

Monumental Architecture and the Construction of the Mycenaean State

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The site of Mycenae today is dominated by the massive fortification walls and extensive palace remains that blanket much of the acropolis hill. These ruins serve as perhaps the most visual reminder of the powerful state authority whose social, economic and political activities not only dominated much of the immediate region but also, as is illustrated by the widespread distribution of Mycenaean and Mycenaeanizing cultural traits, extended into the wider worlds of the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean. Most of the extant remains on the site, however, are the product of a series of extensive building programs that were undertaken throughout the LH IIIA:2 and LH IIIB periods, and thus represent but the final stage in the long process of social stratification and state formation that culminated in the creation of the mature Mycenaean palace state. Despite the difficulties inherent in documenting and interpreting this process purely on the basis of material culture, the formative stages of this socio-political development have long been of interest to Aegean scholars, who have tended to approach the topic from three perspectives: the search for the first palatial megaron, the study of mortuary data and burial customs, and the application of survey exploration (Fitzsimons 2006, 6–18). This paper seeks to supplement the information produced by these studies and elucidate further the socio-political developments which led to the emergence of the palace at Mycenae by examining the changes in the nature and application of monumental building techniques throughout the Early Mycenaean period, *i.e.* the late MH through LH IIIA:1 periods. Such an approach demonstrates that the evolution of monumental architectural practices at Mycenae can be divided into four distinct, though to some extent overlapping, stages which both reflected and, by acting as a catalyst for the competitive display of human and material resources, inspired corresponding changes in the socio-political system that produced them.

Phase I: The Shaft Grave Period [MH III–LH IIA]

Strong evidence for the emergence of a new privileged class in the Argolid appears towards the end of the Middle Helladic period with the appearance of two small groups

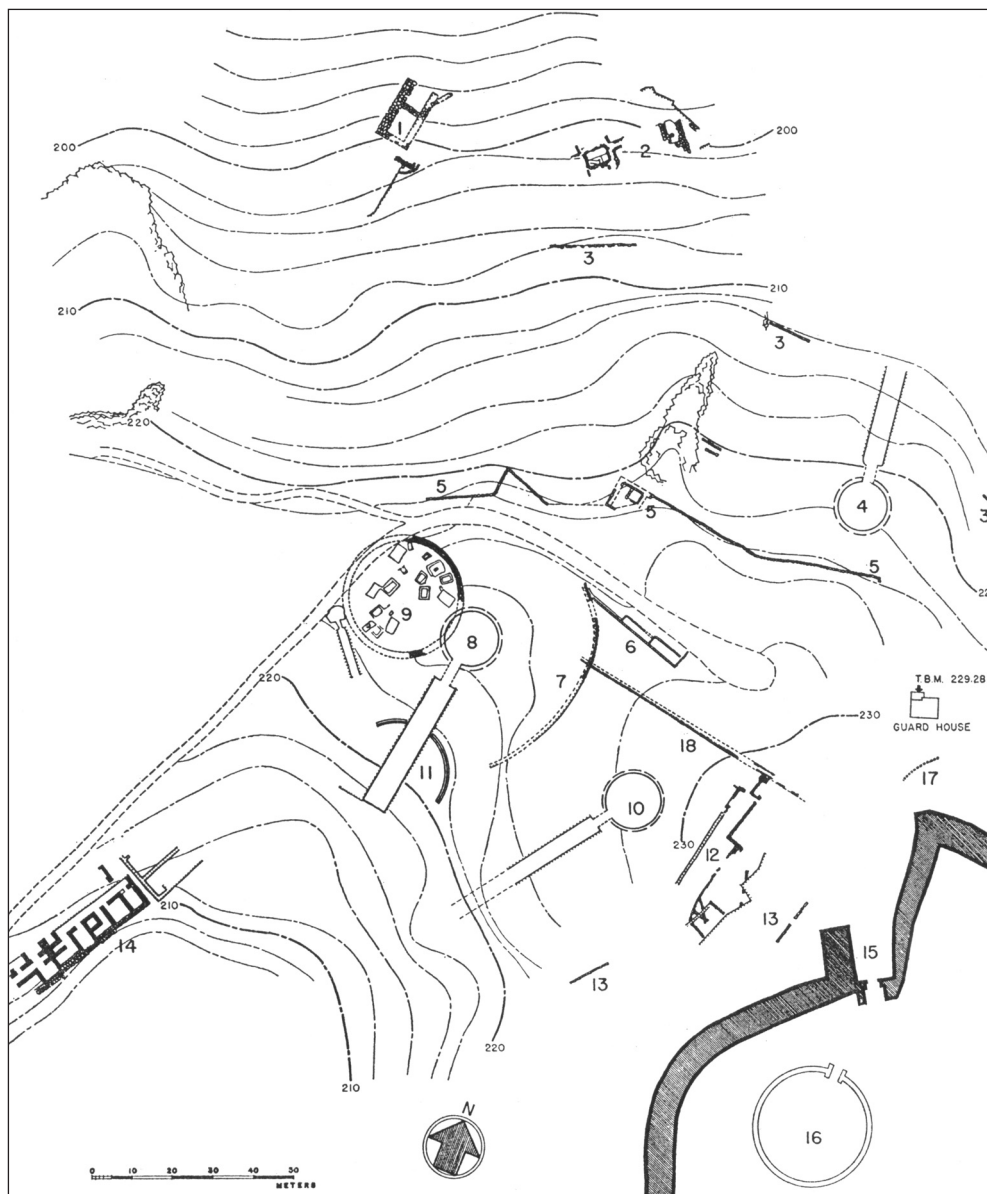


Figure 5.1 Plan of the site of Mycenae, showing the locations of Grave Circles A (no. 16) and B (no. 9) (After Wace 1954, fig. 1).

of burials (Grave Circles A and B) dug into the midst of the Prehistoric Cemetery (Alden 2000) that spread northwest from the hilltop upon which the later palace at Mycenae would be erected (Fig. 5.1). The most visible indication of the newfound prosperity of these emerging elite can be found in the quantity and quality of the

tomb contents (*e.g.* Voutsaki 1995; Voutsaki 2001), the origin of which has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Early attempts to identify the occupants of the shaft graves as foreign intruders (*e.g.* Hammond 1967, Muhly 1979; Diamant 1988) have been dismissed in favor of arguments that stress an indigenous development. Indeed, despite the obvious escalation in material and symbolic wealth they signify, the range of funerary offerings deposited with these burials, as well as the form of the shaft grave itself, appear to be strongly rooted in the native MH tradition (*e.g.* Dickinson 1984; Hägg 1984, 120; Dickinson 1989, 132; Voutsaki 1999). There is, therefore, little reason to doubt that the occupants of the shaft graves, rather than representing an intrusive foreign element, were drawn from the local population(s) which had inhabited the region for generations.

Similarly, while the preponderance of military equipment in the burial assemblages and the prevalence of martial iconography in much of the artwork have led some to suggest that these grave goods represent booty acquired through the subjugation of distant lands, the absence of evidence for violent destructions in the Aegean during the later MB and early LB periods and the apparent lack of any logistical sophistication on the part of the mainlanders at this time makes it unlikely that these objects were acquired exclusively or primarily through conquest (*e.g.* Voutsaki 1999, 103). Moreover, given the relative complexities of the mainland and island cultures during this period, it is difficult to believe that these products represent tribute paid by the Minoan palaces or Cycladic settlements to their Mycenaean overlords. Instead, as current scholarship has stressed, the majority of the wealth that appears in the shaft graves appears to be the result of the increased participation on the part of the emerging elite at Mycenae in the complex web of exchange networks that criss-crossed the Aegean world in the late Middle and early Late Bronze Ages. Since Veblen's seminal study at the end of the 19th century (Veblen 1899, 68–101), it has been widely recognized that for many cultures the acquisition and prominent display of wealth by an emerging elite, usually in the form of exotic or expensive objects, is of fundamental importance to the expression and maintenance of social hierarchy (*e.g.* Hodder 1982; Shanks and Tilley 1982; Shennan 1982; Trigger 1990; Peregrine 1991; for the Shaft Graves, see Wright 1995; Voutsaki 1995; Voutsaki 1999; Voutsaki 2001). Participation in this practice provides a vital means of creating and preserving the positions of power and authority held by the higher status members of a particular society by demonstrating in a prominent and tangible fashion their access to superior resources to the other members of the community.

While it is true, as recent research has demonstrated, that Aigina and the Cyclades played a much more substantial and active role in these exchange systems than previously acknowledged (*e.g.* Rutter and Zerner 1984; Voutsaki 1999, 104; Dietz 1998; Graziadio 1998), the striking and overwhelming abundance of Minoan and Minoan-style artifactual, architectural, artistic, technological and ideological motifs throughout the Aegean nevertheless makes it clear that the prime catalyst for the intensification and expansion of these regional trade networks was Crete (*e.g.* Watrous 1993, 81–85; Wright 1995; Voutsaki 1999, 103). Indeed, it is likely no coincidence that the onset of the Shaft Grave Period coincided with the appearance of the New Palaces, the distribution of whose luxury products underwent such a rapid expansion that some scholars have (mis-)labelled this period the age of the Minoan Thalassocracy (*e.g.* Starr 1954–55;

Buck 1962; Finley 1970, 39–41; Doumas 1982; Doumas 1983, 126–131; Hägg and Marinatos 1984). What goods were offered by the inhabitants of Mycenae in exchange for the elite artifacts (and perhaps artisans) that were circulating throughout the Aegean during this period is uncertain, though agricultural produce, slave labor and mercenary service (*e.g.* Hooker 1971) are all plausible candidates that would have been available locally, while raw materials arriving from more distant sources, such as amber from the Baltic and gold from Lavrion and/or Transylvania (*e.g.* Davis 1983; Hughes-Brock 2005), might well have been funnelled through the Argolid. What is certain, however, is that the Mycenaean elite buried in the two Grave Circles, at least in part, derived, maintained and advertised their positions of authority through exclusive access, be it direct or indirect, to the production centers of Minoan Crete. The archaeological record of the Shaft Grave period at Mycenae, then, conforms well to the network model of secondary state formation discussed in recent anthropological literature (*e.g.* Galaty and Parkinson 1999, 6–8; Feinman 2000, 214; Galaty and Parkinson 2007b, 9–10; Parkinson and Galaty 2007).

In stark contrast to the ostentatious nature of the goods they contained, the graves themselves may at first glance appear to have been rather simple constructions, representing only a modest elaboration in design over the typical cist grave of the preceding Middle Helladic period. Not surprisingly, then, most studies of state formation and social stratification in the Early Mycenaean period have tended to focus on the evidence provided by funerary offerings. Close examination of the funerary architecture associated with the enclosures, however, demonstrates that changes in the socio-political structure at Mycenae can also be discerned in the development and application of monumental features to structure of the shaft graves themselves. It is, of course, difficult, if not impossible, to apply an absolute value to the “monumentality” of any architectural work, since in many ways it is a concept that is almost entirely subjective. On the other hand, it is possible to isolate and evaluate a number of the factors which contribute to notion of “monumentality”, factors which are, to some degree, quantifiable and which are readily identifiable in the archaeological record. For the shaft graves, the monumentality of the funerary architecture can be measured in four main ways: the dimensions of the tomb, the structural elaboration of the burial chamber, the presence (or absence) and nature of the tomb markers, and the location of the tomb within the larger funerary landscape. While the last three characteristics are governed more by qualitative considerations, the first (*i.e.* the scale of the tomb) can be measured quantitatively, and consequently, can serve as useful and objective data for comparisons of monumentality (Fitzsimons 2006, 40–44, 61–64, 79–84). In fact, despite the incomplete and occasionally conflicting nature of the extant data upon which such measurements are based (for Grave Circle B, Mylonas 1957, 128–175; Mylonas 1971–73; Dietz 1991, 106–132; Graziadio 1991, 408 [Tables 2–3]; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 28 [Table 3]; for Grave Circle A, Schliemann 1880; Karo 1915; Gates 1985, 272–274; Graziadio 1991, 410 and n. 52; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 44), it is nevertheless the case that the size of the tomb stands as perhaps the most easily quantifiable measure of the grave’s monumentality, providing an objective series of data that serve as a direct reflection of the amount of labour investment required for its construction.

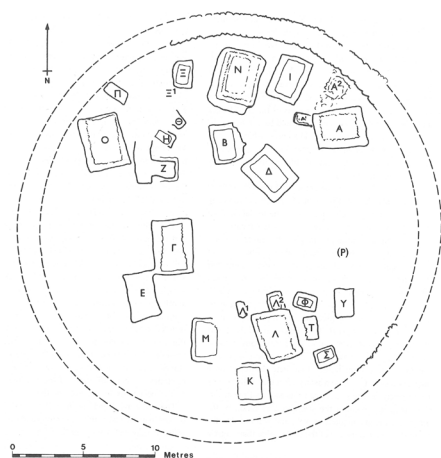


Figure 5.2 Plan of Grave Circle B (After Dickinson 1977, fig. 7).

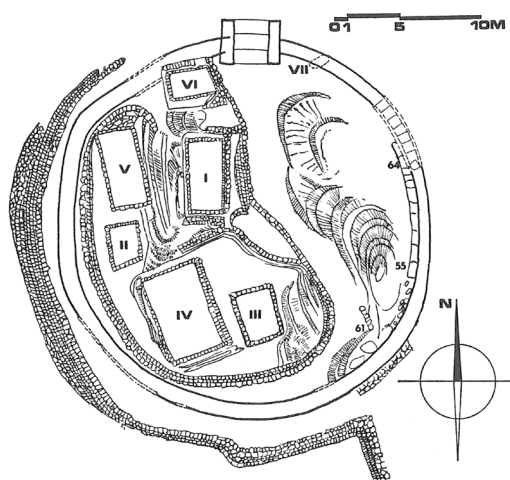


Figure 5.3 Plan of Grave Circle A (After Mylonas 1966, fig. 19).

