

Becoming Mycenaean? The Living, the Dead, and the Ancestors in the Transformation of Society in Second Millennium BC Southern Greece

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A SYMBIOSIS OF FUNERARY AND WIDER SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS?

It is generally agreed that toward the end of the second millennium BC in central and southern Greece state-level social and political structures were in operation in many, or most, areas. The nature, or natures, of this (or these) apparatus remain a matter of keen discussion (Galaty & Parkinson 2007; Shelmerdine & Bennet 2008; Galaty et al. 2011), as is the extent of their reach beyond the confines of their most apparent physical manifestation, the so-called palace complexes (Lupack 2011; Kvapil & Wolpert 2006; Small 2007). Even less clear is the long emergence and development of the palaces and the social institutions that underpinned them (Wright 2006a, 2008; Maran in press; Nelson 2001; Barber 1992). Although much recent work has focussed on developments in society around the Middle–Late Bronze Age transition (e.g., Voutsaki 2010; for chronology see Table 13.1), there is a fundamental disjuncture between such studies, based primarily on mortuary data, and studies of the social structures articulated or projected through the later palaces, based on entirely different evidentiary strands (though see Murphy 2014 and Bennet 2007). It is this disjuncture that I wish to re-examine in this chapter.

The evidence available when considering the nature of the late Mycenaean ‘palace’ complexes includes written evidence (mainly accounting documents, though rich in circumstantial detail), architecture, iconography, and the accumulated finds from the sites. Beyond the borders of the palace complexes, funerary evidence, road systems, and ‘second and third order’ sites need to be considered.

Table 13.1. *Phases and dates in the second millennium BC Aegean*

Phase	Simplified calendar dates BC
MHI	2050–1950
MHII	1950–1750
MHIII	1750–1680
LHI	1680–1600
LHIIA	1600–1520
LHIIIB	1520–1445
LHIIIA ₁	1445–1400
LHIIIA ₂	1400–1300
LHIIIB	1300–1180
LHIIIC	1180–1070

Note: The table simplifies many points of controversy and adopts the ‘high chronology’ (see Shelmerdine 2008, figures 1.1 and 1.2; and Manning 2010).

In a series of papers in the 1980s dealing mainly with Minoan Crete, John Cherry set forth a definition of the state, which, he suggested,

can be defined as a powerful, complex, permanently instituted system of centralised political administration; it exercises sovereignty in carrying out basic political functions (e.g. maintaining territorial rights and internal order, or making and executing decisions regarding group action) and its authority in these matters is buttressed by sovereignty in the use of force within its jurisdiction.

(Cherry 1984, 23)

He also, with Colin Renfrew, set forth the concept that the early state should normally appear in small groups (the peer-polity model: Renfrew & Cherry 1986; Cherry 1986). He suggested a series of ‘inter-polity homologues’ for the suggested polities of Crete, in palace design, peak sanctuary ideology, writing systems, and elite pottery styles: a comparable scheme of development for late Mycenaean Greece might substitute ‘elite burial practices’ for ‘peak sanctuary ideology’.

The kind of state envisaged by Cherry is more all encompassing than many would now imagine for the Mycenaean centres. The problem with the mainland evidence however is that – unlike in Crete – prior stages in the developments of the palace complexes have been very difficult to define. Recent work within the late Mycenaean period is very exciting: at Tiryns the megaron sequence within LHIII has been clear for some time (Maran 2010); and the potential second order palatial site at Iklaina is revealing successive building phases, the earliest pre-dating LHIII (Petrakos 2011, 24–8), and significant areas remain to be excavated (Boyd forthcoming b). The development and role of the major new site at Ayos Vasilios are still unclear (Smith 2013, 31; Cavanagh 2011, 23). However we know little of the use of the great centres at Mycenae and Tiryns in LHII, and even less in LHI. The situation is rather better at Pylos and improving as work continues in the excavation archive there (Stocker & Davis 2014), but an answer to the specific question of what pre-dates the megaron will not be forthcoming, as no excavation took place under the megaron floor (Nelson 2001, 44–5).

With so little evidence from the palaces themselves for the early Mycenaean period the attraction of the funerary evidence is therefore understandable. At Mycenae there is an unbroken sequence of burial data from MHIII to LHIIIC (Boyd in press); at Pylos the situation is comparable (Murphy 2014; Boyd 2002, 147–52). Moreover there is a wealth of evidence from other sites. The early Mycenaean funerary evidence offers the riches of the shaft graves and other rich burials, as well as the architectural innovations of the chamber and especially the tholos tomb, now emblematic of Mycenaean culture. It is here that the genesis of Mycenaean leadership and hierarchy has been sought: each generation of scholars has turned to the shaft graves and contemporary burials to illustrate the rise of the elites that would soon be responsible for the construction of the great palaces. The excavation of Grave Circle B at Mycenae in the 1950s, and its detailed publication some twenty years later (Mylonas 1973), provided much impetus, as it seemed to illustrate, generation by generation, the increasing wealth and aristocratic poise of a group – a dynasty – who exuded power at the place where in the later period many would locate the centre of the Mycenaean world.

