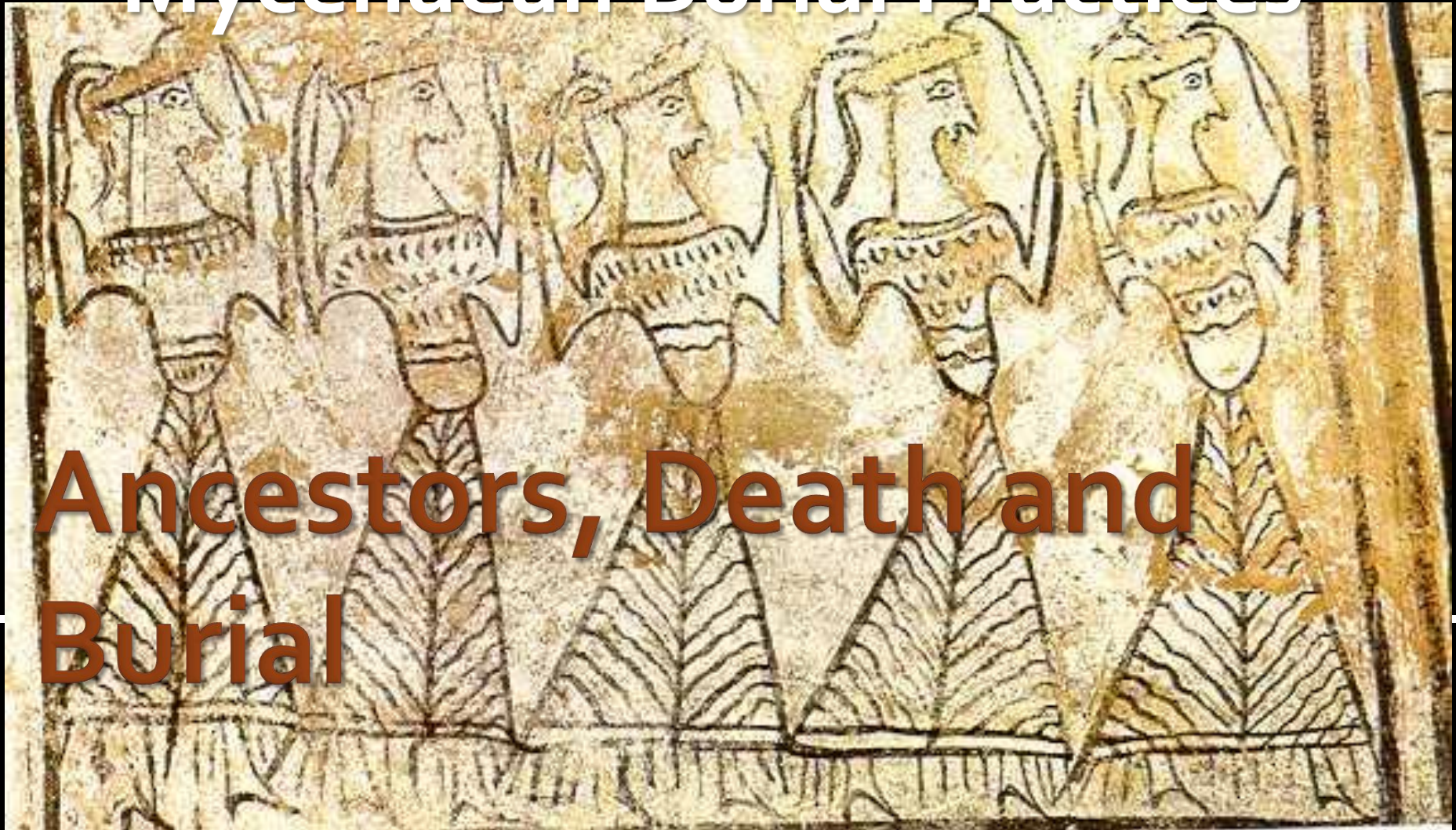


Mycenaean Burial Practices

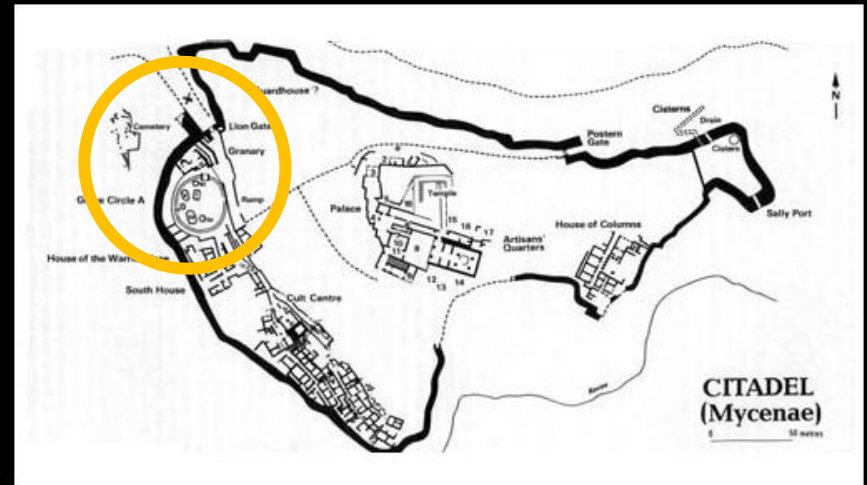
**Ancestors, Death and
Burial**





Shaft Graves, Mycenae

- Established over MH prehistoric cemetery
- 2 grave circles: B, A
- Circle B:
 - Set aside as a bounded cemetery for exclusive use by distinct social group
 - Claiming ties with earlier inhabitants of Mycenae through location of burial ground?
- 26 graves: 14 shafts, 12 cists



Funerary Ritual

- Inhumation
 - Earlier burials contracted
 - Later burials extended
- Several burials in tombs
- Funerary feasting:
 - Debris from funerary feast thrown into shaft:
 - Animal bones & molluscs, mixed with broken pottery



Grave Eta



Grave Upsilon

Grave Goods

- Primarily pottery
- Some gender differences
- Later burials increasingly wealthy
- O & Γ marked by plain stone stelae
- Exotic grave goods:
 - Amber necklace
 - Rock crystal duck vase
 - Minoan amethyst seal
 - Electrum mask

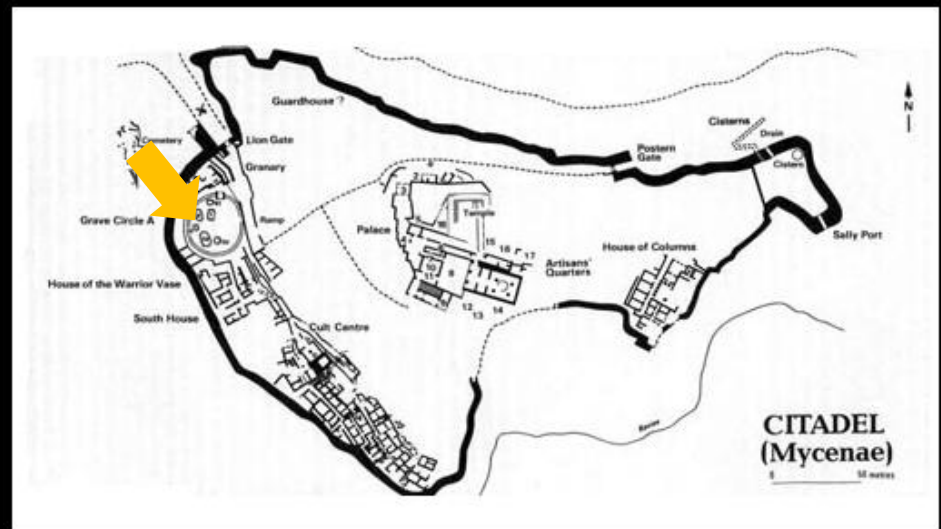


Matte-painted ware



Grave Circle A

- New funerary enclosure
 - Overlaps final use of Circle B
- Inhumation within shaft graves
- Re-use of tombs: cumulative, multiple burials:
 - Six graves: 19 burials (9 men, 8 women & 2 infants)



