had in certain key respects come to look more like modern western societies" with the appearance of social differentiation and elite consumption. The similarity, he observes, "demanded investigation." In a similar vein, Legarra Herrero (2012, 325) summarizes the object of inquiry: "The Prepalatial period on Crete constitutes one of those key phases in European history during which a set of changes occurred that would have significant implications for the long-term cultural development of the sub-continent."

The tholoi, repositories for significant quantities of pottery and other goods, held valuable evidence of this change. Platon's (1956) Prepalatial designation supports the teleological thrust of these statements, reflecting the persistence of Evans's (1921) vision of Crete as the cradle of European civilization. Others have addressed the historiography of Evans's influence on Cretan archaeology (McEnroe 1995; 2002; Hamilakis 2002; Papadopoulos 2005; Hamilakis and Momigliano 2006), and reference to the issue is included here as context for the role of the tholoi as crucial sources of data in the assembling of scholarship on Prepalatial Crete.

Responding to a narrative arc focused on state formation archaeologists have assembled the tholoi in a totalizing and essentializing account according to which the earliest tombs, constructed around 3100 BCE constitute a homogeneous assemblage of circular structures with an interior diameter no greater than five meters, containing large amounts of pottery (Legarra Herrero 2012). Rather than territorial markers for nearby settlements (Branigan 1970; 1993; Murphy 1998), the first tholoi provided a locus for the formation and maintenance of social relationships among the otherwise dispersed population that practiced marginal agriculture and transhumance, erecting farmsteads that rarely lasted more than a few generations (Whitelaw 2000; Relaki 2004; Legarra Herrero 2011; 2012; 2014; Sbonias 2012; Tomkins forthcoming). Legarra Herrero (2009, 2012, 2014), who has commented on the structure of the tombs, views their collectivity as proof of an egalitarian society while Tomkins (2012) suggests the tombs constituted an elite effort to assert their qualitative superiority and emphasizes the way in which the collective interments hearken back to Neolithic cave burials. In EM IIA (*c.* 2650 BCE) annexes were added to some of the existing tombs and construction of new cemeteries usually with anterooms spread north and into the Mesara plain, and the deposition of off-island material increased (Legarra Herrero 2012) although whether these changes marked competition among individuals or communities remains unresolved (Relaki 2004; Tomkins and Schoep 2010; Schoep and Tomkins 2012). Both the anterooms and the increase in luxury goods in the tomb indicate the emergence of elites seeking, with the annexes, to control access to the tombs (and thereby the ancestors) and competing in ritual displays outside the tombs. By the beginning of MM I (*c.* 1900 BCE) some individuals are placed in clay coffins known as larnakes although evidence indicates these too may have been collective (Papadatos 2014). Construction of the tombs and their mortuary use ends at most sites by the beginning of the Protopalatial period with a recentering of ritual activity at the palaces and at peak sanctuaries. While a few tholoi were reused in the Late Palatial period (1650–1200 BCE) there is no clear evidence for how populations after the Bronze Age interacted – if at all – with the tombs.

In this assembling of the tombs the emphasis has shifted from creating a catalogue with subsets according to distinctive features visible in the floor plans to the tombs as containers for bodies and things. Architectural modification in this assemblage occurs in a contested landscape in which built display expresses power. Tellingly all these arguments can be made without really talking about the material structures which remain strangely absent.