These approaches were first formalised in Dickinson's *Origins of Mycenaean Civilisation* (1977). In a series of papers Voutsaki (1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2010) has developed the notion that elite status was not merely reflected in rich

burials, but actively created through the rituals enacted, and especially through the deposition ('consumption') of choice materials. This approach has faced some recent criticism (Papadimitriou 2011; Boyd forthcoming c).

These differing approaches have in common the underlying assumption (sometimes made explicit: Dickinson 1983), at least in the shaft graves and rich tholos tombs, that social structure has some direct relationship to burial practices: that extravagant events must reflect the upper echelons of society. While this may be true, it has very little explanatory force. With a significant chronological remove between the rich burials of the MH-LH transition and the first scraps of evidence for the 'Mycenaean state' around LHIIIA, the former carry all the weight in our understanding of the development of the Mycenaean world. However, these practices came about not to prefigure later developments, but within specific spatial and chronological contexts, as a result of conditions and intents borne of those contexts and no other. We can only assess early Mycenaean burial practices in their own contexts, and not in the light of what was to follow. The promotion of an elite may not have been the only, or even the main, aim of such practices. It is this question that this paper seeks to address, and in doing so consider other aspects of the social arenas enacted, foregrounded, and reproduced at these events.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MYCENAEAN BURIAL PRACTICES

Although there is much variety in Mycenaean burial practices, key developments during the MH-LH transition form a core set of new (or much enhanced) practices that are maintained through all subsequent developments. These are the introduction of tripartite architectural spaces (tholos and chamber tombs) with occasional variants, the use of collective burial practices, the introduction of secondary treatments of funerary contexts, the occupation of landscape areas for funerary purposes, and the development of specific uses of material culture in mortuary rituals (see Papadimitriou forthcoming for a slightly different set of developments). These developments, although set out here under five headings, are interrelated; it can be difficult to show that one preceded the other, or that the development of one facilitated the development of the other. The development of the entire package was rapid, and quickly established itself as the dominant paradigm, though with plenty of areas for innovation and local developments.

Funerary Architecture

Whereas it is widely agreed that stone-built tholos tombs first appeared in Messenia in MHIII (Boyd 2002, 55 and especially note 36), the first mainland rock-cut chamber tombs seem more dispersed: none are certainly dated to MHIII (though some of the earliest tombs at Volimidia may be: Boyd 2002, 144), but in LHI the form can be found in the Argolid and Laconia as well as Messenia. Both tholos and chamber tombs have been separately argued to have been derived from Cretan prototypes: the Messenian tholos tomb from the synonymous type known in central Crete (Hood 1960) and the chamber tomb from the multi-chambered variety known from Knossos (Dickinson 1977, 61), perhaps via Kythera.

While there is no strong reason to accept a simple Cretan transference for the tholos tomb form (Boyd 2002, 55–6; Voutsaki 1998, 43) it remains possible that the distant burial forms of Crete (and their nearby manifestation on Kythera) were drawn on rather freely in the re-imagining of possibilities in the burial field that characterises the MH–LH transition in Messenia (Cavanagh & Mee 1998, 44). Both Cretan types share certain characteristics with the mainland forms: the establishment of an enclosed, reusable space whose entrance may be opened and closed, wherein activities can take place involving a number of persons in an area suitable for multiple burials.

However, the main impetus in developing new architectural forms was not in imitating Minoan Crete. Changes in funerary architecture may in fact be traced within an unbroken mainland chain. In Messenia (Boyd 2002, 218, table 4), as indeed more widely on the mainland (Pelon 1976; Müller 1989; Cavanagh & Mee 1998), the burial tumulus constituted the principal monumental funerary form. Tumuli are characterised by their architectural variability, exhibiting differences in height and diameter, construction method and material, and complexity of architectural history. Few have been excavated and well reported, adding to the haziness of this category. Some, such as the excavated mound at Ayos Ioannis Papoulia (Marinatos 1954, 1955; Korres 1978, 1980, 1988; Boyd 2002, 119–23; Figure 13.1) have a clear phasing demonstrating architectural (and practical) development. In its earlier phase the Papoulia mound was smaller and built around a single, central ‘grave’ (found empty on excavation). The grave was open to the east, giving the otherwise undifferentiated mound a specific line of focus. In the later phase the expanded mound came to play host to multiple burials, many of them ranged

around the periphery in pithoi. Set so as to remain partly visible after insertion, the pithoi reimagined this funerary space as multi-focal.