Though no two examples are identical, all of the shaft graves in Grave Circles A and B share the same principal design characteristic (Figs. 5.2 and 5.3): a deep shaft dug into the earth or bedrock at the bottom of which stood the burial chamber proper. Indeed, it is the presence of this shaft which serves as the primary structural feature distinguishing this tomb type from the typical Middle Helladic cist grave, not only in terms of form but also, and more importantly, of scale. It should be noted, however, that the placement of the burial chamber at the bottom of a deep shaft is but one factor contributing to the increased monumentality of the shaft grave. In quantitative terms, the creation of a shaft naturally would have resulted in an increase in the volume of fill which had to be removed for the construction of the tomb, but the escalation in magnitude of the shaft graves was not purely a function of increased depth. Rather, independent from the presence of this feature, these elite burials also underwent a dramatic rise in the area they covered at both surface and floor level (Tab. 5.1). Unfortunately, the data for area at surface level are unavailable for many of these graves, but even at floor level, this phenomenon is readily apparent, as only a single cist grave (Grave Zeta), covered more area than the smallest of the shaft graves (Graves Nu, Pi, Tau and Xi). Moreover, with the exception of Grave VI, all of the shaft graves in Grave Circle A were built on a much larger scale than even the largest of the examples from Grave Circle B (Grave Omikron), with Grave IV, the largest of the tombs in the former enclosure, covering an area 4.5 times as large as that of Grave VI.

Generating similar data for a comparison of the volume of each shaft grave is rendered somewhat difficult because of the absence of reliable data concerning the depth and surface area of all the tombs in Grave Circle A and many of the smaller burials in Grave Circle B (Fitzsimons 2006, 40–44, 61–64, 79–84). However, although it can be shown that floor area and volume are not directly proportional in the graves in Grave Circle B, where the appropriate dimensions are available, a general correlation between the

	GRAVE	SURFACE	FLOOR
GRAVE	TYPE	AREA	AREA
IV	Shaft	?	26.86†
V	Shaft	?	16.44†
I	Shaft	?	15.40†
III	Shaft	?	9.99†
II	Shaft	?	6.56†
Omikron	Shaft	10.50	5.94
VI	Shaft	?	5.83†
Gamma	Shaft	10.64	5.76
Alpha	Shaft	11.31	4.76
Lambda	Shaft	9.99	4.41
Epsilon	Shaft	7.15	4.08
Mu	Shaft	6.03	3.60
Kappa	Shaft	?	3.56
Delta	Shaft	8.29	3.45
Iota	Shaft	6.56	3.32
Beta	Shaft	4.81	2.91
Upsilon	Shaft	?	2.41
Zeta	Cist	?	2.09
Nu	Shaft	12.09	1.90
Pi	Shaft	?	1.71
Tau	Shaft	2.22	1.65
Xi	Shaft	?	1.61
Alpha ²	Cist	?	1.50
Sigma	Cist	2.31	1.26
Alpha ¹	Cist	?	1.20
Eta	Cist	?	0.83
Lambda ¹	Cist	?	0.71
Phi	Cist	?	0.66
Lambda ²	Cist	?	0.66

Table 5.1 Floor areas of the graves in the Grave Circles ("†" denotes measurements taken from Karo, rather than Schliemann).

Perhaps the best way to interpret these numerical data is to translate them into values which reflect the amount of labour investment they represent. Though there are a variety of factors which influence the pace of such activity, such as the quality of the tools available, the nature of the fill to be excavated and the conditions under which the work is being conducted, Wright's estimation that one man can remove one cubic metre of soil per day serves as a useful guideline for calculating energy expenditure (Wright 1987, 174). Thus, for the typical MH cist grave, which tended to house a single body and averaged around two or three cubic metres in size (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 26–30; Fitzsimons 2006, 31–33), two or three man days of labor would be required. In other words, most burials, including a number of the smaller examples in Grave Circle B, could have been prepared by one or two men working for one or two days at a leisurely pace. The larger shaft graves in this enclosure, however, which measure

two measurements has nevertheless been shown to exist (Fitzsimons 2006, 40–44). Therefore, it is possible to generate a rough ranking order of the size of the various tombs in both enclosures based upon both volume, when such data are accessible, and floor area, when they are not (Tab. 5.2). The values produced by these rough calculations appear to fall into three broad rankings, here labelled I (the smallest, with volumes of 5.78 m³ or less), II (a middle category, with volumes between 17.28 m³ and 11.39 m³) and III (the largest, with volumes exceeding 24.12 m³). Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the same two basic patterns which were detected in the values for floor area can be discerned in here. First, only three of the cist graves (Graves Sigma, Zeta and Alpha²) surpassed any of the shaft graves in terms of volume of fill excavated (Graves Tau, Xi, Upsilon and Pi), and even these examples fall well within the third (and smallest) ranking. And second, while the evidence is tenuous, based upon their relative floor area and the value of *ca.* 98 m³ generated for the volume of Shaft Grave V (Wright 1987, 173–174), it is difficult not to conclude that most of the shaft graves in Grave Circle A far exceeded their counterparts in Grave Circle B in this respect as well.

	GRAVE	SURFACE	FLOOR	AVERAGE	DEPTH	VOLUME	VOLUME
	TYPE	AREA	AREA	AREA			RANKING
IV	Shaft	?	26.86†	?	?	?	?
V	Shaft	?	16.44†	?	?	98 [#]	?
I	Shaft	?	15.40†	?	?	?	?
III	Shaft	?	9.99†	?	?	?	?
II	Shaft	?	6.56†	?	?	?	?
Omikron	Shaft	10.50	5.94	8.22	3.50	28.77	I
VI	Shaft	?	5.83†	?	?	?	?
Gamma	Shaft	10.64	5.76	8.20	3.50	28.70	I
Alpha	Shaft	11.31	4.76	8.04	3.00	24.12	I
Lambda	Shaft	9.99	4.41	7.20	2.40	17.28	II
Nu	Shaft	12.09	1.90	7.00	2.30	16.10	II
Epsilon	Shaft	7.15	4.08	5.62	2.85	16.02	II
Iota	Shaft	6.56	3.32	4.94	2.85	14.08	II
Delta	Shaft	8.29	3.45	5.87	2.10	12.33	II
Beta	Shaft	4.81	2.91	3.86	2.95	11.39	II
Mu	Shaft	6.03	3.60	4.82	1.20	5.78	III
Kappa	Shaft	?	3.56	?	1.40	(4.97)	III*
Sigma	Cist	2.31	1.26	2.91	1.25	3.64	III
Zeta	Cist	?	2.09	?	0.60	(3.48)	III*
Tau	Shaft	2.22	1.65	1.94	1.70	3.30	III
Alpha ²	Cist	?	1.50	?	2.10	(3.14)	III*
Xi	Shaft	?	1.61	1.90	1.90	3.06	III
Upsilon	Shaft	?	2.41	0.80	0.80	1.92	III
Pi	Shaft	?	1.71	0.98	0.98	1.68	III
Phi	Cist	?	0.66	?	1.80	(1.19)	III*
Eta	Cist	?	0.83	?	0.65	(0.54)	III*
Alpha ¹	Cist	?	1.20	?	?	?	?
Lambda ¹	Cist	?	0.71	?	?	?	?
Lambda ²	Cist	?	0.66	?	?	?	?

Table 5.2 Dimensions of the graves in the Grave Circles ranked by volume and floor area (“†” denotes measurements taken from Karo, rather than Schliemann; “#” denotes measurements taken from Wright 1987, 173–174; “*” denotes tombs for which the volume has been estimated).

between ca. 11.39 m³ and ca. 28.77 m³ in volume, would have required between at least 12 and 29 man days of labor for their completion, and would have taken those same two workers between one and two weeks to excavate. And the excavation of the largest examples from Grave Circle A, if they were comparable in size to Shaft Grave V, would have demanded almost 100 man days of labour, or in other words, would have occupied a gang of ten workers for ten days.

It is important to note, however, that this calculation of energy expenditure does not take into account the added effort that would have been required to remove the fill from the shaft as it plunged deeper into the bedrock, nor the extra time that would have been needed for the additional structural provisions with which most of the shaft graves were provided (Tab. 5.3). Indeed, while many of these features already present in some form in individual burials dating to the MH period (Dickinson 1977, 52; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 26–30; Fitzsimons 2006, 31–35), their frequency and elaboration in

	WALL	ROOF	TOMB	FLOOR
GRAVE	CONSTRUCTION	CONSTRUCTION	MARKER	CONSTRUCTION
Alpha	rubble	wood beams/thatch	carved stele	pebble
Beta	mudbrick/rubble	wood beams/thatch	stone ring, stone cairn	pebble
Gamma	mudbrick/rubble	wood beams/thatch/flagstones	carved stele	pebble
Delta	bedrock ledge	wood beams/thatch	-	pebble
Epsilon	rubble	wood beams/flagstones	-	pebble
Iota	bedrock ledge	wood beams/thatch	stone ring	pebble
Kappa	?	?	?	?
Lambda	rubble	wood beams/flagstones	-	pebble
Mu	bedrock ledge	wood beams/thatch	stone ring	bedrock
Nu	bedrock ledge	wood beams/flagstones	stone ring, plain stele	pebble
Xi	rubble or mudbrick	wood beams/thatch	stone ring, stone cairn	pebble
Omikron	rubble	wood beams/flagstones	plain stele	pebble
Pi	-	?	?	pebble
Tau	mudbrick	?	?	?
Upsilon	?	?	stone ring, stone cairn	pebble

Table 5.3 Structural elements in the Shaft Graves in Grave Circle B.

the burials of Grave Circle B (as well, likely, of Grave Circle A, though these data have for the most part been lost) at Mycenae suggests a marked intensification in the use of funerary architecture as a means of marking elite status. Thus, for example, the burial chamber proper was separated from the shaft by the presence of built roofs which served to prevent the fill above from contaminating the burials below and which display some variety in both their manner of construction and the mechanisms employed for their support. Where such features were preserved, the roofs were generally composed of a mixture of twigs, leaves and branches sealed with a thick coating of impermeable clay, though on occasion a layer of flagstones was laid on top of or below this construction. In most cases, these roofs were set atop a series of wooden timbers that ran between the long walls of the chamber, and on occasion supported graves goods that had been removed from earlier burials and re-deposited in the shafts. The roof beams themselves were either set upon ledges that were cut out of the bedrock or rested atop linings of rubble or mud brick built against the walls, and in most cases, the floors of the burial chamber were covered with a layer of pebbles, though some graves lacked such provisions.

In reality, then, the estimation of 100 man days for the largest of the shaft graves represents only the minimum amount of energy expended on the construction of these tombs, since it omits not only the time and effort required for these structural enhancements, but also the additional efforts that were undertaken when the graves were reused. In effect, then, the appearance of the shaft grave marked an increase not only in the structural elaboration and physical magnitude of the tomb architecture itself, but also in the size of the workforce employed in its construction. While the excavation of the typical MH cist grave and many of the smaller burials in Grave Circle B was likely a relatively simple affair undertaken by a small group of individuals directly related to the deceased, the construction of a shaft grave involved a much more elaborate set of logistical requirements that demanded the organization and control of groups of workers drawn from beyond the confines of the immediate family. The appearance of the shaft grave, therefore, signaled the emergence of a new elite whose

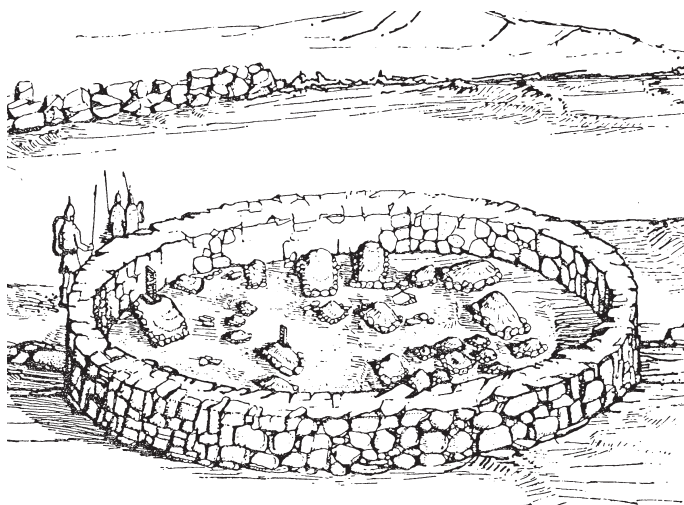


Figure 5.4 Reconstruction of Grave Circle B (After Laffineur 1987, pl. XXIVa)

privileged status was advertised not only in the monumental nature of the tomb they had constructed for themselves and the wealth and diversity of the grave goods which were deposited therein, but also in their ability acquire and direct a substantial pool of laborers whose energies were devoted to furthering the lofty standing of their overseers. Indeed, the presence of dozens of workers engaged in such a demanding undertaking on the outskirts of the settlement for extended periods of time can only have served as a striking visual reminder of the distinguished nature of these elite.