Drinking Sets

- MH: ceramic drinking sets were a prerequisite:
 - Two-handed *kantharos* & a jug
- Continuity of practice into Shaft Grave period:
 - Final communion with dead at graveside important element of ritual
 - Traditional MH form persists (but in gold)







LH Funerary Monuments

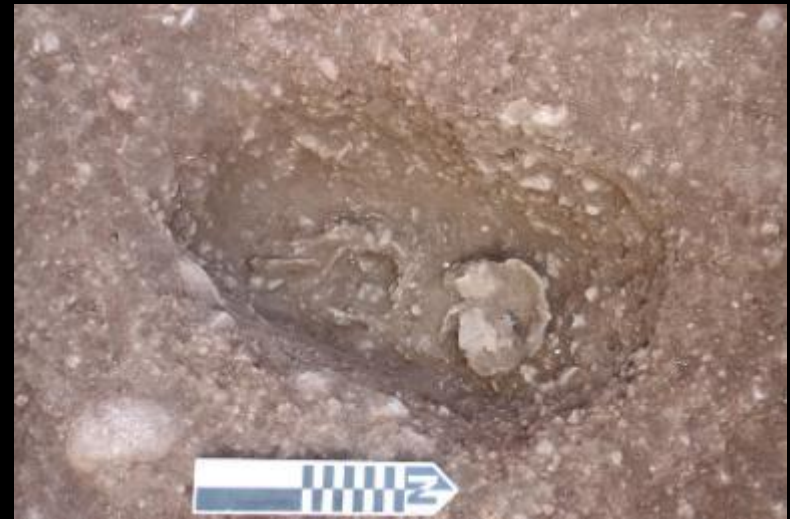
- Several different types:
 - Pit (& cist graves) persist
 - Shaft graves persist
 - Chamber tombs
 - Built *tholos* tombs
- Choice of tomb relates to hierarchical structures of society



Chamber tombs, Messenia

Pit Burials

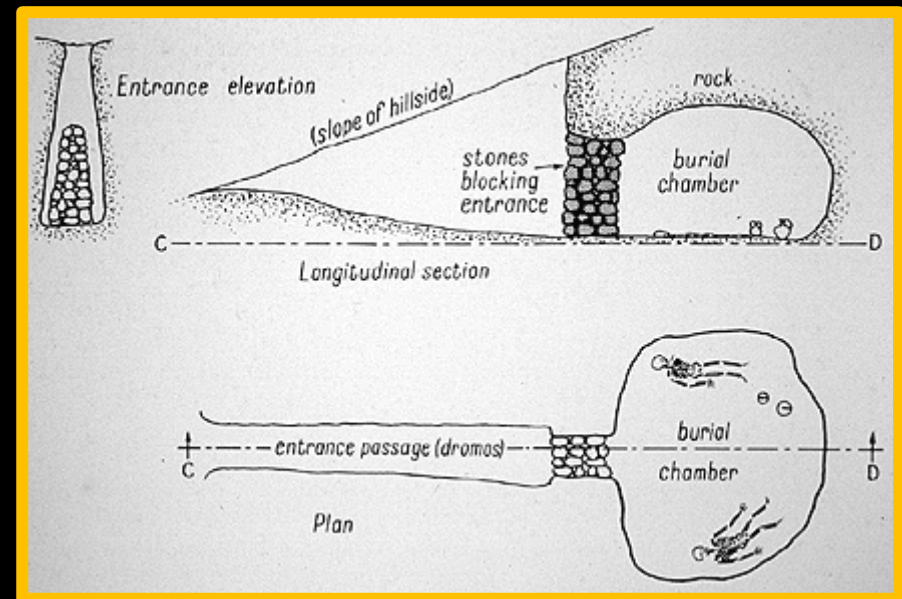
- Typically for primary inhumation:
 - Placed in contracted position
- Intramural burials: 80% are for infants
- Poorly furnished – might have drinking & pouring vessels:
 - Continuing MH practice
- Used by members of community who had no need to expressing continued family ties through construction of family tomb



Pit burial, child

Chamber Tombs

- Rock-cut tombs:
 - *Dromos*
 - *Stomion*
 - Irregular chamber
- Multiple inhumations
- Family/kinship tombs?
- Tombs of the *damos*?