The level of excavation and publication is too poor to ascertain whether other sites follow the pattern established at Papoulia, transforming a single, central grave into a multiple burial monument (this may be the case with some of the mounds at Vrana: Marinatos 1970). But by the later part of the Middle Bronze Age large numbers of tumuli are known from Messenia, and a good number from elsewhere in southern and central Greece. It was within these tumuli that a degree of architectural experimentation was to take place that led in a very short space of time from the initial conception of the tholos tomb form to its remarkable proliferation throughout Messenia in LHI and then throughout central and southern Greece in LHII.

Tholos tombs overlap chronologically with the tumulus phenomenon. Their impressive corbelled design requires external pressure for stability (Cavanagh & Laxton 1981), and although in a few early cases this is provided by building the structure underground, in most cases this is provided by means of a tumulus. On this basis alone the tholos can be seen as a development of existing practices (Cavanagh & Mee 1998, 45). However, closer examination of the early evidence suggests a more specific line of development.

Some of the earliest tholoi¹ are grouped together in burial mounds. At sites such as Gouvalari (Korres 1974, 1975a, 1975b; Boyd 2002, 108–12), Kaminia (Korres 1975a, 1975b, 1980; Boyd 2002, 116–18), and Nichoria (Choremis 1973; Boyd 2014a), groups of small tholoi have been noted in one or more burial mounds. The best known of these sites is Kaminia (Figure 13.2), and it is perhaps here that architectural developments are clearest. Middle Helladic pithoi were found here, two in a secondary position near the summit of the mound, and two built into the fabric of a later tomb. Five small (chamber diameters 2.1 m to 3.4 m) tholos tombs were ranged round the mound. With their narrowed mouths facing outward, the place occupied by the tombs in the mound clearly echoes that of the preceding pithoi (Korres 1996, 2011; Boyd 2002, 54–6), and it may be argued that these small tholoi were partly envisaged as a development of the pithos form (the largest pithos at Papoulia was 2.18 m in length). The circular plan of the tholoi, and their domed interior, recall the oval and rounded aspects of the pithos’ shape, and as noted, their stomia recall the mouths of the pithoi and occupy the equivalent place