The assemblage of the tombs by the public and the archaeological service

Since their rediscovery and excavation the surviving tholoi have been similarly essentialized as Bronze Age Tholos Tombs, the designation that appears on the yellow on brown signs posted by the archaeological service at a few sites (Ayios Kyrillos, Apesokare A and B, Kamilari A, Koumasa, Lebena Yerokambos, Platanos A and B). As Goodison and Guarita (2005) discovered in their survey the tombs have been vulnerable to predations by a local populace seeking building materials at least a dozen reduced to piles of rocks in open fields, reassembled in the construction of field walls and houses. Over the last five years this author (in a different kind of assembling) has hunted down nearly all the remaining tombs, and while most are as Goodison and Guarita found them, the reassembling/disassembling continues with the apparent losses of uncompleted Tombs B and C at Ayia Kyriaki, Kalathiana B, Christos B and Goodison and Guarita's South Coast 11B. 15 tombs have been enclosed by Greek archaeological service fences (Sopata Kouses, Platanos A and B, Koumasa A, B and E; Lebena Papoura I and Ib, Lebena Yerokambos II and Ila, Kamilari A, Archanes B and E, Ayia Photia both). Eight others (Ayios Kyrillos, Krotos, Korakies/Miamou, Krasi A, Moni Odigetria A and B, Goodison and Guarita's South Coast 8A and 8B) are on land enclosed for agricultural purposes so coincidentally protected along with the crops and the sheep and goats. Both tombs at Apesokare, while not enclosed, have been marked by signposts. The rest dot the countryside open to the predations of anyone who happens by, saved in some instance (Trypiti, Livari, Mesorrachi, Phylakas A and B, Christos, Stou Skaniari to Lakko 1 and 2) by their remoteness and difficulty of access. Others are less fortunate and tombs at Vorou, particularly B, Marathokephalo (both), and Porti, all located in modern olive groves, are heavily overgrown reflecting a reluctance to destroy the ancient structures and uncertainty as to how to deal with them although the tombs at Marathokephlo have been repurposed as storage areas for agricultural equipment. The tholoi at Megaloi Skinoi were enclosed in 2013 by a private fence and the area around the tombs subjected to clearly illegal digging while Lebena Zervou was fenced off by a private party in spring 2014 as part of the construction of a new house.

The opening of the new prehistoric galleries at the archaeological museum in Iraklion revealed a new assembling of the tholoi into a totalized Prepalatial Tomb. The pottery in the display cases is arranged in a chronological sequence but without identification of which tomb was the source essentialized as Grave Goods. Some jewelry, stone vessels and other small finds have been segregated by type in their own displays, separated by space and the glass of the cases from the pottery with which they were deposited. In this exhibit, which includes neither a drawing nor a photograph of one of the monuments from which the objects derive, the tombs have been reduced to pure concept as though they had no material existence.

The most curious aspect of these assemblings, the one strain academic and the other public, is the comparative lack of interaction or contact between the two sets of processes. As noted above the scholarly discussions rarely include actual pictures of the tombs which instead are reduced to plans on the apparent assumption that these two-dimensional renderings will provide all the essential information. There are descriptions of the tomb walls in some of the excavation reports, and occasional references to the particularities of wall construction (Branigan 1993) and the investment of labor required to gather and stack the boulders

(Legarra Herrero 2012) but upon completion the tomb is finished, a static container, a condition belied by the way the tomb was used (as discussed in more detail below) and the current ongoing disassembling. While the museum display has scholarly underpinnings, there is no evidence of the academic engagement with the tombs at the sites themselves. The non-specialist visitor to the tholoi confronts a bewildering array of walls in various states of repair with no clear indication of which structure was used as a tomb or indeed that the tombs were linked to a community as opposed to an individual. The local populations, while generally respectful of the remaining structures (although Megaloi Skinoi A and B may be in peril) even in the repurposing, have casual interactions with them as evidenced by the debris of shotgun shells (Trypiti), dead goats (Ayia Kyriaki in summer 2013) and occasional soft drink containers (Ayios Kyillos in summer 2012). If they understand them as erstwhile cemeteries (a topic for future research) they do not indicate any sense that these were places where their ancestors were buried as there is no sign that the tombs are seen as part of Cretan heritage in contrast with the ubiquity of images of bulls and snake goddesses.

Assembling the cemetery at Yerokambos

The tombs in fact never were static but were interwoven into people's lives for hundreds of years. The interactions with the tombs were never completed structures passively receiving bodies and objects; rather the tombs were for interactions both inside and outside the structure (Hamilakis 2013; Miller Bonney 2013). The users were aware that their deposits were simply the latest in a series reaching back to the founding of the tomb. Thus we can understand the cemetery complex as an assembling of people - living and dead - and the objects they chose to deposit inside and outside the tombs.