Of course, the conspicuous building activities which resulted in the creation of these monumental tombs were of limited duration, but even after the burial and its accompanying ceremonies had been completed and the shaft had been backfilled, the distinct status of their owners was expressed in more lasting form through the employment of a number of physical markers that were set above the shaft (Tab. 5.3). In some cases, a ring of small stones was set around the tumulus while in others a stone cairn was erected above the shaft, but the most conspicuous means for marking the location of burials, was through the provision of one or more grave stelai, traces of twenty-three of which were recovered from both Grave Circles (Wace 1921–23a, 127–146; Mylonas 1951; Mylonas 1957, 109–111, 131, 135–137, 144, 148; Mylonas 1966, 93–94, 107–109; Younger 1997; Fitzsimons 2006, 45–46, 65–66). These markers served not only as a visual reminder of the position of the tomb itself but also as a testament to the memory of its occupant(s), whose prominence was further enhanced by the decorative and figural scenes which adorned the faces of at least thirteen examples. Furthermore, the exclusive nature of the occupants of the graves in each enclosure was further reinforced by the construction of peribolos walls which encircled the tombs and isolated them physically from the contemporary burials elsewhere in the Prehistoric Cemetery (Fig. 5.4; Wace 1921–23a, 107; Wace and Stubbings 1954, 246; Mylonas 1957, 116–118; Mylonas 1966, 91, 95, 97–98; Dickinson 1977, 40, 47; Gates 1985; Fitzsimons 2006,

47–48, 66–71). Thus, the distinction in economic and social status of the shaft grave occupants already evident in the quality and quantity of the tomb contents and the size and sophistication of the tomb architecture was also provided with a permanent, physical form that carried the lofty standing of the deceased into the world of the living (Wright 1987, 175; Dabney and Wright 1990, 49; Graziadio 1991, 404).

At the same time, however, there are clear indications of division within this elite faction, indications which become increasingly manifest in the archaeological record over time. Despite the fact that the tombs in both grave circles have yielded a large quantity of complete and partial vessels, it has proven extremely difficult not only to establish a firm sequence for the deposition of the individual burials, but also to determine the chronological relationship between the different classes of structure in each enclosure: the rubble walls, the cist graves and the shaft graves. Classification systems based entirely on pottery analyses are limited by a number of hindering factors, including the relative scarcity of datable objects in many of the smaller graves and the apparent contemporaneity of several of the burials (Dickinson 1977, 42), and the destructive effects of contemporary and later building activities in the area have succeeded in obscuring the stratigraphy of both circles (Fitzsimons 2006, 38–39, 73–76). In the absence of reliable artifactual and stratigraphic data, then, most scholars have attempted to take into account the structural features of the graves themselves when constructing such sequences, but even this approach has failed to resolve the issue (Fitzsimons 2006, 48–52, 57–59, 71–72, 86–90). Not only is there little agreement regarding the sequence of tomb construction in the proposed systems, there is also no direct correlation between the elaboration of the graves and the structural elements which are present. Not surprisingly, then, interpretations of the social and political implications indicated by the diachronic use of the two grave circles are similarly varied.

Interestingly, perhaps because of the small number of burials in Grave Circle A, there is surprisingly little dispute regarding either the date of the individual burials or the period they span, late MH/early LH through LH IIA, despite the fact that reconstructing their sequence is further hindered by the spotty nature of the original excavation records and the destructive effects of the LH IIIB renovations to the area, which resulted not only in the rearrangement of the initial fill but also in the disturbance of the shafts themselves (Dickinson 1977, 47–48; Fitzsimons 2006, 73–76). The general consensus places Graves II and VI at the beginning of the sequence of construction, sometime in the late MH or early LH period (Wace 1949, 13; Mylonas 1957, 124; Mylonas 1966, 96; Dickinson 1977, 47–48, 50–51; Dietz 1991, 247–250; Graziadio 1991, 430–437; Mountjoy 2001, 8, 10; Fitzsimons 2006, 71–72), with the latest burial being deposited in Grave I, early in the LH II period (Tab. 5.4). The precise order in which the rest of the graves were constructed varies from scholar to scholar, but since their period of use appears to be restricted to no more than two generations (Dickinson 1977, 50), such discrepancies bear little on the present discussion. Moreover, given the questions regarding the presence and absence of specific structural embellishments and the general similarity of those features which are extant, it seems difficult at best to draw any correlations between the architectural development of the shaft graves in Grave Circle A and the passage of time. Indeed, the only noticeable pattern evident from the available data is that the two earliest examples (Graves VI and II) are also the

	SCHLIEMANN'S	KARO'S	VOLUME	PERIOD
GRAVE	AREA	AREA	RANKING	OF USE
I	22.30	15.40	II	Late
IV	39.96	26.86	I	Middle
V	19.93	16.44	II	Middle
III	15.25	9.99	III	Middle
II	10.00	6.56	III	Early
VI		5.83	III	Early

Table 5.4 Floor area, volume ranking and period of use for the Shaft Graves in Grave Circle A.

smallest in terms of floor area; though the later graves are generally larger, and often significantly so, it would appear that the largest of these structures (Grave IV) is not, in fact, the latest (Tab. 5.4).

The sequence of construction for the tombs in Grave Circle B, however, is much less certain (Tab. 5.5). Dickinson, for example, has divided these graves into three chronological periods (Early, Middle, Late) and concluded that their occupants experienced a steady and gradual increase in wealth and prosperity over time, a process which culminated in the appearance of the burials in Grave Circle A, whose occupants succeeded their counterparts in Grave Circle B (Dickinson 1977, 42–44). Graziadio, on the other hand, though he also divided the graves into three periods (Early Period, Late Period 1, Late Period 2), believed that the floruit of the Circle's use occurred in the second phase, after which there was a distinct drop in the wealth and prestige of its occupants, whose status was usurped by the occupants of Grave Circle A (Graziadio 1988; Graziadio 1991). Nevertheless, despite the uncertainties regarding their precise order of construction, close examination of both the proposed sequences and the architectural features of the graves, two significant observations emerge from these data (Tab. 5.5; see Fitzsimons 2006, 48–52). The first is that the use of the two grave types (cist and shaft) appears to have overlapped, since, in two of these proposed sequences, the construction of (at least) one of the cist graves (Grave Lambda¹) postdates that of some of the shaft graves (see also Mylonas 1966, 98). According to Dickinson's chronology, Grave Lambda¹ belongs to the Middle Phase, meaning it was built after at least the two shaft graves he attributed to his Early Phase (Graves Theta and Tau). Similarly, Graziadio placed Grave Lambda in his Late Phase II, making it one of the final tombs to be constructed in the Circle, and therefore later than all but four, if not more, of the shaft graves (Graves Kappa, Mu, Omikron and Pi). It would appear, therefore, that the space contained within Grave Circle B was never reserved for the exclusive use of shaft grave burials, a conclusion further supported by the fact that none of the cist graves were disturbed by the construction of its peribolos wall (Fig. 5.2).

The second observation resulting from the above comparison is that there is no direct correlation between the size and sophistication of the graves and the passage of time, nor are the most elaborate tombs confined to an intermediate phase of the Circle's use, as was suggested by Graziadio. In fact, small and relatively simply built tombs appear to be distributed throughout the sequence, which is not surprising considering the frequent juxtaposition of "rich" and "poor" graves documented elsewhere in the MH period. At the same time, however, it is possible to discern here a general, though not

	GRAVE	DICKINSON	GRAZIADIO					VOLUME
GRAVE	TYPE	(1977)	(1988), (1991)	FLOOR	WALL	ROOF	SEMA	RANKING
Mu	shaft	Late	LP2	bedrock	-	wood beams/ thatch	SR	III
Pi	shaft	Late	LP2	pebble	-	?	?	III
Omikron	shaft	Late	LP2	pebble	rubble	wood beams/ flagstones	S	I
Alpha	shaft	Late	LP1	pebble	rubble	wood beams/ thatch	S	I
Gamma	shaft	Late	LP1	pebble	mudbrick/ rubble	wood beams/ thatch/ flagstones	S	I
Epsilon	shaft	Late	LP1	pebble	rubble	wood beams/ flagstones	-	II
Nu	shaft	Late	LP1	pebble	bedrock	wood beams/ flagstones	SR, S	II
Delta	shaft	Late	LP1	pebble	bedrock	wood beams/ thatch	-	II
Kappa	shaft	Middle	LP2	?	?	?	?	III
Lambda ¹	cist	Middle	LP2	bedrock	-	wood beams/ thatch	-	III
Beta	shaft	Middle	LP1	pebble	mudbrick/ rubble	wood beams/ thatch	SR, C	II
Lambda	shaft	Middle	LP1	pebble	rubble	wood beams/ flagstones	?	II
Upsilon	shaft	Middle	LP1	pebble	?	?	SR, C	III
Iota	shaft	Middle	EP	pebble	bedrock	wood beams/ thatch	SR	II
Xi	shaft	Middle	EP	pebble	?	wood beams/ thatch	SR, C	III
Theta	shaft	Early	EP	?	?	?	?	?
Tau	shaft	Early	EP	?	mudbrick	?	?	III
Alpha ¹	cist	Early	EP	pebble	-	wood beams/ thatch	-	III
Alpha ²	cist	Early	EP	?	-	wood beams/ thatch	-	III
Zeta	cist	Early	EP	pebble	-	wood beams/ thatch	SR	III
Eta	cist	Early	EP	pebble	-	-	SR	III
Lambda ²	cist	Early	EP	pebble	-	wood beams/ thatch	-	III
Xi ¹	cist	Early	EP	?	?	?	?	?
Sigma	cist	Early	EP	pebble	-	wood beams/ thatch	C	III
Phi	cist	Early	EP	pebble	-	wood beams/ thatch	-	III

Table 5.5 Proposed construction sequences for the graves in Grave Circle B. (C: stone cairn, S: stele, SR: stone ring; “-” denotes the absence of a feature; “?” indicates that the presence/absence of a feature is uncertain).

absolute, trend towards elaboration and sophistication (Tab. 5.5). Indeed, while it is true that the earlier graves rank among the smallest (Volume Ranking III) and that features such as wall linings and grave markers are rarely present in them, it is equally evident the later graves do tend to be larger (most have a Volume Ranking of I or II) and characterized by the use more sophisticated construction techniques (mud brick and/or rubble walls, flagstone roofs) and the presence of more prominent markers (notably the stelai). The obvious conclusion, therefore, is that not all the members of the select social group represented by the earliest burials in Grave Circle B were equally

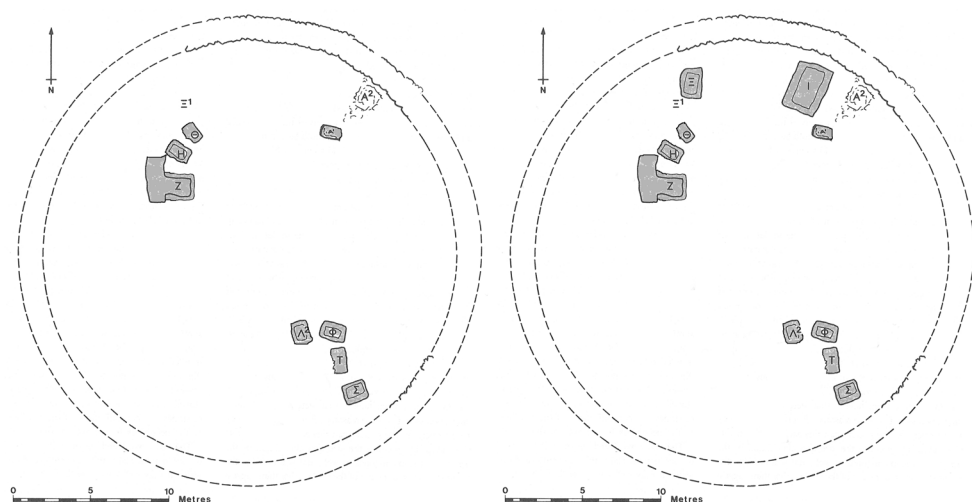


Figure 5.5 Plan of Grave Circle B, showing the graves of Dickinson's Early Phase –left- and Graziadio's Early Phase –right- (After Dickinson 1977, fig. 7).

successful in the competition for status and prestige, and that over time, even within this restricted community, certain individuals or groups of individuals succeeded in distancing themselves from their peers.