Chamber Tombs: Grave goods

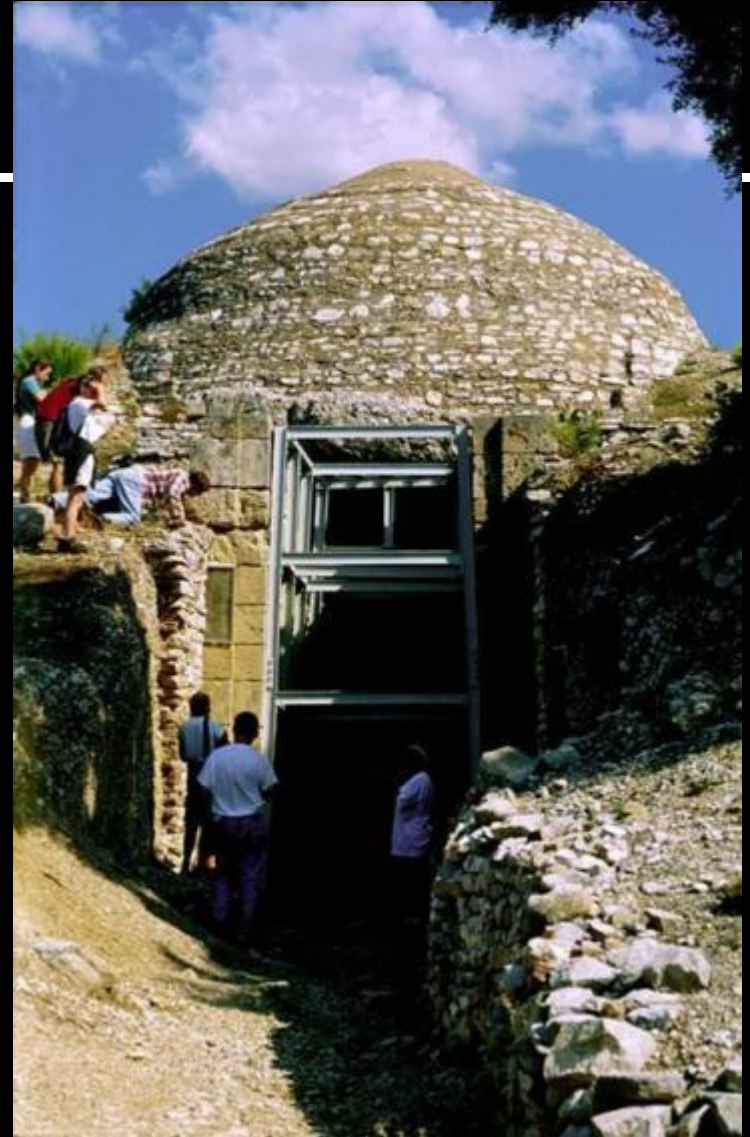
- Richly furnished & certain prerequisites:

- Weapons & tools
- Mirrors, ivory combs
- Sealstones
- Personal adornment
- Pottery
- Figurines