The original tholos

The mortuary complex at Yerokambos is one of the best-documented of the Prepalatial tholoi because it had escaped serious looting. The primary tholos, Tomb II (Figs 2.6 and 2.7), approximately 3 km west of the Lentas promontory, is among the earliest of the tholoi, ante-dating four other extant examples in the region – Zervou north-east of Lentas, Papoura I and Ia just to the north-west of the town and Ila at Yerokambos – by nearly 500 years and serving as a center of community for the otherwise dispersed population (Relaki 2004; Legarra Herrero 2012, 335). The builders, having agreed on the location, assembled on the site in sufficiently large numbers to insure the collaborative manpower needed for the acquisition, transport and positioning of the substantial blocks (Legarra-Herrero 2012). They engaged with the earth itself embedding the 1.9 m thick circuit wall so it rested on bedrock, piling up boulders and rocks likely from the nearby slope, packed with smaller stones and clay, in imitation of the local rocky outcroppings and shallow caves (Tomkins 2012). The exterior of the circuit wall no longer is visible because of accumulated silt, but the outside of contemporary tombs such as those at Kaloï Limenes and Ayia Kyriaki (Figs 2.4 and 2.5) reveal the integration into the landscape and expose the inaccuracy of the neat external boundary of the floor plans. Access was to be through a roughly one meter square entrance framed by three megaliths, and a corbeled vault sprang from the offset at the upper



Fig. 2.6. Tomb II at Lebena Yreokambos

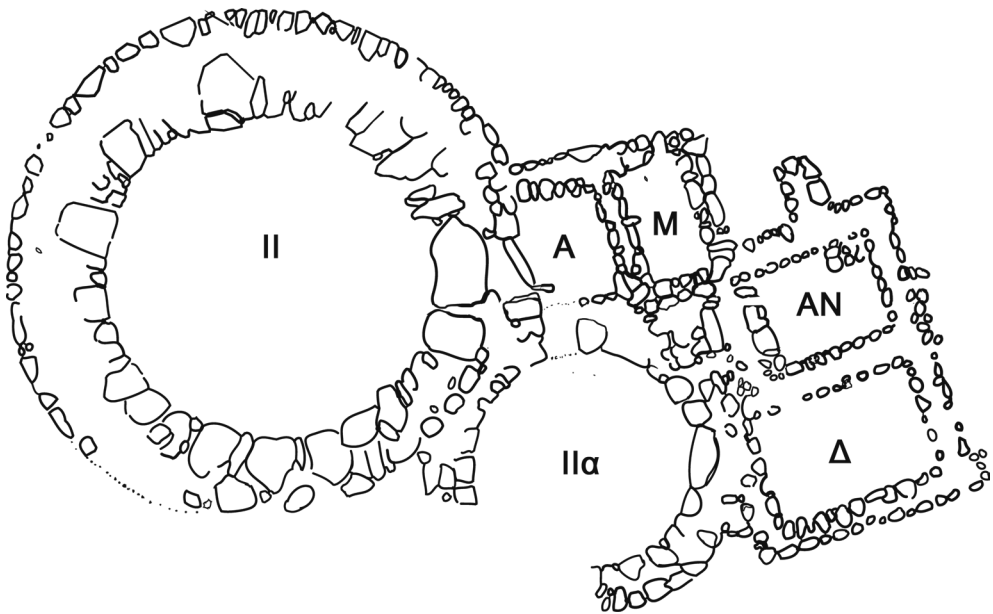


Fig. 2.7. Plan of cemetery at Lebena Yreokambos (after Alexiou and Warren 2004, fig. 12)

interior wall. When the vault collapsed from an original design flaw early in the tomb's existence the users made repairs (Alexiou and Warren 2004, 15).