Bearing on this discussion is the distribution of graves throughout the enclosure wall (Fitzsimons 2006, 53–54). In general terms, the graves fall into two main groupings, with nine shaft graves (Alpha, Beta, Delta, Theta, Iota, Nu, Xi, Omikron and Pi) and five cist graves (Alpha¹, Alpha², Eta, Zeta and Xi¹) set along the northern perimeter of the Circle and seven shaft graves (Gamma, Epsilon, Kappa, Lambda, Mu, Tau and Upsilon) and four cist graves (Lambda¹, Lambda², Sigma and Phi) arranged in its southern reaches (Fig. 5.2). Each of these larger collectives can be further subdivided, with Graves Omikron and Pi set slightly west of the other tombs in the northern group, and Graves Gamma and Epsilon situated some distance northwest of the rest of the southern graves. A similar lack of uniformity is also evident in the orientation of the individual graves, with some of them lying on a north-south axis (Gamma, Epsilon, Kappa, Lambda, Mu, Xi, Tau and Upsilon), others deviating slightly from this alignment (Beta, Delta, Theta, Iota, Nu, Omikron, Pi) and one set east to west (Alpha). At first glance, then, the overall pattern in the placement and orientation of the individual graves within the enclosure does appear to have been random, as Mylonas and Dickinson have argued (Mylonas 1957, 153, 166; Mylonas 1966, 108; Dickinson 1977, 40–41). Mylonas' contention that the gaps produced by this distribution resulted from the difficulty of excavating into certain sections of the fill or the abandonment of the enclosure before they were filled may be partially correct (Mylonas 1957, 153, 166; Mylonas 1966, 108), but what is omitted in such an assessment is the chronological factor. Indeed, despite the absence of a general consensus regarding the precise order of construction of the individual graves, there are nevertheless enough commonalities in the sequences

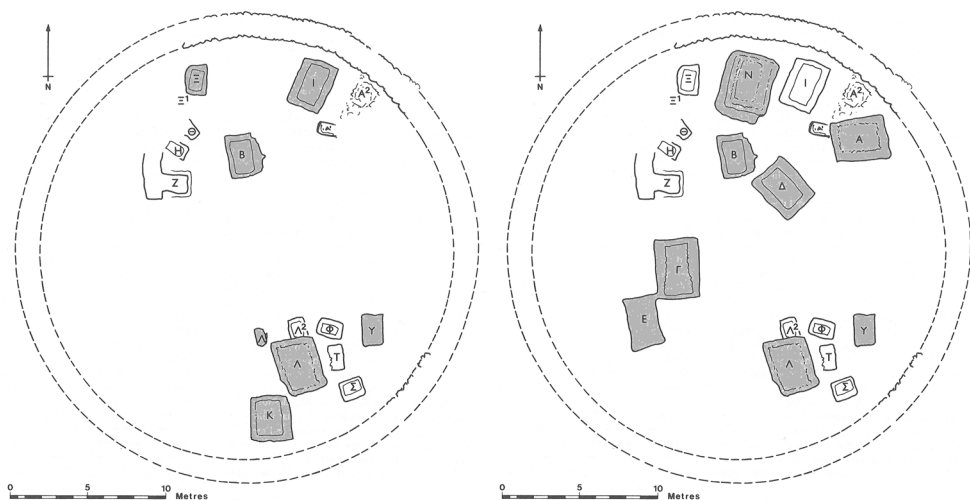


Figure 5.6 Plan of Grave Circle B, showing the new graves of Dickinson's Middle Phase –left- and Graziadio's Late Phase 1 (After Dickinson 1977, fig. 7).

proposed by Dickinson and Graziadio to suggest that there is an underlying pattern of organization. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the earliest burials sunk into the enclosure appear to fall into three distinct groupings located in the northeast, northwest and southeast quadrants (Fig. 5.5). The most obvious explanation for this distribution is that the three groups represent three distinct subdivisions within this elite community, and it is tempting to see in this pattern the independent families or separate branches of the larger kinship group which Dickinson has proposed for the burials in Grave Circle B (Dickinson 1977, 56–57). Moreover, it would appear that these three original clusters continued to serve as the foci for the placement of most of the subsequent burials of the two succeeding phases (Figs. 5.6 and 5.7), with Graves Epsilon and Gamma, located equidistant between the southeast and northwest cluster, perhaps representing the appearance of a new social subdivision.

In such a scenario, the clear evidence for increase in both the sophistication of the tomb and the wealth of the grave goods indicates that these competitive displays of status and prestige were aimed not only at the inhabitants of the settlement whose remains were interred in the Prehistoric Cemetery to the east, but also with their peers within the enclosure itself. In other words, what detailed analysis of the chronology, distribution and architecture of the shaft graves themselves demonstrates is not the emergence of a single 'Shaft Grave Dynasty' possessed of a 'special relationship' with one or more Minoan palatial centers (Dickinson 1977, 53), but rather a series of rival and independent elite factions, each with its own network of 'special relationships' to the production and distribution centers of the Aegean and each vying for socio-political dominance over not only the non-elite occupants of the Prehistoric Cemetery, but also its elite competitors in the Shaft Grave community itself.

Despite their obvious indebtedness to the traditional burial customs of the MH period, then, it is clear that the shaft graves do mark a significant change in scale and

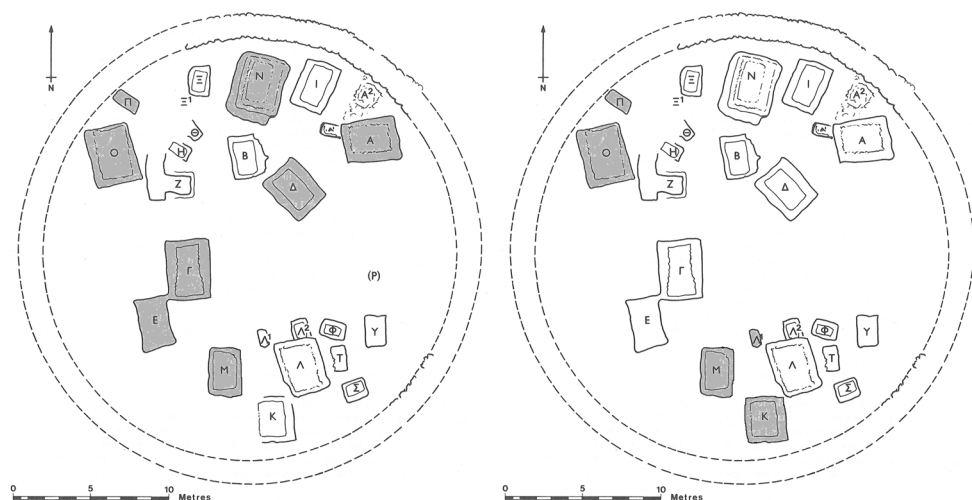


Figure 5.7 Plan of Grave Circle B, showing the new graves of Dickinson's Late Phase –left– and Graziadio's Late Phase 2 (After Dickinson 1977, fig. 7).

splendor over their more humble predecessors. In addition to the obvious physical elaboration in both the size and form of the individual tombs, the requirements for their construction now extended beyond the mere material wealth illustrated by the grave goods and demanded the organization and control of groups of workers drawn from beyond the limits of the immediately family. In this regard, the appearance of the shaft grave signals the entry of architecture into the arsenal of weapons available in the game of conspicuous consumption being enacted in the Argolid. At the same time, however, the limited extent of the Grave Circles and their proximity to Mycenae itself suggest that the intended audience was largely a local one. And, despite the architectural innovations afforded to them, there seems little reason to doubt that the primary means through which their occupants participated in the competition for status lay in the remarkable wealth and diversity of the grave goods themselves.

Phase II: The Pre-Palatial Period [LH IIA–LH IIIA:1]

The Shaft Grave served as the primary means of elite burial in the area of Mycenae for roughly two centuries before it was finally abandoned towards the beginning of the LH IIA period. By this time, the burial practices of the inhabitants of the Argolid had been marked by a striking innovation with the introduction of a new type of funerary architecture – the tholos tomb. Despite attempts to identify Crete as the birthplace of this structure (see, for example, Hood 1960; Dickinson 1977, 61–62; Pelon 1990, 107; Kanta 1997), there seems little doubt that the tholos tomb represents a uniquely mainland development (Wace 1921–23c, 393–397; Mylonas 1957, 99–102; Mylonas 1966, 132; Cavanagh and Laxton 1981; Korres 1993, 236–237; Fitzsimons 2006,

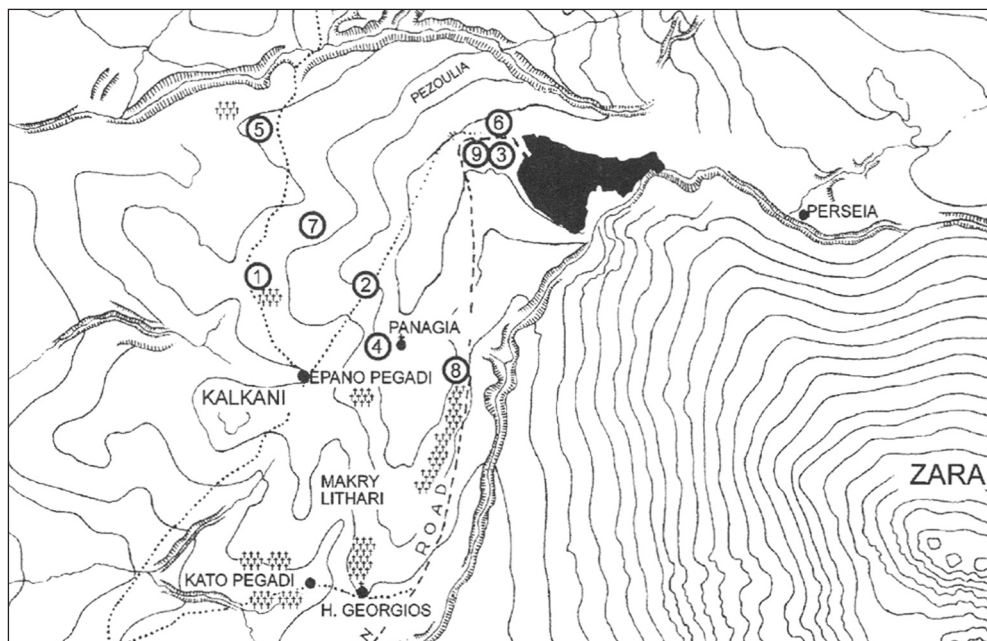


Figure 5.8 Plan of the site of Mycenae, showing the location of tholos tombs. 1: Cyclopean Tomb, 2: Epano Phournos Tomb, 3: Tomb of Aigisthos, 4: Panaghia Tomb, 5: Kato Phournos Tomb, 6: Lion Tomb, 7: Tomb of the Genii, 8: Treasury of Atreus, 9: Tomb of Klytemnestra (After French 2002, fig. 10).

92–100). It is generally acknowledged that the earliest such structure appeared at the site of Koryphasion, in southwestern Messenia, towards the end of the MH period (Lolos 1989; Korres 1984; Korres 1993; Davis and Bennett 1999, 106), and by the LH IIA period, the practice of constructing tholos tombs had spread to most areas of the Greek mainland, including the Argolid (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 44–46; Fitzsimons 2006, 100–108, 187–192). Here, over the course of the LH IIA through LH IIIB periods, a total of sixteen tholoi displaying a wide range in scale and elaboration were erected, with nine such monuments being constructed at Mycenae (Fig. 5.8), two at Tiryns and single examples at Berbati, Dendra, Kazarma, Kokla and Prosymna (Fig. 5.9), and while domestic architecture in the region continued more or less unchanged for much of this period (until the construction of the first palaces in LH IIIA:1, for which see below), these new burial monuments not only stood at the forefront of architectural complexity, but for roughly 250 years also served as the prime architectural marker of elite status in the Argolid.

Establishing a chronological sequence for the construction of the tholos tombs in this region is hampered by the absence of any firm stratigraphical or contextual data. Despite precautions taken by the builders to the contrary, each of the tombs had been robbed in antiquity, resulting in the destruction of the burials and the loss of much of their original contents. Having been thus violated, the tombs were left unsealed, and

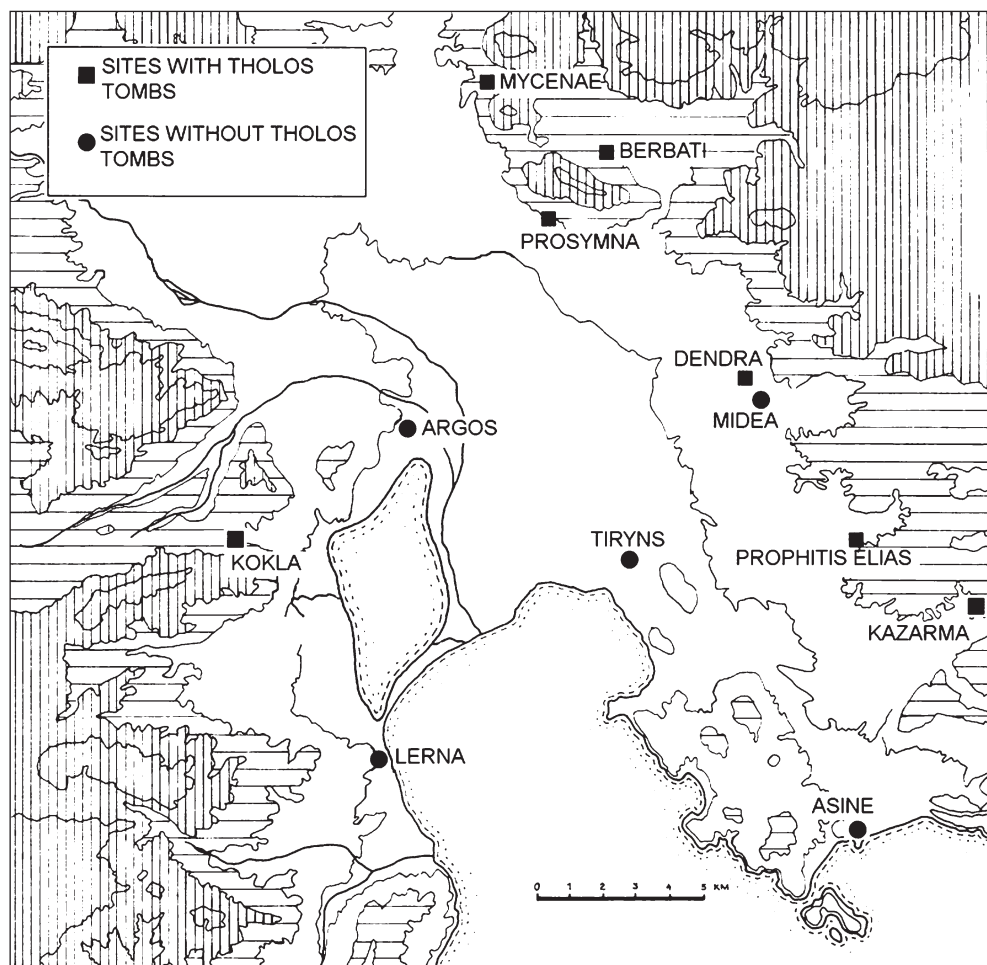


Figure 5.9 Map of the Argolid, showing the location of tholos tombs (After Dietz 1991, fig. 83).