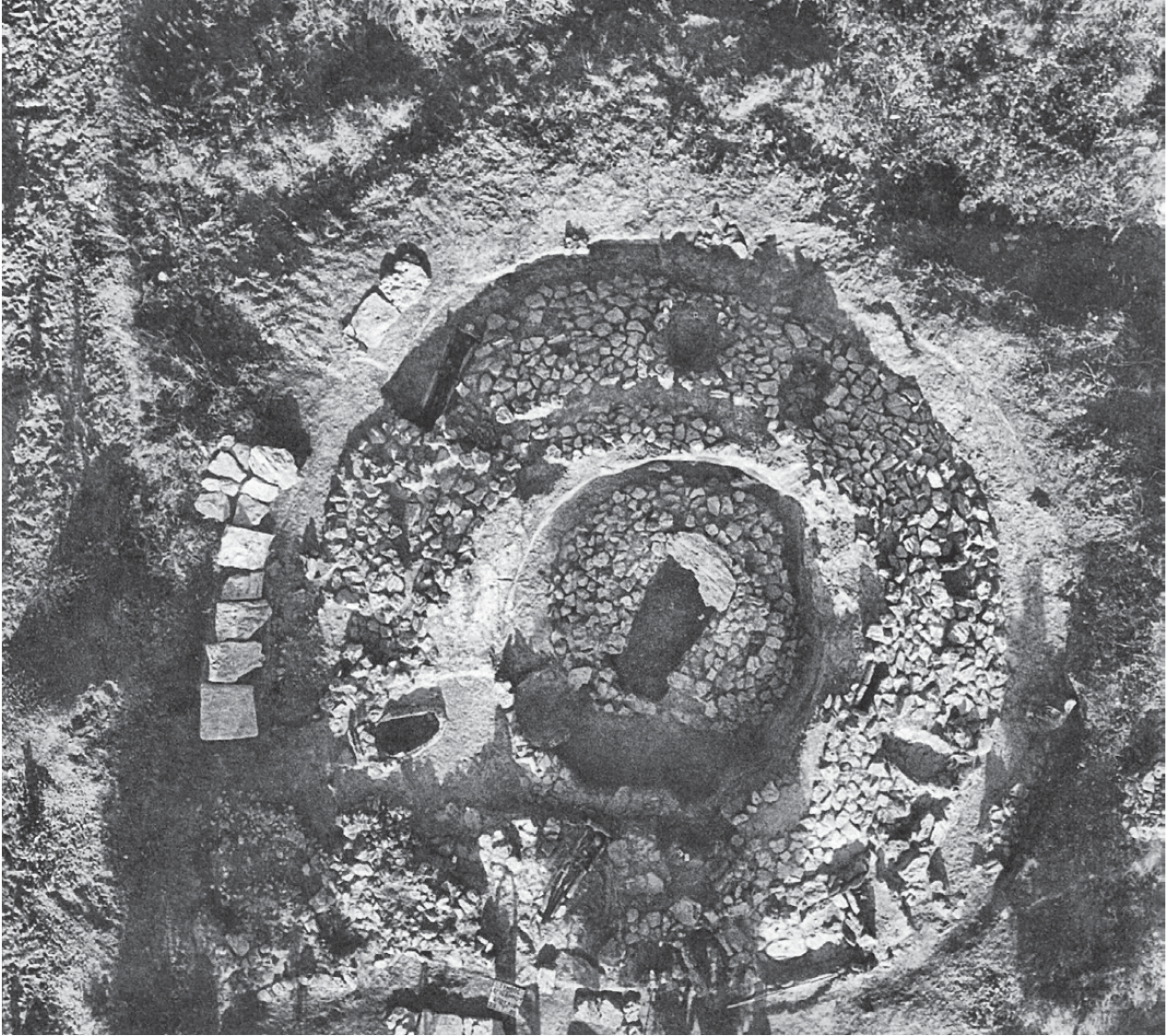


Figure 13.1. Tumulus at Ayos Ioannis Papoulia, Messenia.
Photo J. Myers. Courtesy G. S. Korres.

in the mound (Korres 2011; see also Papadimitriou 2011, 473–4).

The suggested development from the pithos to the tholos as a funerary device *within* the existing concepts of the tumulus is not to underplay the significance of the new form. Aside from the technical difficulty of building a corbelled tomb competently (the small size of these early tholoi makes them a suitable testing ground for the perfection of the technique: Cavanagh & Mee 1998, 45), these constructions are significant in introducing permanent architectural spaces that may be entered and within which activities may take place. This is feasible with even the smallest tholos tomb, but not with even the largest

pithos, and marks a fundamental expansion of the possibilities for activity at the mound.

Once perfected, the tholos tomb form was widely and rapidly replicated in Messenia. Beyond the tumuli with multiple tholoi already mentioned, at Voïdhokilia a tholos tomb was built into an existing Middle Helladic tumulus; elsewhere new mounds were constructed to house individual tholoi. Many of these were still located in the vicinity of existing tumuli: the complex at Gouvalari, for example, not only included two multiple-tholos mounds, but also two other mounds with one and two tholoi, respectively; new tholoi at Routsì, Englianos (Spencer 1995), and Peristeria were all close to existing tumuli.



Figure 13.2. Multiple-tholos mound at Kaminia, Messenia.
Photo J. Myers. Courtesy G. S. Korres.

After having perfected the technique of construction, it became possible to build larger tombs occupying an entire mound, so that the type underwent a secondary adaptation, from being one funerary space among others in a larger monument, to being the single such space available in a mound now secondary to the tholos itself. The impetus behind the invention and perfection of the tholos form was rooted in the creation of funerary spaces within burial mounds, but the technical ability to build larger tholoi prompted a new vision, originally unintended: the creation of single-tholos burial mounds. The fourteen MHIII-LHI tholoi of Messenia not located in multiple-tholos mounds average 5.8 m in diameter², significantly larger than those in multiple-tholos mounds, though much smaller than what was to occur in later periods.

Beyond Messenia, tholos tombs are almost unknown before LHII (see Dickinson 2014 for potential exceptions, and Kasimi 2013). The tripartite form of the tholos is however replicated in the early chamber tombs, examples of which from LHI are known at Epidhavros Limira in Laconia (Dickinson 1977, 63–4; Boyd 2002, 206–8;

Gallou 2009), several sites in the Argolid (Boyd in press, note 38), as well as Volimidhia in Messenia (Boyd 2002, 138–47). In many ways these tombs are a simple adaptation of the tholos form, from a stone-built structure within a mound to a rock-cut underground location. Most early tholoi are prominent in the landscape through the use of a mound, and mound groupings might suggest processional routes through a known landscape. Chamber tombs, however, may be less visible, but more often grouped closely together. In this regard the earliest chamber tombs at Volimidhia perhaps draw more inspiration from nearby multiple-tholos burial mounds than from the larger, individual tombs.