In this rugged, mound-like structure the users deposited hundreds of pots for nearly 500 years. At first the deceased were placed directly on the ground accompanied by probably two vases, most frequently a globular two-handled biconical vase the excavators called tankards and that seem suited for shared drinking and pyxides, smaller containers with lids, these two accounting for nearly 75% of the EM I and EM IIA pottery. A much smaller number of personal items were recovered but this may be a result of the materials being more susceptible to decay. As the tomb deposit grew bones and pots were pushed to the perimeter of the tomb interior either as part of the interment ritual or in a secondary manipulation process unrelated to a new death. Each burial was its own assembling, a reassembling of things used in life with things newly assembled for the ceremony, with the growing mortuary deposit a larger assemblage that incorporated the individual – the dead permanently and the living fleetingly. The dead themselves were first assembled as a body with grave goods, and then reassembled as disarticulated, defleshed bones now separated from the objects with which the deceased originally was interred, some bones removed from the tomb assemblage altogether, others reassembled with similar bones, usually just long bones and skulls. The individual who entered the tomb interacted not just with bodies and pots but with smells so intense visitors could taste them and encountered human remains and pottery that, as the tomb deposit continued to be assembled, were increasingly distant in time (Hamilakis 2013; Miller Bonney 2013). Effects and affects became more complex and layered as the decades passed, bodies decayed, ceramic styles changed, and the procession of burials and re-entry continued. Contact with vases previously placed in the tomb confirmed the appropriateness of and preference for the deposition of tankards and pyxides throughout EM I, conveying a shared understanding of what it meant to be dead and how to mark the departed. Suggestions that during this first 500 years there were additional non-mortuary rituals at the tombs (Branigan 1970) remain unsubstantiated. So presumably assemblings at the tomb always would have been in the context of burials, with the participants on each occasion different, even if only slightly, from both the preceding and the subsequent events. These gatherings perpetuated the memory of the place drawing the tomb and its contents always into the present. Perhaps most important the mortuary use was an integral part of the assembling of the tomb as a tomb that only began with the initial construction.

Assembling the annexes

At the very end of EM IIA, while the original tholos still was in use, a secondary, smaller tholos, Tomb IIA, was added abutting Tholos II on the southeast, immediately adjacent to the entrance. Not long after construction the interior of IIA was burned and at about the same time, while both tholoi still were in use, the users added rectangular compartments AN and Delta and likely a third compartment further to the southeast. Neither had a doorway and must have been entered from above although the original height of the walls is unknown. Subsequent to the burning in IIA the floor was covered with sand creating a small sealed deposit – 25 vases – of very late EM IIA and some EM IIB pottery under the sand while above were more than 150 cups and a small number of pouring vessels with a few interments. AN contained at least 118 vases and sherd material for another 524 (Alexiou and Warren 2004, 171), almost all cups and no burials. Delta contained fewer vases, perhaps 100, but like AN

predominantly cups and jugs and unlike AN was used for interments. Around 1900 BCE the entry to II was filled and that to IIa was sealed and rooms A and M and two additional rooms north of AN were added directly east, with A abutting and effectively blocking access to both tholoi. A served primarily as an ossuary although 90 conical cups were found beneath the bones (Alexiou and Warren 2004, 158–9). M, which was filled with conical cups, must have been used for liquid offerings and may have been in use into Middle Minoan (“MM”) IB, along with AN and Delta. The complex ceased to be used as a site for burials late in Middle Minoan (MM) IA or during the MMIA/B transition (Alexiou and Warren 2004, 180).

These developments tell a story of new ways of assembling at the cemetery and a gradual change in focus. The addition of Tholos IIa in late EM IIA initiated a sequence of reassemblings that changed interactions of users, pots and place. The addition of the secondary tholos changed the appearance of the complex and the options for movement. Constructed of smaller stones it less clearly implicated the entire community in its construction and restricted the angle for viewing the entrance to the tholos, obscuring part of the trilithon entrance. AN and Delta further interfered with physical access. Moreover the annexes shifted the visual focus toward the southeast and away from the doorway giving new prominence to the open space before Tomb II, introducing a certain ambiguity. Where was the complex’s center? Because Delta must have been entered from above it altered the way in which the dead would have been introduced to the interior – no longer pushed or dragged through the tholos door. Further reassembling added rooms A and M and blocked the entrances to II and IIa drawing to a close any further assembling of these burial deposits. The proliferation of cups, now more frequently deposited without burials, signaled the importance of toasting rituals which may or may not have been part of mortuary activity. The bones in M mark a reassembling not only of the bones themselves but of the burial rituals with primary treatment of the body occurring somewhere else altogether and only the bones deposited without grave goods.