appear in many cases to have been utilized as early as the Geometric Period by later inhabitants of the area. Moreover, the removal of the tumulus overlaying their roofs and the subsequent compromise of their structural integrity resulted in the collapse of all but one of the tombs' vaults. As a result, only three of the tholoi in the Argolid have produced material from datable contexts, though none of these dates is without problems (Fitzsimons 2006, 100–103). Thus, the presence of a LH IIIA:1 pithoid jar in the tomb at Kokla provides a *terminus post quem* for its final use (Demakopoulou 1990; Demakopoulou 1993, 57), though its initial construction should likely be assigned to an earlier period, either LH IIA or LH IIB (Mountjoy 2001, 11; Fitzsimons 2006, 103, 150–151). Similarly, the grave goods deposited in Shaft I in the tomb at Dendra suggest a date of LH IIB–IIIA:1 for the burial contained within it (Persson 1931, 23–24; Fitzsimons 2006, 103, 157), though how much time passed between

the construction of the tomb and this internment is uncertain. Finally, the abundance of LH IIIA:2 material in the so-called Bothros Deposit, through which the dromos of the Treasury of Atreus was cut, provides a terminus post quem for the construction of the tomb (Wace 1939, 212; Wace 1949, 124–128; French 1964, 241–242, 243–261; Mountjoy 2001, 17, 63, 150; Fitzsimons 2006, 101–102, 136), though the discovery of a sherd from a LH IIIB:2 deep bowl beneath the threshold in the stomion has been used to suggest a somewhat later construction date (Wace 1921–23c, 347–349, 356–357; Mylonas 1957, 87–88; Mylonas 1966, 122).

In the absence of reliable stratigraphic and contextual information, then, it is the architecture of the tombs themselves that must provide the foundation for the development of any sequence. Following his excavations of the tholoi at Mycenae, Wace constructed the first such scheme, dividing the tombs into three groups of three tombs based upon the presence and/or absence of certain architectural features (Wace 1921–23c, 285–286, 387–393; Wace 1949, 16–19): to the earliest group (early LH II) belong the Cyclopean Tomb, the Tomb at Epáno Phournos and the original incarnation of the Tomb of Aigisthos; to the second (later LH II), the Tomb at Kato Phournos, the Panaghia Tomb and the Lion Tomb; and, to the third (LH IIIB–LH IIIB), the Tomb of the Genii, the Tomb of Klytemnestra and the Treasury of Atreus. For the tombs outside the vicinity of Mycenae proper, Wace himself acknowledged that this evolutionary scheme did not necessarily hold (Wace 1921–23c, 284–285), an observation that has been generally accepted by most subsequent scholars (Persson 1931, 24–26; Pelon 1976, 383 and 388–391; Santillo Frizell 1984, 31–32; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 44–46).

Despite these difficulties, however, detailed analysis of the extant architectural remains, together with an examination of the grave goods recovered from the tombs, suggests the following sequence of construction for the tholos tombs in the Argolid (Tab. 5.6; for a detailed discussion of the chronology of these monuments, see Fitzsimons 2006, 100–165 and 187–191). The three earliest examples (Cyclopean, Epáno Phournos, Aigisthos) appeared at Mycenae early in the LH IIA period, with the first example beyond the site being constructed at Kazarma sometime later in the same phase. Four more tholos tombs appeared in the Argolid sometime during the LH IIA–B periods, with three examples being erected at Mycenae (Panaghia, Lion, Kato Phournos) and two elsewhere in the Argive Plain (Kokla and Tiryns). Towards the end of the LH IIIB period, or perhaps early in the LH IIIA:1 period, one of the earlier tombs at Mycenae (Aigisthos) was remodeled (see below) and one new example was erected (Genii), while three more were built elsewhere in the region (Berbati, Dendra and Prosymna). The final two examples, the Tomb of Klytemnestra and the Treasury of Atreus, were constructed in the LH IIIA:2–IIIB:1 period, by which time the socio-political situation at Mycenae has changed to such a degree that these two structures stand quite apart from the tradition embodied by the earlier examples. As a result, they are better understood as products of the fully developed Mycenaean state, and will be discussed in that context below.

Though no two tholos tombs were identical in terms of overall size, construction technique or decorative sophistication, they all conformed to the same basic pattern of design: a long, narrow entrance passage, the dromos, led to a stone façade pierced by a large doorway, the stomion, which in turn opened onto the burial chamber proper, the thalamos. In terms of plan, the tholos tomb was rather similar to the chamber

TOMB	SITE	DATE
Cyclopean Tomb	Mycenae	Early LH IIA
Epano Phournos Tomb	Mycenae	Early LH IIA
Tomb of Aigisthos (original construction)	Mycenae	Early LH IIA
Tholos Tomb	Kazarma	LH IIA
Tholos Tomb	Kokla	LH IIA-B
Panaghia Tomb	Mycenae	LH IIA-B
Lion Tomb	Mycenae	LH IIA-B
Kato Phournos Tomb	Mycenae	LH IIA-B
Tholos Tomb I	Tiryns	LH IIA-B
Tholos Tomb	Berbat	LH IIB-III A:1
Tholos Tomb	Dendra	LH IIB-III A:1
Tomb of Aigisthos (remodelled)	Mycenae	LH IIB-III A:1
Tomb of the Genii	Mycenae	LH IIB-III A:1
Tholos Tomb	Prosymna	LH IIB-III A:1
Tomb of Klytemnestra	Mycenae	LH III A:2-III B:1
Treasury of Atreus	Mycenae	LH III A:2-III B:1

Table 5.6 Approximate construction dates for the published tholos tombs in the Argolid.

tomb, a second new burial type that was introduced to the Argolid in the LH I period (Dickinson 1983; Cavanagh and Mee 1990; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 48). Unlike the pit and cist grave, the other common forms of burial in the LH Argolid, the chamber tomb can be understood as a monumental funerary structure in whose variation of size, plan and design can be found elements of the competitive display of resources. While the plans of these structures do show remarkable variation from tomb to tomb, each consisted of a (number of) large, hollow space(s) carved out of the bedrock and each was generally provided with a built entranceway. In essence, then, the chamber tomb closely resembled the tholos tomb in terms of plan and elevation, but there is no doubt that the latter served as a much more effective instrument of conspicuous consumption, as is evident in three aspects of tholos tomb construction in the Argolid: the increase in sheer magnitude over contemporary (and earlier) tomb types, the application of an elaborate, new architectural features (notably the application of ashlar masonry) that were absent in other tomb types and the regional (rather than local) nature of their geographical distribution.

The first, and most easily quantifiable, characteristic which distinguished the tholos tomb from the chamber tomb, not to mention the Shaft Grave, was its overall magnitude, a quantity that is directly related to the amount of labor invested in the excavation, preparation and construction of these structures. Despite the ready availability of relevant data for the tholos tombs in the Argolid, only one attempt has been made to produce such a calculation (Cavanagh and Mee 1999). A rough estimation of the amount of labour investment for the other tombs, however, can be produced by calculating the volume of soil that had to be removed for their construction (Tab. 5.7). Even brief perusal of these data demonstrates that the magnitude of the tholos tomb far exceeded that of both the Shaft Grave (Tab. 5.2) and the chamber tomb in the Argolid, the largest examples of which had volumes of *c.* 98 m.³ (Shaft Grave V) and *c.* 250.25 cubic metres (Chamber Tomb 505 at Mycenae, for which see Mylonas

TOMB	DATE	DROMOS	STOMION	THALAMOS	TOTAL
Atreus: (a) side stomion (b) side passage (c) side chamber	LH IIIA:2-III B:1	972	195.37 21 31.25 288	1451.5	2959.15
Klytemnestra	LH IIIA:2-III B:1	999	195.37	1284.1	2478.5
Lion	LH IIA-B	439.56	124.2	1085.7	1649.5
Aigisthos II	LH IIB-III A:1	267.75	80	883.6	1231.35
Aigisthos I	Early LH IIA	193.75	80	883.6	1157.35
Epano Phournos	Early LH IIA	112.5	90	597.3	799.8
Prosymna	LH IIB-III A:1	203.94	72.3	457	733.2
Kato Phournos	LH IIA-B	144	56	452.4	652.4
Tiryns I	LH IIA-B	111.3	77	355.2	543.5
Genii	LH IIB-III A:1	129.8	46.2	288.8	464.8
Kokla	LH IIA-B	138	44.8	277.1	459.9
Dendra	LH IIB-III A:1	183.5	44	231	458.5
Panaghia	LH IIA-B	102	39.9	277.8	419.7
Berbati	LH IIB-III A:1	58.9	46.4	256.8	362.1
Kazarma	LH IIA	[44.1]†	[52.5]†	[232.7]†	[329.3]†
Cyclopean	Early LH IIA	39	40.8	235.6	315.4

Table 5.7 Estimated total volume of fill removed for the construction of published tholos tombs in the Argolid ("†" denotes approximate values resulting from the uncertainty in the original height of the tomb). For detailed discussion of the calculations appearing here, see Fitzsimons 2006, 169 n. 563.

1957, 75). By contrast, the construction of the smallest of the tholos tombs in the Argolid, the Cyclopean Tomb, required the removal of *c.* 315.4 m.³, while the volume of the largest example in the present study, the Lion Tomb, measured *c.* 1649.50 m.³. Thus, the same team of ten workers which took ten days to complete the excavation of Shaft Grave V would have required just over a month (31 days) to remove the fill in preparation for the construction of the Cyclopean Tomb, and a staggering five and a half months (165 days) to achieve the same task for the Lion Tomb. These estimates for labor input represent the time required to complete only the first stage in the construction of a tholos tomb, however, for they take into account neither the effort expended on the acquisition, transport and laying of the massive lintel blocks that were set above the stomion passage nor that needed for the preparation of the stone linings that were applied to the walls of the dromoi, stomia and thalamoi of most of these structures (Cavanagh and Mee 1999). In terms of simple size, therefore, the introduction of the tholos tomb clearly marked a significant increase in the amount of physical, capital and symbolic resources available to and expended on the part of their occupants, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the adoption of this new tomb type reflects a corresponding rise in the status of the elite in the Argolid.

The monumentality of these new funerary monuments and their effectiveness as vehicles for conspicuous consumption was further enhanced by the introduction of a new architectural refinement – ashlar masonry. The ultimate origin of this technique appears to have been Minoan Crete (Wright 1978, 134–150, 272–278; Hult 1983,

TOMB	DATE	DROMOS	PARASTADES	STOMION	THALAMOS
Cyclopean	Early LH IIA	bedrock	large rubble	large rubble	rubble
Epano Phournos	Early LH IIA	bedrock	large rubble	rubble	rubble
Aigisthos I	Early LH IIA	bedrock/ rubble	rubble	rubble	rubble
Kazarma	LH IIA	rubble	large rubble	large rubble	rubble
Kokla	LH IIA-B	bedrock	bedrock	bedrock	rubble
Panaghia	LH IIA-B	rubble	ashlar	ashlar	rubble
Lion	LH IIA-B	ashlar	ashlar	ashlar	rubble
Kato Phournos	LH IIA-B	ashlar	ashlar	ashlar	rubble
Tiryns I	LH IIA-B	rubble	rubble	rubble	rubble
Berbati	LH IIB-III A:1	rubble	ashlar	rubble	rubble
Dendra	LH IIB-III A:1	rubble	ashlar	rubble	rubble
Aigisthos II	LH IIB-III A:1	bedrock/ rubble	ashlar	rubble	rubble
Genii	LH IIB-III A:1	rubble	ashlar	ashlar	ashlar
Prosymna	LH IIB-III A:1	rubble/ ashlar	ashlar	rubble	rubble
Klytemnestra	LH III A:2-III B:1	ashlar	ashlar	ashlar	ashlar
Atreus	LH III A:2-III B:1	ashlar	ashlar	ashlar	ashlar

Table 5.8 Wall types used in the construction of the published tholos tombs in the Argolid.

49–52, 72; Nelson 2001, 50–55, 108–154, 187–191), where ashlar masonry served as the premiere masonry style throughout the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods, though the transmission of this building technique to the Argolid may have been more complex than once believed. Indeed, recent work by the University of Minnesota has unearthed evidence that ashlar was already being cut on the mainland as early as the LH I period at the site of Pylos, where a number of apparently reused ashlar blocks were incorporated into a series of pseudo-ashlar walls in the Southwest Quadrant (Nelson 2001, 114–117, 195). The earliest use of ashlar in the Argolid, however, appears in the LH IIA period, when it was applied to the dromoi, parastades and stomia of the Panaghia, Lion and Kato Phournos Tombs at Mycenae (Tab. 5.8). Given the abundance of archaeological evidence suggesting that Messenia played a particularly important role in the circulation of Minoan-style artifacts to the rest of Greece (Hägg 1982; Hägg 1984; Korres 1984; Korres 1993), it seems highly possible that Mycenaean masons borrowed the Minoan technique of ashlar masonry from their mainland counterparts at Pylos, rather than from Minoan masons directly. In any event, whatever its exact manner of transmission, there is little doubt that ashlar construction became the masonry style par excellence in the Argolid soon after its introduction.