Other forms occasionally appear during MHIII-LHI: several sites boast unusually large or complex cist or built tombs (Papadimitriou 2001a). These are sometimes associated with a tumulus, and sometimes grouped together. Chief among this disparate group are the shaft graves of Mycenae (Mylonas 1973; along with those from Lerna: Caskey 1955, 32–4; 1956, 155–7). Other important tombs, often with a lateral entrance (Papadimitriou 2011), are located at Argos (Papadimitriou

2001a, 17–20; 2001b; forthcoming), Sparta (Papadimitriou 2001a, 29; Smith 2013, 28), and Eleusis (Papadimitriou 2001a, 65–85; forthcoming), while elsewhere in Attica the tumuli of Vrana (Marinatos 1970), with complex and large burial constructions, and the tumulus of Thorikos (Servais & Servais-Soyez 1984), might all be constructions of MHIII–LHI. Similar elaborate graves are also known in Messenia at this time, for example, at Nichoria (Papadimitriou 2001a, 37–42; Boyd 2014a). These ‘elaborate simple’ graves perform different functions closely associated with their local context. The Akones group at Nichoria are in some ways analogous to the adjacent Tourkokivouro multiple-tholos mound, in that their entrances face radially outward from the centre of a (probable) mound. The graves in the tumuli at Vrana and Thorikos function as enlarged and modified cists within the tumulus tradition, associated with smaller and simpler graves. The ‘gamma graves’ of Eleusis are placed in a ‘normal’ cist grave cemetery, and this is also the setting for the Argos graves.

Around the LHI–II transition, the tholos tomb type was transformed again, in this case to a significantly larger and more elaborate architectural form (Figure 13.3), including, as has recently been argued, more emphasis on the now longer dromos (Papadimitriou 2011; forthcoming). At the same time, tholoi – generally in this more elaborate format – began to be constructed outside Messenia. The earliest examples of large tholoi are those at Englianos (IV) and Psari (1) in Messenia, but others were soon constructed at sites such as Mycenae, Marathon, Thorikos, Kokla, Kazarma, and Vapheio. During LHII chamber tombs also became much more common, and individual tombs or small clusters began to develop into extended cemeteries. At Mycenae chamber tombs and tholos tombs were in use in growing numbers, and the shaft grave sequence came to an end (Boyd in press). The construction of other forms of built graves became notably less common, with the impressive exception of tomb Rho at Mycenae (Papadimitriou 2001a).

In LHIII fewer tholos tombs were built, though those in existence continued in use, perhaps less frequently after LHIIIA. However, the real innovation of the era is the explosion in chamber tomb construction. In LHIII these can be found in great numbers in cemeteries small and large throughout the central and southern Greek area and far beyond. Their increase in numbers had certainly begun in LHII, but throughout LHIII (including the post-palatial period) the rise is exponential. This means that while during LHII numbers of chamber

tombs and tholos tombs are broadly comparable, during LHIII tholos tombs were far outnumbered by chamber tombs in most places. This change in numbers will have been reflected in understandings of the two types.

Association and Collective Burial

Some burial tumuli may have been built around an initial feature, such as a large grave. Later, additional burials would take place in the mound, both emphasising the centrality of the original feature, but also diluting its attention-focussing properties. This applies to Papoulia, and perhaps also to nearby Routsi (Boyd 2002, 153–7). Given the lack of properly excavated and published tumuli, it cannot be shown that this was the most common sequence in burial tumuli. At Vrana in Attica tumulus 1 contains multiple burials ranged around what may have been an original burial monument, whereas in tumulus 2 the single burial space was expanded but other peripheral burial spaces were not added. At Vrana another probable tumulus contained a built central grave reminiscent of that at Papoulia (Marinatos 1970; Boyd 2002, 120 and note 66; Papadimitriou 2001a).