Perhaps even more significant the annexes changed the meaning of the burial community reassembling the users into those who were buried in the primary tholos (the original locus for all) and those who were buried in the secondary tholos while ultimately some additional subset was interred in Delta. While some have speculated (Alexiou and Warren 2004, 191–2) that IIa was constructed to accommodate an extended branch of the original social unit, the real effect was the separation and fragmentation of the community, a process that already had begun with the construction early in EM IIA, that is before secondary tholos IIa, of a double tholos complex at Lebena Papoura, only 3 km to the east, and that continued in EM IIB with the building of another tholos at Lebena Zervou only a kilometer further east (Alexiou and Warren 2004). While relationships between the groups who used II and IIa may have been close (Alexiou and Warren 2004, 191), the reconfiguration altered the possibilities for behavior. By the time the annexes AN and Delta were in use bones and pottery were separated, the ceramic vessels no longer serving as accompaniments to the dead, and at A and M only defleshed bones were deposited with no indication of any actual burial.

Finally alteration of the depositional patterns suggests that users were redefining appropriate burial activity. The more standardized and less frequently decorated cups that are part of the lower deposit in IIa and comprise the only pottery in the upper level of the secondary tomb mark a change in what is appropriate to leave with the dead and indicate a formalization of conduct at the tomb. From EM IIB on users deposited large numbers

of cups and a smaller number of jugs. Warren observes that the cup “seems to have begun within EM II but flourished chiefly in EM III-MMI. Its use ... marks a distinct change in practice from EM I times” (Alexiou and Warren 2004, 55). People offered the cups by themselves not as grave goods, and there was a shift, evidenced by the use of standardized cups, to toasting outside the tomb. In short, rather than mingling with the dead in the tomb, individuals distanced themselves with external rituals, a change that appears to coincide with the recentering of the community at the newly constructed substantial settlements.

Assembling the archaeological site

So far as the excavator could determine there was only a single unsuccessful looting attempt after abandonment of the site around 1900 BCE. At least one building, the still encroaching structure that cuts into the south-west quadrant of the secondary tholos was constructed at an unknown date but prior to Alexiou’s work at the cemetery. There is otherwise no material trace of human engagement with the site until the excavation of the cemetery in 1957. The primary tomb was packed with pottery and skeletal material. It is a tribute to Alexiou’s skill and professionalism that in a single season he excavated and recorded most of the data and transferred the masses of pottery to the Archaeological Museum in Iraklion where a selection was on display by the early 1980s (Sakellarakis 1982). But it was only with Warren’s participation in the ceramic studies that tombs, pottery and small finds finally were assembled and published (Alexiou and Warren 2004). It is not clear when the archaeological fence was put in place, but as the cemetery underlay part of a complex of houses and a field on the road from Lendas to Kaloi Limenes, early protection would have been essential. That fence makes the Yerokambos cemetery part of a small group that have received this sort of protection, and the evidence from the Internet photographs posted indicate that the tomb continues to attract attention from 21st century visitors who may or may not know what they actually have before them. Whether there is a way to bring this monument and the other tholoi under the protective shelter of a heritage movement remains to be seen.

Conclusion

The Cretan Prepalatial tholoi have served a variety of epistemological endeavors. As constituents in lists they support modernist assumptions about the existence of underlying regularities to human existence that can be discerned by the careful scholar. The thoughtful arrangement of data yields insight into the patterns of the past, so it is sufficient to create lists of tombs with pavements, tombs with projecting slabs and so on. It also is appropriate apparently to discuss the tomb contents in the aggregate without necessarily referring to the materiality of the structure that contained them. Yet the filling of a tholos was integral to its purpose, and the deposits reveal what people thought was suitable for use in a mortuary setting. There is an interplay between tombs and things and people that is lost if we essentialize and dematerialize the tholoi. Those tombs such as Yerokambos that retain so much of the original construction convey how important that materiality was to the people who built and used the cemeteries and for whom they were places where deeply significant actions were performed. Finally, without this epistemological tack we lose awareness of the role of the current population in the ongoing and always unfinished lives of these monuments.

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