Despite the close connection between ashlar masonry and tholos tombs in the Argolid, their introduction does not appear to have been interrelated. Indeed, two of the tombs in the immediate vicinity of Mycenae – the Cyclopean and Epano Phournos Tombs – and three along the periphery of the Argive Plain – at Kazarma, Kokla and Tiryns – were composed entirely of rubble masonry (Tab. 5.8). Moreover, only two



Figure 5.10 Detail of the east stomion of the Tomb of Aigisthos at Mycenae (early LH IIA and LH IIB–IIIA:1), showing the ashlar parastade appended onto the original rubble façade (photograph by author).



Figure 5.11 Detail of the east stomion of the Lion Tomb at Mycenae (LH IIA–B), showing the ashlar parastade appended onto the original façade (photograph by author).

of these structures – the Tomb of Klytemnestra and the Treasury of Atreus – were rendered entirely in this fashion, and only a single other example – the Tomb of the Genii – incorporated it into the chamber itself. Elsewhere, ashlar masonry was applied to the blocking walls, dromoi, façades and stomia in three basic combinations: in the Kato Phournos and Lion Tombs, it was applied to the entire dromos and stomion; in the Panaghia Tomb at Mycenae and at Prosymna, the entire stomion, but only part of the dromos was so treated; and at Berbati and Dendra, it was reserved for the parastades of the stomion. The best evidence for independent origins, however, derives from the Tomb of Aigisthos and the Lion Tomb, where ashlar façades were appended onto the original rubble stomia (Figs. 5.10–5.11; Fitzsimons 2006, 116–117), an arrangement which seems to indicate that the use of cut stone postdates rather than coincides with the introduction of the tholos tomb despite the fact that ashlar masonry quickly became a standard element in its construction.

On a purely functional level, the application of ashlar masonry, particularly that incorporating the tight joins provided by poros limestone, might be interpreted as one additional mechanism for defending against the destructive effects of water seepage. A concern for combating leakage is already evident not only in the use of clay in the lining of the rubble walls of most tholoi, but also in presence of layers of waterproofing clay



Figure 5.12 (above) Detail of the east stomion of the Lion Tomb at Mycenae (LH IIA–B), showing traces of plaster in the interstices between the blocks (photograph by author).



Figure 5.13 (right) Detail of the walls of the thalamos of the Lion Tomb at Mycenae (LH IIA–B), showing the regular size and coursing of the individual stones (photograph by author).

in the tumuli above the Tomb of Aigisthos (Taylour 1955, 207–209; Fitzsimons 2006, 117) and the Treasury of Atreus (Wace 1956, 116–117; Fitzsimons 2006, 132), as well possibly as the Tomb of Klytemnestra (Taylour 1955, 219–220; Fitzsimons 2006, 139 n. 444). In this light, the traces of plaster evident in the interstices of some of the better preserved ashlar walls of the tholoi both at and outside of Mycenae might be interpreted as a final line of defense against water seepage (Fig. 5.12). It is likely no coincidence, then, that in non-funerary monuments ashlar masonry was applied almost exclusively to those walls which would have been exposed to the elements, both on Crete and the mainland. On a more symbolic level, however, ashlar masonry served to enhance further the already monumental nature of the tholos tomb by imbuing these funerary structures with an aesthetic veneer that was lacking in similar rubble constructions. While it is difficult, if not impossible, to gage the aesthetic principles of a culture foreign to one's own, there is little doubt that one of the primary functions of ashlar masonry in any architectural tradition was decorative in nature (Wright 1978, 134). Indeed, even in some of the tombs where rubble masonry was exclusively or partially employed, as for example in the dromos at Berbati, the chamber of the Lion Tomb, and throughout the tombs at Prosymna and Tiryns, there is a clear attempt to regularize the appearance of the rubble walls by utilizing stones of more or less uniform size and shape and laying them in rough courses, and it is tempting to see in this phenomenon a desire on the part of the masons to mimic to some degree the visual impression created by the orderly façades of ashlar masonry (Fig. 5.13).

The escalation in architectural elaboration and labour specialization inherent in ashlar masonry is evident in both the use of new materials and the development of

new techniques required for their exploitation. Prior to the introduction of cut stone masonry, the most common material utilized in rubble construction at Mycenae was the creamy-grey limestone native to many of the hills throughout the region (Wace 1949, 135–137; Wright 1978, 126–133; Cavanagh and Mee 1999, 97). This stone, which burns to a bluish or yellowish hue under the sun, provided a number of advantages to local builders. Firstly, it was readily available from the abundant bedrock outcroppings which dot the landscape, and thus required neither the ability to quarry nor the effort of lengthy transport for its use. Instead, rocks of suitable size and shape could be easily gathered with minimal effort, either from nearby fields and riverbeds or from the rocky outcroppings which poke through the layer of topsoil which blankets the landscape. Secondly, it tends to cleave from its beds in a manner which produces a number of naturally (roughly) even surfaces, and as a result, though it can be very dense and difficult to shape, it lends itself easily to incorporation into wall faces or rough courses. Ashlar masonry, on the other hand, was rendered exclusively in poros limestone and conglomerate, rather than the local limestone that was typical of rubble construction in the Argolid, and therefore required knowledge of the location of suitable sources for exploitation. Moreover, while the laying of rubble walls could be carried out by individuals with little or no technical expertise, the construction of walls employing cut stone masonry required not only the ability to quarry the material and transport it to the construction site, but also the expertise to properly set and face the stones, and thus indicates the existence of a body of highly specialized craftsmen (Wright 1978, 274–276; Belli 1997, 254–255). Moreover, these activities required the creation of an entirely new set of tools, including saws, chisels and rasps, with which to cut and shape the blocks. In both technical and visual terms, then, this stone cutting technique played a significant role in enhancing the monumentality of the tholos tomb. While the construction of even rubble tombs required a degree of structural and logistical sophistication heretofore unseen on the mainland, the practice of cutting ashlar masonry represented a still further increase not only in the technical expertise it demanded of its masons, but also in the expenditure of resources it required of the tomb owners.

In addition to the growth and elaboration of the funerary structure itself, the introduction of these new monuments also marked a change in the scale on which the competitive display of resources being enacted in the Argolid was operating, a change clearly evident in the relative distribution patterns of tholos tombs and Shaft Graves (Fitzsimons 2006, 178–187). The latter were restricted to the gentle plateau that spread west from and abutted the acropolis hill (Fig. 5.1), suggesting that the audience to whom they were advertising status was limited to the occupants of (and perhaps visitors to) the site itself. Moreover, the Shaft Graves were clustered into two tight groups, Grave Circles A and B, an intimate arrangement that was further enhanced by the presence of the rubble peribolos walls that served both to unite the individual burials within each group and at the same time isolate them from the larger community of graves that formed the Prehistoric Cemetery, thus reinforcing the cohesive nature of their occupants. The widespread distribution of tholos tombs not only in the immediate vicinity of Mycenae (Fig. 5.8) but throughout the Argolid as a whole (Fig. 5.9) indicates, first, that their elite owners were now displaying their privileged status, not as a collective subsection of a larger community, but rather as discrete groups operating in direct competition,

rather than collaboration, with one another, and second, that the audience to which they were advertising their power and authority had now expanded to a regional scale. In effect, then, with the introduction of the tholos tomb, the socio-political boundaries of elite competition were expanded beyond the confines of the individual settlement and into the larger arena of the Argolid as a whole.

On the one hand, the popularity of this new tomb type in the Argolid can be taken as an indication that the competition for prestige and authority which had begun in the Shaft Grave period continued into the succeeding era. In this light, it is easy to read the adoption of the tholos tomb, as well as ashlar masonry, as an attempt on the part of the elite in the region to maintain their privileged positions by keeping pace with the latest “fashions” emerging from the southwestern Peloponnese. On the other hand, however, the radical changes in funerary architecture and distribution embodied in the tholos tomb clearly reflect a correspondingly drastic transformation in the fundamental nature of the socio-political environment that existed in the Argolid during the LH IIA–IIIA:1 periods. What is needed, then, is an explanation that provides a sufficient enough motivation to explain these profound changes.

It has been argued above that the distinguished position held by the occupants of the Shaft Graves rested largely upon their exclusive relationship to the production centers of Minoan Crete, in particular, to the palace workshops of the Neopalatial period. It is likely no coincidence, therefore, that the end of the Shaft Grave period and the appearance of the tholos tomb in the Argolid in the LH IIA period correspond to the final stages of the Second Palace period on Crete. Indeed, signs of social and political disruption are already evident on the island throughout the LM IB/LH IIA period (Driessen and MacDonald 1997), and by the end of that phase, virtually every major center on the island with the possible exception of Knossos had been destroyed (Rehak and Younger 2001, 442). Not surprisingly, the destruction of the palace centers and palatial workshops of the Neopalatial Period led to the gradual collapse of the traditional network of production and distribution centers upon which the exchange of elite goods throughout the Aegean had largely been based (Niemeier 1984; Rehak and Younger 2001, 426–433, 454–456). This marked disruption in regional trade patterns no doubt provoked a dramatic escalation in the competition for foreign resources throughout the region, resulting in profound changes in the socio-political landscape of the Argolid and necessitating the creation of new mechanisms for the acquisition and display of status and prestige. As access to traditional exchange networks became more and more limited, fewer and fewer elite factions would have been able to acquire the luxury items that served as the basis of socio-political standing at Mycenae, and as a result, the competition for socio-political power would have been restricted to a much more select group (*e.g.* Voutsaki 2001). At the same time, the status and prestige of these elite factions would have been further enhanced not only by the absorption of those factions that had been unsuccessful in this intensified competition for restricted resources, but also by their newfound (or increased) role as patrons for the Minoan craftsmen who were no doubt seeking new benefactors after the collapse of the Minoan palace system. Indeed, while some of the luxury goods deposited in the tholos tombs of the Argolid may have been produced before the destruction of the palatial workshops on the island, the evidence for the continued (but dwindling) production and dissemination of Minoan-style objects

in the LH II and later periods and the proliferation of Minoan-style ashlar masonry in these monuments suggests that at least some Minoan artisans were now in residence and employed by the local powers at Mycenae.

Moreover, the disruption of traditional trade patterns in the Aegean may also have forced the elite at Mycenae to turn their attention to more immediate sources of wealth, namely exploitation of the rich agricultural land in and around the Argive Plain. In this light, it is tempting to associate the increase in the settlement activity evident at the beginning of the LH period in the Berbati-Limnes Valley (Wells 1996, 121, 173), the Nemea Valley (Cherry and Davis 2002) and the Southern Argolid (Jameson, Runnels and van Andel 1994, 367–368) as a reaction to the social, political and economic upheavals plaguing the Aegean at this time (Dickinson 1977, 54, 88; Cherry and Davis 2002). While it is true that these regions had already witnessed an increase in settlement by the end of the MH period, it is important to note that this endeavor was a gradual process that could well have undergone a period of intensification following the end of the Shaft Grave period. Indeed, as Cherry and Davis have argued, by the LH II period, Mycenae appears to have established itself as the dominant power not only in the Argolid, but also in the Corinthia to the north (Cherry and Davis 2002, 156; see also Schallin in Wells 1996, 173; Voutsaki 2001), and while traditional scholarship tends to associate tholos tombs with local elite resident at nearby settlements, the peculiar distribution of these monuments throughout the landscape might suggest instead that they were used by territorial markers by one or more elite factions resident at Mycenae itself (Fitzsimons 2008).

In any event, it is clear that the collapse of the so-called Minoan Thalassocracy had dramatic and wide-ranging effects on the socio-political landscape, not only of Crete and the Cyclades, but also of the Argolid itself. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the appearance and proliferation of monumental architecture is often associated with times of political and/or social stress (McGuire and Schiffer 1983; Trigger 1990, 127; Abrams 1994, 92). The impact of such building activity on the competition for status and prestige is evident in two main ways. First, because of its permanence and prominence in the physical (and psychological) landscape, large-scale public construction serves to advertise the wealth and power of its builder(s) in a much more pronounced and lasting fashion. And second, for the same reasons, it tends to act as a mechanism that attracts labor and prestige away from the smaller social and political units with whom its owners are in competition by serving as a tangible and enduring testament to their superior resources and power (Sidrys 1978, 155; Price 1984; Abrams 1989; Abrams 1994, 92–95). Given the vast increase in labor expenditure required for its construction and the expanded scale on which it functioned as a vehicle for conspicuous consumption, there seems little reason to doubt that the appearance of the tholos tomb signaled a corresponding escalation in the scope and extent of the power and authority possessed by the elite in the Argolid: the loss of the traditional foundations of prestige and status that had existed in the Shaft Grave period resulted not only in the increased exploitation of more local sources of wealth, but also in the consolidation of elite authority in more restricted hands and the expansion of status competition to a larger, regional scale.



Figure 5.14 Plan of the acropolis at Mycenae, showing the remains of the LH IIIA:1 palace (After Iakovides 1983, plan 12).