If some tumuli were built around a single, central burial space (with perhaps a specific inhabitant), these represented only a short-lived exception to the general phenomenon of the clustering of burials throughout the second millennium. In the Middle Helladic period, such clustering may be seen not only in funerary mounds, but also elsewhere. So-called intramural burials are in fact often placed in then-disused parts of settlements, as may be the case for the disparate burials of the so-called prehistoric cemetery at Mycenae (in fact not a cemetery in the organised sense of the word: Boyd in press), including Grave Circle B, as well as at many other sites (Nordquist 1987, 95; Dietz 1991, 275; Maran 1995; Cavanagh & Mee 1998, 24–5; Boyd 2002, 33–6; Milka 2010). Burial amidst the detritus of former habitations is not limited to simple pit or cist burials: both tumuli and later tholos tombs have been built directly into areas previously used for settlement. Some Middle Helladic mounds such as Voidhokilia (and perhaps Papoulia and Routsi) were built on the ruins of EH settlement (Boyd 2002, 37), and Late Helladic tombs such as the Akones group at Nichoria (Boyd 2014a) were built on disused Middle Helladic settlement. The LHIII tholoi at Mycenae of course involved considerable remodelling of the existing topography, as must their immediate predecessors near the acropolis (the Lion and Aegisthus tombs).

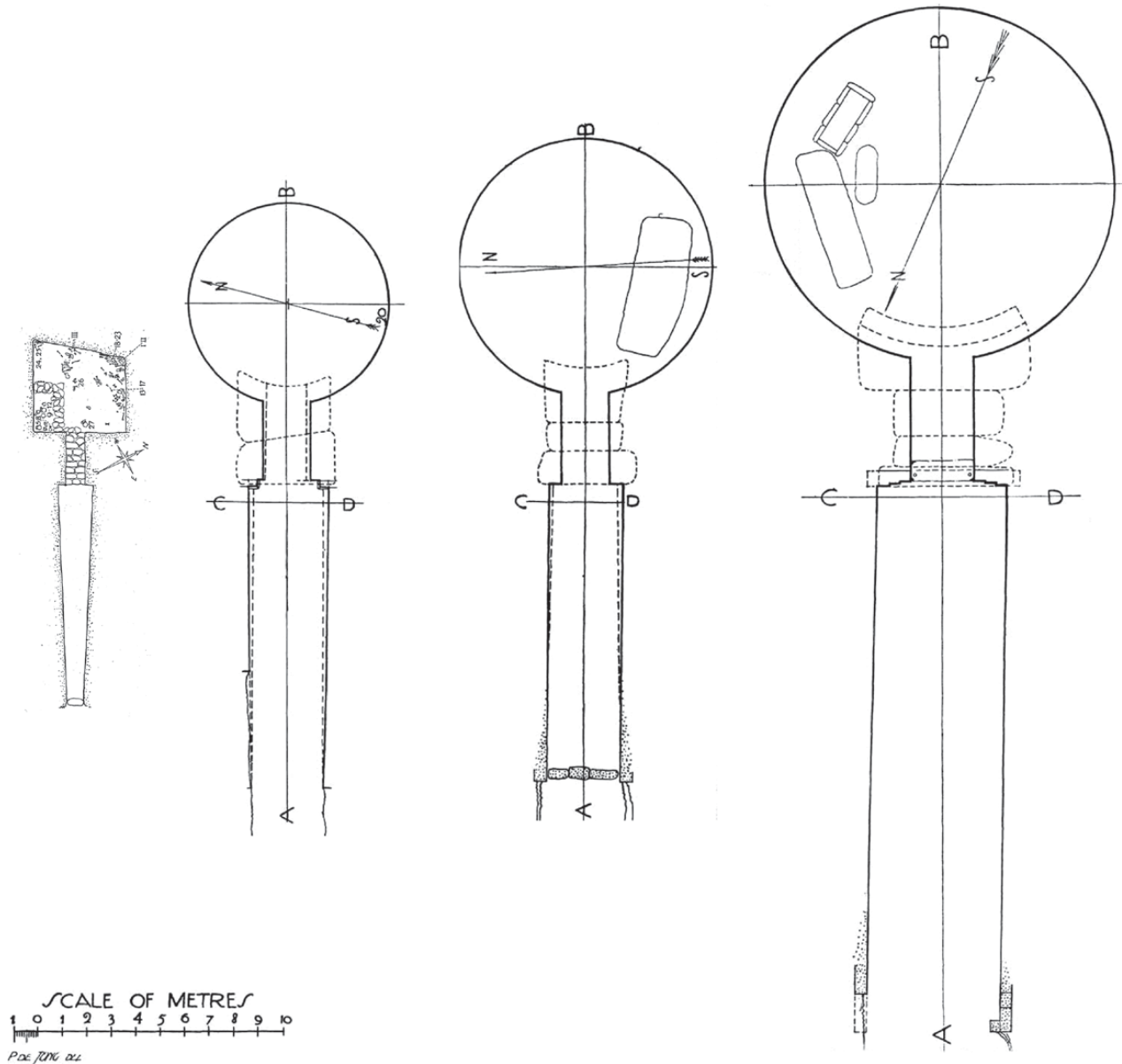


Figure 13.3. Scale in chamber and tholos tombs at Mycenae. Chamber tomb 502 with the Panayia, Kato Phournos, and Lion tholoi, shown to scale.