Tholos Tombs

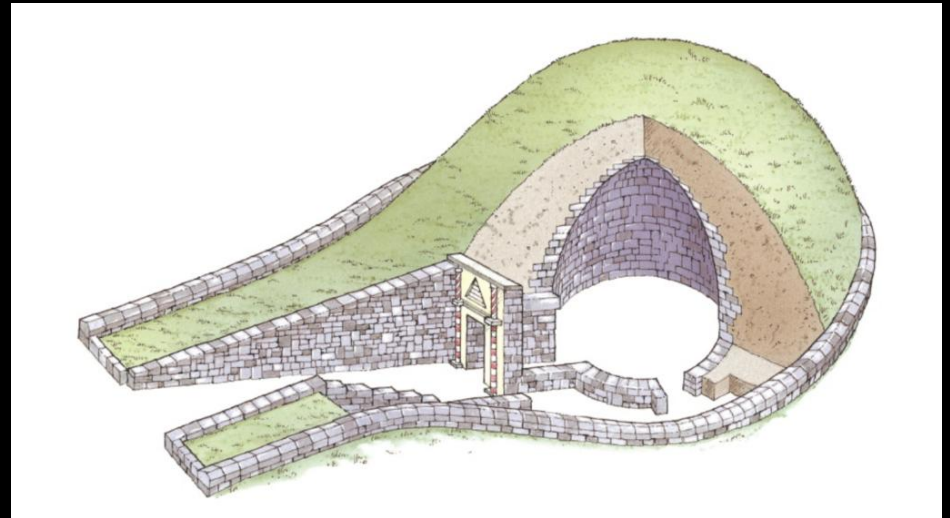
- Develop in Messenia in LH I (region with many MH tumuli)
- Spread throughout southern Greece in LH II-III
- Monumentality:
 - Inscribing landscape – memory & identity
 - Lineal descent (control over capital)
- Restricted to Mycenaean elite (but not just royalty?)



Peristeria

Tholos Tombs

- Share architectural components with chamber tombs:
 - *Dromos*
 - *Stomion*
 - Chamber
- Important elements in performance of funerary ritual
- Important for cosmological beliefs?



Treasury of Atreus

Inscribing Political Landscapes

- “control of space lies at the heart of social power (Chapman 2000: 184)
- Inscribed landscape becomes focus of ritual performance:
 - Repeated commemorative activities embed places within cultural psyche
 - Deep sense of past entangled with important individuals
 - Monumentality: competition for social & political capital



Treasury of Atreus

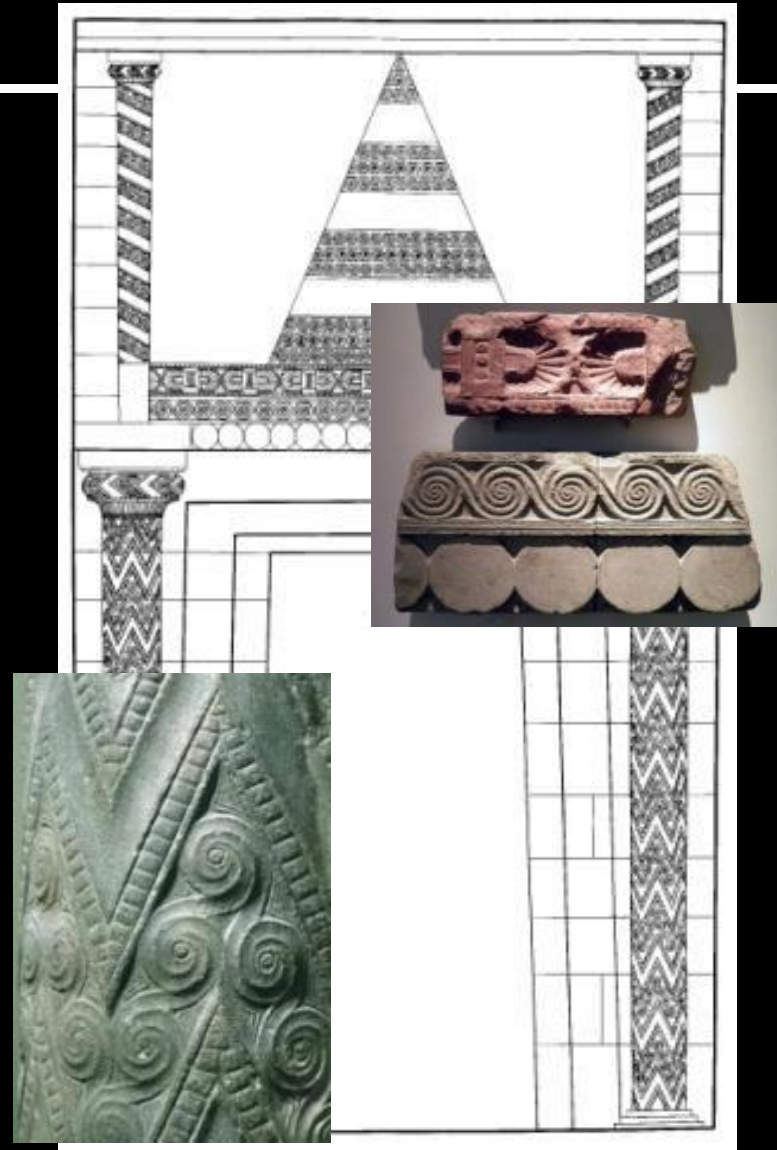
Monumentalising the *Tholos*

- Orchomenos – carved ceiling analogous to designs used at Malkata:
 - Symbol of power & shared cultural milieu of East Mediterranean