Phase III: The Proto-Palatial Period [LH IIIA:1]

The LH IIB–IIIA:1 period marked the floruit of the tholos tomb as an instrument of conspicuous consumption in the Argolid, with four new examples being constructed (Mycenae [Genii], Berbati, Dendra and Prosymna) and a fifth structure (Tomb of Aigisthos) undergoing substantial remodelling with the addition of an ashlar façade to its stomion. By the middle of the LH IIIA:1 period, however, the popularity of this structural type had declined: with the exception of the Tomb of Klytemnestra and the Treasury of Atreus, tholos tombs ceased to be constructed in the Argolid (see below), and moreover, there is no evidence that the earlier structures continued to be utilized past the LH IIIA:2 period. The absence of tholos tomb construction after the LH IIIA:1 period is all the more remarkable when two further observations are made. First, while the tholos tomb falls out of fashion at this time, the other grave types which

had characterized the preceding era, namely the chamber tomb and the cist grave, continued in use; indeed, the chamber tomb served as the standard burial structure for the inhabitants of the Argolid for the rest of the Bronze Age (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 65, 71, 77, 83–84). Second, the disappearance of the tholos tomb appears to have been a phenomenon that was largely confined to the Argolid itself; indeed, elsewhere, these structures continued to appear in areas where they had been popular during the early phases of the LH period, and in fact, by the LH IIIA period, the custom of building tholos tombs had spread into new regions not only of the Greek mainland, but also of the larger Aegean world (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 63–64, 70–71, 81–83). There is little doubt, therefore, that this marked change in the funerary habits in and around Mycenae was not the product of a general, or even regional, shift in mortuary custom, but rather an indication that the elite in the Argolid now chose to invest the bulk of their resources in projects of another, non-funerary, nature. It is likely no coincidence, therefore, that the same period which witnessed the demise of the tholos tomb also produced the first evidence for monumental construction at a number of sites in the Argolid, including Mycenae.

While the overall form and nature of the LH IIIA:2–B palatial complex at Mycenae has been relatively securely established through over a century of excavation on and around the summit (*e.g.* Wace 1949, 69–84; Mylonas 1966, 15–35; Schaar 1979, 91–95; Iakovidis 1983, 55–63; Fitzsimons 2006, 195–228), the nature and extent of the building activities that preceded the LH IIIA:2–B building program is far less certain. The notion that an early palace existed at Mycenae was first proposed by Wace, who argued that the remains visible in his day on the summit (*i.e.* the LH IIIA:2–B palace) belonged to the final stage of palace development at the site, his “Third Palace”. This complex, he believed, was preceded by two earlier incarnations, which he dated to the MH (his “Middle Helladic Citadel”) and LH I–II periods (his “Second Palace”) and assigned to two royal dynasties, the first associated with the occupants of Shaft Grave VI in Grave Circle A and the second with Shaft Graves I–V and the tholos tombs of his first two phases (Wace 1921–23a, 119–120; Wace 1949, 21–22, 69, 71, 86–87; Fitzsimons 2006, 203–210). Later scholars, notably Mylonas, Schaar and Kilian, followed Wace’s lead in identifying early palace complexes on the summit, though they modified both the layout and chronology of his original proposals (Mylonas 1957, 13, 66; Mylonas 1966, 16, 26–27, 59, 68–70, 73, 77; Schaar 1979; Kilian 1987; Kilian 1988; Fitzsimons 2006, 211–228). Indeed, the notion that an early palace stood on the summit at Mycenae during the LH I, or even late MH, period has become an accepted “fact” in most current literature, both general surveys of Mycenaean architecture (*e.g.* Iakovidis 1983, 23, 71; Lawrence 1983, 87; Taylour 1983, 86–87; Dickinson 1994, 153) and more specialized works (*e.g.* Dickinson 1977, 56; Kilian 1988, 296–297; Barber 1992, 17; French and Shelton 2005), despite the fact that the proof for its existence derives less from the nature of the extant structural remains and more from an instinctual (and unfounded) belief in their inevitable appearance, a belief seemingly influenced by the monumental nature of the burial customs practiced by the elite members of Mycenaean society during the late MH and early LH periods, *i.e.* the shaft graves and the tholos tombs. However, while it is clear from the large number of graves in the Prehistoric Cemetery (Alden 2000) and the widespread scatter of fragmentary house remains both

on and around the acropolis (Alden 2000, 16; Fitzsimons 2006, 263–267) that the site was occupied by a settlement of substantial size already in the later MH period, there is no indication anywhere in the architectural or artifactual record that indicates the existence of any monumental, non-funerary structures that might be labelled “palatial” prior to the LH IIIA:1 period (Dabney and Wright 1990, 48; Laffineur 1995, 83–84; Wright 1995, 71; Shelmerdine 2001, 350; Fitzsimons 2006, 228–274), when a major new construction program that transformed both the character and appearance of the pre-existing settlement was undertaken.

The first element of this new building project was the construction of a massive, artificial platform on and around the summit of the acropolis that served to support the various components of this first palatial complex. Traces of the wall retaining this massive fill survive in the form of two segments of Cyclopean construction incorporated into, but not bonded with and oriented differently from, the later (*i.e.* LH IIIA:2–B) Western Terrace Wall (Fig. 5.14 A, B; Wace 1949, 71–72, 75; Mylonas 1966, 66, 67; Schaar 1979, 71–72; Fitzsimons 2006, 234–237). Although Schaar associated these wall segments with two separate MH/LH I deposits in the area (50:3 and 62:3) and assigned them to the LH I period (Schaar 1979, 59), there is no explicit mention in Wace’s report that these deposits (and the floors that rested atop them) were associated with the Old Terrace Wall, and as a result, there is no evidence to support such an early date (Fitzsimons 2006, 236–237). Instead, given the generally late (*i.e.* LH IIIA:1) date for the construction of Cyclopean terraces in the Argolid (Wright 1978, 175–179; Loader 1998, 11), the abundant evidence for LH IIIA:1 monumental constructions elsewhere on the acropolis (see below) and the fact that these wall segments were incorporated into the remodelled Western Terrace Wall in the LH IIIA:2 period, an original construction date of LH IIIA:1 seems more likely for the Old Terrace Wall.

Two monumental entrance systems, each assuming the form of columned porticoes, appear to have provided access to this artificial terrace. The first, dubbed here the North Propylon (Fig. 5.14 C), was located beneath the later Propylon (Wace 1921–23b, 210–213, 237; Wace 1949, 70; Wace 1956, 106; Mylonas 1966, 66–67; Schaar 1979; Iakovides 1983, 58–59; Fitzsimons 2006, 232–234), where Wace and Mylonas unearthed a conglomerate column base beneath the floor of the southern room and a stretch of crude Cyclopean walling running along (and apparently beneath) the western wall of the later structure (Wace 1921–23b, 212–213; Mylonas 1966, 68; Fitzsimons 2006, 233–234). Though Schaar dated this early entrance system to the LH I period (Schaar 1979, 50), he provided no supporting evidence, and there is no reason to date it any earlier than the LH IIIA:1 period. The second entrance system, dubbed here the South Propylon (Fig. 5.14 D), was located at the southwestern edge of the terrace platform, where Wace unearthed traces of a small, subterranean chamber provided with a square pillar of rubble masonry set atop a conglomerate base, the so-called Pillar Basement (Wace 1921–23b, 181; Wace 1949, 75; Mylonas 1966, 66; Schaar 1979, 41–45; Fitzsimons 2006, 237–240). A LH IIIA:1 date for the construction of this room is suggested both by the presence of early LH IIIA material from beneath its floor (Wace 1949, 75; Mackeprang 1938, 555–556, 558–559; Schaar 1979, 44; Iakovides 1983, 61; note, however, the date of LH IIIA:2 provided by Mountjoy 2001, 142) and the construction of the Throne Room and its Anteroom above it in the LH IIIA:2 period

(Wace 1921–23b, 187; Wace 1949, 73, 75; Wace 1956, 104; Mylonas 1966, 64–65; Iakovides 1983, 60–61). This latter building activity, together with the construction of the Grand Staircase later in the LH IIIB period (Wace 1921–23b, 149–160; Wace 1949, 73–75; Mylonas 1966, 66; Wright 1978, 139–141; Schaar 1979, 38; Iakovides 1983, 62–63), has served to obscure the precise arrangement of this area of the summit in the LH IIIA:1 period, but given the presence of the subterranean pillar in the Pillar Basement, the dramatic rise in ground level between the upper terrace to the north and the lower ground level to the south, and the presence of the later Grand Staircase, it is reasonable to postulate the existence of a monumental entrance system consisting of a stepped passage leading up to a columned portico that opened onto the upper terrace (Wace 1949, 75; Fitzsimons 2006, 239–240), perhaps through a doorway marked by the red sandstone threshold rebuilt into the eastern door of the Anteroom (Mylonas 1966, 65).

What the exact layout of the structures erected atop this new platform was remains uncertain, but the extant remains, fragmentary though they may be, suggest that the LH IIIA:1 building program extended across the entire hilltop. Thus, early wall fragments north of the later Western Portal and South Corridor in the areas of Room 41 and Space 38–39 (Fig. 5.14 E–G) point to the presence of structures immediately north of the later megaron complex, though these remains are too patchy to allow any conclusions regarding their original form (Wace 1949, 70–72, 78–82; Mylonas 1966, 64, 67–68; Schaar 1979, 40–41, 50–51, 55–56; Iakovides 1983, 59; Fitzsimons 2006, 248–251). Similarly, the presence of Stairway S, located immediately north of Room 41 and opening off the entrance corridor leading south from the North Propylon (Fig. 5.14 H), suggests the existence of a second, higher terrace that occupied the northern reaches of the summit, but no trace of the buildings erected on this terrace during the LH IIIA:1 period survives (Wace 1949, 70, 82; Mylonas 1966, 67; Schaar 1979, 41, 51, 66–68; Fitzsimons 2006, 251–252). What relationship the so-called Guardroom complex (Fig. 5.14 I), whose southern extent was obscured by the construction of the later North Terrace, may have had to the North Propylon or to the buildings erected atop the upper terrace is equally uncertain (Wace 1949, 69–70, 83–84; Rowe 1954, 252; Mylonas 1966, 72; Schaar 1979, 48–50; Iakovides 1983, 58; Fitzsimons 2006, 230–232). Likewise, additional sections of early walling at the east end of the summit (Fig. 5.14 J) indicate further constructions in that area (Wace 1949, 79–80; Mylonas 1966, 72; Schaar 1979, 61–62; Fitzsimons 2006, 260), though their distance from the other LH IIIA:1 remains and the uncertainty surrounding their attribution to this early phase render it difficult to posit a direct formal and chronological relationship to the LH IIIA:1 structures located elsewhere.

Most significant, however, are the traces of substantial rubble walls running behind the later north walls of the Great Court (Wace 1949, 72–73, 75–76, 89–90; Mylonas 1966, 63–64; Schaar 1979, 45–48; Iakovides 1983, 60; Fitzsimons 2006, 240–245) and the megaron (Wace 1949, 76–78; Mylonas 1966, 60–63; Iakovides 1983, 61–62; Fitzsimons 2006, 245–248), which appear to have formed the northern boundary of a complex of rooms erected along the southern limits of the terrace (Fig. 5.14 K–L), to which access was afforded through the South Propylon. Unfortunately, the builders of the later megaron, whose construction appears to have been accompanied by substantial



Figure 5.15 Photograph of the east wall of the megaron porch, north of the doorway, showing the presence of reused ashlar blocks, with the dowel hole, originally positioned atop the block, on the interior side of the re-positioned block (photograph by author).

cutting into pre-existing strata, removed virtual all traces of the interior (and, for the most part, exterior) configuration of its predecessor. However, given the presence of a LH IIIA:1 megaron complex at nearby Tiryns (Kilian 1987, 209; Kilian 1988, 294) and the predilection on the part of Mycenaean builders for plans of megaroid character (*e.g.* Werner 1993), it is tempting to reconstruct here a monumental complex composed of a large court on the west, the predecessor to the Great Court, and an axially-arranged suite of two or three rooms, the predecessor to the later megaron, to its east (Fitzsimons 2006, 240–248). If the proposed South Propylon stood at the southwestern corner of this early court, then the location and dimensions of the LH IIIA:1 megaron may not have been too dissimilar from those of its successor, though there is no direct evidence to support this supposition.

Some indication of the grandiose character this early megaron complex possessed is provided by the presence of reused ashlar blocks in the later Great Court and megaron (Fig. 5.15), as well as by the fragments of painted plaster decoration recovered from early deposits across the citadel. One cache of discarded wall paintings, recovered by Tsountas on the lower ground west of the Western Terrace Wall, has been dated to the LH IIIA or LH IIIA/B periods on stylistic grounds (Lamb 1919–21; Immerwahr

1990, 117, 123–124, 142–144, 165, 191–194 [nos. 2, 10, 17–18]). The fragments from this deposit appear to have been drawn from a series of different scenes, and included at least two different processions of female figures, another procession of men and horses, a group of female charioteers, a rosette dado and fragments of ornamental decoration. Though their original context is lost, it is plausible that these pieces represent part of the decoration that adorned the walls of the LH IIIA:1 palace, and that they were removed and deposited together with other debris when the palace terrace was remodelled in the LH IIIA:2–B period (Lamb 1919–21, 190; Iakovides 1983, 61). A second cache of discarded fresco material, the so-called Ramp House Deposit, was recovered by Schliemann and Wace beneath the Ramp House (Lamb 1919–21; Immerwahr 1990, 106, 110–111, 114, 117, 122, 145, 164–166, 190 [no. 1]; Shaw 1996). Again, these fragments represent a number of different themes (bull leaping, a procession of female figures, women in an architectural setting, a dado of imitation stone and floral patterns) and appear to date to the LH IIIA:1 period, as is suggested by the LH II–IIIA:1 material in the deposit from which they were recovered. While it is perhaps more tempting to associate these paintings with a structure located in the vicinity of the Ramp House, it is nevertheless possible that, given the evidence for the widespread remodelling of the hilltop and the creation of a series of artificial terraces running down the western slope of the hill, this material represents debris from the LH IIIA:1 palace that was subsequently transported some distance down from the summit during the LH IIIA:2–B building operations.