After Wace 1932, figure 2, and Wace 1923b, figures 59 and 61, and plate 53, respectively.

The clustering of burials together (whether or not in monuments), as well as the attraction of disused settlement areas for burial, are both factors highlighting the importance of *association* in choice of burial location (cf. Cavanagh et al. forthcoming). At this very general level, this importance of association is both widespread and long lived. This association is not just that of new burials to prior burials, but more generally an association between present and past practice. Often it seems locations with an ancestral resonance, an aura of the past

more distant or recent, were chosen and then maintained for burial. Although the tumulus monumentalised and formalised the aspect of association, the principle can be seen in operation with many other burials.

The difference between the Middle Helladic desire for association and Late Helladic collective burial in tholos and chamber tombs is a fine one. On the one hand, graves clustered in tumuli or in specific, disused areas of settlement were already being maintained in close association with each other and with their specific locale.

But on the other hand, even though burials in tholos and chamber tombs advanced this associative aspect towards the collective, strategies of differentiation were often as much in play in these burials as strategies of association. This is seen not just in the use of pit and cist burials sometimes seen within chamber or tholos tombs, but also in the process of the production of context (Thomas 1996, 171) of any given burial within a tomb, whereby during burial material culture is deployed in certain ways that (quite apart from the individual motivations for each action) ultimately result in the production of a new context contained within and utilising the wider resources of the collective tomb, which nonetheless, at that moment, emphasises the unique and individual aspects of the funeral that has just taken place. However, these acts of restructuring available resources to accommodate new burials also emphasise the collective aspect of the tomb, drawing in and reassociating material previously otherwise disposed. They also presage other activities described in the next section.

The enabling development in forms of association from the clustered burials of the Middle Helladic to the collective burials of the Late Helladic is the innovation of the chamber within which multiple burials may be located. Despite the occasional use of pits and cists, 'burial' is usually a misnomer – bodies were often placed within the chamber on the floor or sometimes on a bench, and were not covered or otherwise inaccessible to those who had gained access to the chamber. The use of the chamber for multiple burials renders the form collective: new burials are performed within the same space as those that went before, and the preparation of the chamber and the burial itself usually involved rearrangement of existing contexts, on which more later. The development from multiple tholos mounds to single, larger tholos tombs may in part have been driven by the desire for all of the dead of a given monument to be collected within a single space, and thus accessible without having to open and enter into multiple chambers.

Secondary Treatments of Funerary Contexts

Closely related to the preceding discussion is the development of secondary treatments of funerary contexts within collective burial chambers. Tholos and chamber tombs, although varying in size, generally represent (with the exceptions of the very large tombs) relatively compact, enclosed spaces (cf. Boyd in press, table 2). If for no other reason than the merely practical, after one or

two funerals it would be impossible to continue using the restricted space of most tombs without some strategy for rearranging the contents of the interior. The requirements of space not only to accommodate incoming burials but also to enable circulation of mourners within the tomb would require periodic rearrangement of the interior.

These activities cannot, however, be reduced to mere expediency: they were underpinned by complex motivation and logic. I have argued elsewhere (Boyd 2014a), using Julian Thomas' helpful term 'production of context' (referred to previously; Thomas 1996, 171), that the contents of Mycenaean tombs represented an endlessly redeployed resource in an ongoing production of context in the tomb – the endless reordering of material and restructuring of locale in order to present certain practices within a curated and idealised context. The key difference between this approach and others that regard the interiors of Mycenaean tombs as often the product of looting or 'disrespectful' practices such as 'sweeping aside' (Boyd 2014b, 7 and note 1) is that I hold the contents of Mycenaean tombs – however disordered to our first glance – as the result of multiple *meaningful* practices – and not as the meaningless result of unthinking intervention in the archaeologist's idealised pristine context. Although it is clear that practices did vary widely from tomb to tomb, site to site, and time to time, on a basic level two repeated meaningful elements in the practices of reorganisation in Mycenaean tombs may be recognised.

The first of these is the production of context as part of the activities of a funeral. Before the funeral, or possibly just before interment, as part of the procedure of introducing the corpse into the chamber, the contents underwent initial rearrangement so as to design a space for the presentation of the corpse within a specific material context. The detritus of past funerals might be arranged so as to call past activities to mind and set the current process within a mnemonic framework. Once deposited in place, during activities involving material taken into the tomb (described later), material already present within the tomb, as an available resource, might be used, leading to further rearrangement and thoroughly embedding the new interment within the existing content of the tomb. Numerous small acts led to the eventual closure of the ritual, by which time the corpse and the accoutrements of the present funeral had been set in the most appropriate manner amidst and between the existing content of the tomb. Thus in these small acts of placement and rearrangement, the association of the dead with those who

had gone before, and of the acts of the funeral with past acts, was made manifest and highlighted as a significant aspect of the meanings being implied and created.