Treasury of Atreus

- Most monumental of the *tholoi*
 - Dromos: 36m long & 6m wide
 - Main chamber: 14.6m in diameter & 13.4m high
 - Massive monolithic lintel: 9m long, 5m wide & 0.9m thick; weighs 120 tons
- Elaborated facade with carved red & green stone



Ritual Performance

- Glimpse of gendered ritual action from pictorial representations
 - Processions of mourners
 - Sacrifices to deceased
 - Bull-leaping scenes
- How much is idealised & how much reflects Mycenaean ritual action?



Tanagra *larnax* (detail)



Ayia Triadha sarcophagus

Treatment of the Body

- Bodies placed clothed in tomb
- Ritualised embodied action before funerary procession (close family)
- & at graveside (wider community)
 - Adornment of body
 - Display of family wealth, status, identity



Gold jewellery from chamber tomb
Mycenae

Treatment of the Body

- *Alabastra* commonly placed in chamber tombs
 - Unguents – anointing of body (& textiles)
- Heightened mnemonic power with combination of sensory stimulation & emotions



Alabastra, Dendra

Embodied Practices

- Commensality (& libations) at the grave side
- Includes wider community
- Last communion & “social forgetting”:
 - Severing relationship with deceased
 - “a classic rite of separation” (Cavanagh 1996: 106)



Kylikes



Drinking from a *kylix*

Crete LM II-III

- Hybrid funerary ritual:
- Mycenaean tomb types
- Mycenaean grave goods:
 - Bronze vessels
 - Toiletry articles
 - personal adornment
 - Pottery: Palace Style vases, *alabastra*
- Minoan objects:
 - Sealstones
 - Stone vases
 - Cult equipment: double axes, tripod offering stand

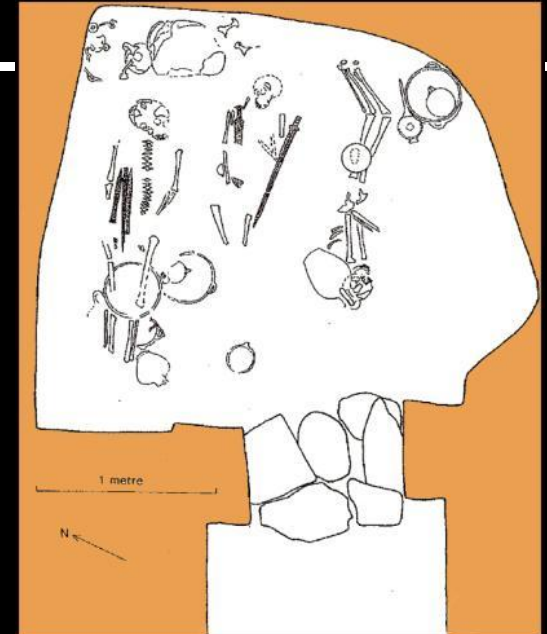


Knossos: Warrior Burials

- Shaft graves or chamber tombs
 - Single or double inhumation
- Array of warrior equipment:
 - Swords
 - Spearheads
 - Arrowheads
 - Knives
 - Occasional helmets



Boars' tusk helmet



Sellopoulo Tomb 4



Swords

Summary

- Mycenaean funerary ritual structured according to hierarchy & wealth:
 - Burial facility
 - Range & quantity of grave goods
- Inscribed landscapes & monuments of power at highest level of society
- Hybrid burials in Crete
- Theatre of funerary ritual at graveside:
 - Embodied practices & conspicuous consumption widely practised amongst *damos*