Given the fragmentary nature of these architectural remains and the dearth of artifactual material that can be associated with them, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assign any specific functions to these buildings with any degree of certainty. On the other hand, the extensive nature of the LH IIIA:1 building program, the use of both cut-stone and Cyclopean masonry and the presence of fresco decoration all suggest that this complex assumed a much more monumental character than any structure that had previously appeared on the site. And, if the extant remains identified here can be understood as embodying an embryonic version of the architectural form of the later megaron complex, it is not inconceivable that the activities housed within them represented a similarly formative stage in the functional evolution of the fully-developed palace. As is becoming increasingly recognized, however, the identification of a ‘palace’ cannot rest upon the structural remains alone, but instead must incorporate a much wider cross-section of its various functional components (Dabney and Wright 1990, 47–48; Kilian 1987, 203–205; Kilian 1988; Barber 1992, 13–14; Laffineur 1995, 83–84; Wright 1995; Shelmerdine 2001, 349–355; various papers in Galaty and Parkinson 2007a). It is no surprise, therefore, that the LH IIIA:1 period also produces further (non-architectural) support, primarily administrative and economic in nature, for the existence of palatial authorities on the mainland. While many scholars still attribute the proliferation of Mycenaean-style cultural traits on Crete at the end of the LM IB period to some ill-defined conquest of the island following upon, or even resulting in, the destruction of the Minoan palace system (*e.g.* Popham 1980; Hood 1985; Doxey 1987, 301), Preston has recently demonstrated that the appearance of ‘warrior’ burials, and by extension other artifactual, architectural and artistic aspects of mainland society, at a number of sites on Crete in the LM II–IIIA:1 periods is

perhaps better explained as an attempt on the part of local elite factions to maintain pre-existing (or create new) positions of socio-political dominance in the face of the collapse of the palatial system through the adoption and adaptation of new symbols of authority (Preston 2004). Indeed, although there is clear evidence for Mycenaean participation in the exchange networks of the Aegean as early as the Shaft Grave Period, if not for an actual Mycenaean 'presence' at a number of sites, thorough analysis of the archaeological record demonstrates that it is only in the LH IIIA:1–2 period that the Mycenaeans appear to become the dominant economic power in the region (Niemeier 1984; Hallager 1993; Watrous 1993, 87–88; Cline 1994, 9–10; Barber 1999; Shelmerdine 2001, 353–354; Voutsaki 2001), at the same time, significantly, that the earliest evidence for the use of seals and sealings in an administrative context appears on the mainland (Dabney and Wright 1990, 50).

In this light, the disappearance of the tholos tomb in the Argolid by the end of the LH IIIA:1 period takes on added significance, signaling a dramatic change in the nature of the socio-political landscape in and around Mycenae, with the rise to dominance of a single, elite faction. This new, restricted group, having emerged successfully from the socio-political struggles of the preceding era and consolidated its pre-eminent position in the region, initiated a radical overhaul of the existing socio-political dynamic in the Argolid and established its own palatial administration, capitalizing on the vacuum created by the disappearance of the Minoan palaces at the end of the Neopalatial Period and expanding its economic interests and activities into the Aegean and beyond into the markets of the Near East (Parkinson and Galaty 2007). Moreover, while monumental architecture still served as the primary vehicle for the advertisement of status and prestige, it was now the world of the living rather than the realm of the dead that was receiving such treatment. Whereas the tomb functioned as a highly personal and retrospective monument, commemorating the achievements and status of individuals and kin-groups in the funerary landscape and conferring socio-political standing to their living descendants in the community, the palace served not only to advertise the pre-eminent position of its individual rulers, but also to symbolize in an impersonal and anonymous manner the power and authority of the nascent palatial state. At the same time, that the governing authority symbolized by these nascent palatial remains had not yet reached full maturity is perhaps further indicated by the fact that the settlement at whose figurative center they stood appears to have lacked the citadel walls so characteristic of the later Mycenaean state (Mylonas 1966, 22–28; Iakovides 1983, 27–29), suggesting perhaps that the physical and symbolic trappings of this nascent central authority were still restricted to a very narrow geographical, and perhaps ideological, range in the LH IIIA:1 period.

Phase IV: The Palatial Period [LH IIIA:2–B]

The nascent palatial structures erected on the citadel hill during the LH IIIA:1 period were largely obliterated by the construction activities undertaken by the LH IIIA:2–B occupants of the site that yielded the majority of the extant remains visible on the site today. The product of this extensive building program, the fully-developed Mycenaean

palace, represents the culmination of the social, economic and political developments that characterized the Early Mycenaean period. While a full treatment of the nature of the mature palatial state at Mycenae falls beyond the scope of this paper, three elements in the architectural practices of this late period do bear particular mention, as they demonstrate the continued evolution of the application of monumentality and reflect significant and concurrent developments in the socio-political landscape of the LH IIIA:2–B periods: the widespread adoption of Cyclopean masonry, the proliferation of state-sponsored building projects and the monumentalization of the ancestral landscape.

While there are a few exceptions, notably the west, north and east walls of the Great Court at Mycenae (Wace 1949, 72–73, 75–76, 89–90; Mylonas 1966, 63–64; Wright 1978, 137, 144, 275–276; Schaar 1979, 45–48; Fitzsimons 2006, 240–245), the LH IIIA:1 period marks the final use of appearance of poros ashlar construction as an elite building technique in the Argolid. Coinciding with its decline and eventual disappearance, however, is the emergence and spread of a second type of monumental construction, Cyclopean masonry (Wright 1978, 157b–263, 278–281; Loader 1998; Fitzsimons 2006, 297–302). The first use of this technique can be seen as early as the late Middle Helladic and early Late Helladic periods in Messenia and at a handful of sites elsewhere on the mainland (*e.g.* Teikhos Dymaion and Krisa; see Wright 1978, 162–170), and despite attempts to date some of the Cyclopean terrace walls at Midea (Walberg 1999, 888), Argos and Kandia (Wright 1978, 162, 168–170) to the LH II period (Wright 1978, 162, 169–170; Walberg 1999, 888; Fitzsimons 2006, 298 n. 879), it seems more likely that the massive terrace walls erected at Mycenae and Tiryns in the LH IIIA:1 period represent the earliest extensive use of this construction technique in the Argolid (Wright 1978, 175–179; Loader 1998, 11; Iakovidis 1999, 199).

The monumental nature of Cyclopean construction has been discussed fully elsewhere and requires little further elaboration here (*e.g.* Fitzsimons 2006, 297–302; Fitzsimons 2007, 111–114). Nevertheless, it is perhaps worthwhile emphasizing again the dramatic escalation in the amount of labor investment this new building technique entailed, as can be illustrated, for example, by examining the scale on which the fortification wall at Mycenae was constructed. While no detailed analysis of the energy expenditure required by the construction of this structure has yet been conducted, some indication of its overall magnitude can be gleaned by estimating the total mass of stone utilized in its construction. During its latest (LH IIIB:2) phase, for example, the citadel wall at Mycenae measured roughly 900 meters in length and between six and ten meters in thickness, and rose to an estimated height of ca. 12 meters (Mylonas 1957, 23; Mylonas 1973, 10; cp. 12.50 in Iakovidis 1999, 200). If these measurements are reasonably accurate, then it is possible to postulate an approximate estimate for both the total volume (86,400 m³) and, based upon the specific gravity of limestone (2.611), the total mass (225,590,400 kg) of stone used in its construction. While it is admittedly impossible to draw any specific conclusions regarding the number of workmen employed in or the time required for the execution of this project based upon such a rough calculation, it is nevertheless clear that the LH IIIA:2–B period witnessed a dramatic escalation in both the nature and scale of building activities undertaken by the palatial elite. On one level, there is little doubt that the successful completion of



Figure 5.16 Photograph of the citadel at Mycenae (photograph by author).

such construction programs required the participation of a vastly increased quantity of laborers who would have been drawn not only from the immediate community, but also from the surrounding countryside, thus lending a distinct communal character to these Cyclopean undertakings. This aspect would have been further emphasized by the widespread distribution of visually similar features throughout the architectural landscape, thereby uniting the community in a physical and psychological fashion (Fig. 5.16). In a sense, then, whereas tholos tombs functioned as discrete monuments that testified to the memory of a single lineage, citadel walls and terrace walls served to advertise the prestige of a larger community, that of the entire settlement.

More importantly, perhaps, the monumentality of Cyclopean architecture is also illustrative of another striking transformation in Mycenaean society, for the quantities of laborers required for these constructions presuppose the existence of a powerful and dominating authority, one which possessed the ability not only to organize and direct the workmen it employed, but also to design and implement the logistical strategies which these projects entailed. The very presence of these massive fortification walls stands as one testament to the existence and power of this developed state, though by no means the only one. Indeed, nowhere is the overreaching nature of this centralized authority more apparent, perhaps, than in the conception and creation of two categories of engineering project that operated on the regional, rather than the local, level. The first involved the laying out of a complex system of roads and bridges that criss-crossed the northeast Peloponnese, connecting the settlements of the Argolid not only with one another but also with the major centers of the southern Corinthia (Mylonas 1966,

86–88; Crouwel 1981; Jansen 1994; Jansen 1997; Hope Simpson 1998; Jansen 2002). The second involved the construction of a massive hydraulic work near the modern village of Aghios Adrianos, a short distance north-northeast of the site of Tiryns (Balcer 1974; Zangger 1994). The purpose of this project, which involved the excavation of an artificial river channel and the erection of a immense earthen embankment lined in part with stretches of Cyclopean walling, was the diversion of a series of torrential watercourses around the acropolis at Tiryns, an area which had suffered periodic, devastating flooding throughout its history. The regional scale not only of these, but of other similarly large-scale endeavors in southwest Messenia (the construction of the artificial port near Romanou, for which see Zangger *et al.* 1997, 613–623; Davis and Bennett 1999, 106–107) and Boiotia (the drainage of the Kopaic Basin, for which see Knauss, Heinrich and Kalcyk 1984; Knauss 1989), and the massive amount of manpower required for their conception, design and construction, provides clear indication of the presence of a powerful, central governing body which had at its disposal unprecedented human and capital resources.

It is in this context of state architecture that the construction of the two final tholos tombs, the Treasury of Atreus and the Tomb of Klytemnestra, should be considered. As Wright has argued, while it is true that both structures assumed the same general form of their predecessors, they incorporated a number of architectural and conceptual details which suggest that they stood apart from the earlier tradition, and functioned not only as mechanisms of control and advertisement of elite authority, but also as means of appropriating the legendary past of the community as a whole (Wright 1987, 176–184; Fitzsimons 2006, 190–191; see, also, Ellis, Higgins and Hope Simpson 1968; Younger 1987; Cavanagh and Mee 1999). In terms of sheer magnitude, these two monuments far exceeded any of the previous tholoi erected at the site, not only in absolute size (Tab. 5.7) but also with respect to the dimensions of the individual blocks used, which themselves could be labeled Cyclopean. In terms of decorative motif, they incorporated architectural features far superior in detail to those evident in the earlier structures. In terms of physical appearance, they mimicked to a remarkable degree the visual effect produced by the contemporary Lion Gate, a resemblance which illustrates a conscious effort on the part of the builders of both structures to create a physical and emotional link between the living power of the state and the inherited grandeur of the past. And, finally, in terms of construction technique, they were the only two tholos tombs to have been rendered entirely in ashlar fashion. Moreover, the primary material used was not the *poros* limestone so common in the earlier tombs, but rather conglomerate, a dense stone which required a greater effort to work and which came to characterize much of the architecture of the LH IIIB citadel. In fact, the use of *poros* ashlar masonry in these two monuments is particularly interesting: given its popularity in the LH II–IIIA:1 tholos tombs in the Argolid and its rarity in the LH IIIA:2–B reconstructions on the hilltop, it is tempting to see its use in the Treasury of Atreus and the Tomb of Klytemnestra as an intentional incorporation of earlier architectural styles and as yet one more indication of the conscious appropriation of the collective memory of its inhabitants by the state. In this sense, it is easy to understand the great lengths to which the rulers of Mycenae went to commemorate the ancient burials of

Grave Circle A and incorporate them and the spirits they housed within the citadel walls (Wace 1921–23a, 103–126; Mylonas 1966, 90–91; Gates 1985; Laffineur 1987; Laffineur 1990; Laffineur 2007, 122–123).

In effect, then, by the 13th century BCE, monumental architecture was being employed not only as a means of advertising state dominance in the present and maintaining its authority into the future, but also of appropriating the prestige of the past in furtherance of these goals. And, in a sense, with this renewed emphasis on the funerary landscape, the use and function of monumental architecture has come full circle, revisiting a situation in which the tomb played a vital role in the advertisement of superior resources and elite power. Now, however, it is not as ancestral representatives of personal alliances and kinship relations that the dead are being commemorated, but rather as social, political and symbolic representations of the state itself.

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