However, beyond the events of a funeral, it is clear that secondary rites were practised in many Mycenaean tombs (sometimes called the ‘second funeral’: Cavanagh 1978; Wells 1990, 135–6; Voutsaki 1993, 151–3; Cavanagh & Mee 1998, 76; Boyd 2002, 84–7; Gallou 2005, 113–14; Lagia et al. forthcoming; Smith et al. forthcoming; Cavanagh et al. have recently reviewed the evidence for developments in the Middle Helladic period: forthcoming). On excavation, tombs often have no intact funerary contexts or articulated skeletons, but careful arrangements of skeletal and other material may be noted. Skeletal material is often completely disarticulated and may be gathered in specific areas of the tomb, perhaps on the floor, or placed less visibly in pits, cists, or niches. Selection and redistribution of skeletal material can lead to concentrations of particular bone types (most obviously skulls) and separate redepositions of different types. This process can involve breakage. Material culture is also redistributed. Funerary contexts may be entirely dismantled and items gathered and redeposited elsewhere. This can again involve breakage, and sometimes the gathering of specific types. Less visible archaeologically is the removal of material from the tomb, but this will also have been a factor, perhaps occasionally evidenced by recoveries from stomia and dromoi (but complete removal to other tombs, or to other contexts, may also be a significant factor).

Not all these activities occurred in a predictable manner, but represent the full range of possible practices available in different funerary contexts. Rather than a set of specific, codified secondary rites, we see repeated, often small-scale interventions within tombs drawing on the range of broadly understood practices outlined here, hedged about as much by local (and small-group) tradition as by broader regional understandings of mortuary practice. Rather than being closed, ‘other’ spaces visited only rarely (and perhaps closed for many years at a time), many Mycenaean tombs were regularly visited and host to frequent activities involving the detritus of past funerals and other interventions, within certain parameters.

We have seen that in assembling the funerary context use was made of the existing material content of the tomb in order to situate the new interment in a material nexus embracing past action in the tomb. The effect of secondary rites was further to confirm the association of the dead with those already interred, by producing new contexts in the tomb where the individual dead could

no longer be recognised either as a complete skeleton or through a coherent set of material used in the funeral. These rites transformed the dead from individuals to a materially more amorphous group whose individual characteristics were no longer highlighted within the chamber, but who were referred to in activities involving their amalgamated remains. This is one of the most significant developments in the transformations around the MH-LH transition, and is considered further later.

The Development of the Funerary Landscape

The clustering of Middle Helladic burials in disused parts of settlements and in tumuli has already been noted. In the former case, burial was situated within the settlement orbit, whereas in the latter case, tumuli – although sometimes situated on top of disused, often Early Helladic, settlement – were not situated within current settlement areas. They may not have been situated in relation to specific settlements (Boyd 2002, 37; see also Korres 2011; Galanakis 2011; Merkouri & Kouli 2011; Papadimitriou forthcoming). Moreover, there is some evidence of the grouping together of tumuli – within a short walking distance, though not necessarily in immediate proximity. Some tumuli are located in relation to landscape features such as transitional zones between higher and lower ground (Boyd 2002, 40), and most are in any case in prominent, raised positions, an aspect accentuated by their shape, protruding from the landscape (though not necessarily widely visible: Galanakis 2011; Korres 2011).

The clustering of tombs in what we might call cemeteries is another development with roots in the Middle Helladic period that becomes an important part of Mycenaean funerary practices (Papadimitriou forthcoming). The multiple-tholos mounds are themselves part of larger funerary landscapes, as are most of the earliest single-tholos tombs. Distinct clustering of tombs in MHIII-LHI and into LHII is noticeable at sites such as Gouvalari, Nichoria, Englianos (Pylos), and Peristeria. At Gouvalari, up to eight mounds are reported, clustered in close vicinity beside a prominent landscape feature (a gorge impassable at that point). The minority excavated all contained two or more tholos tombs. At Nichoria (Figure 13.4) tombs were grouped at four elevated points overlooking a probable crossroads (Boyd 2014a). At Englianos Spencer has highlighted the distribution of widely spaced burial mounds of the Middle Helladic period surrounding the site of the later palace (Spencer 1995, figure 4a, based on McDonald & Hope Simpson

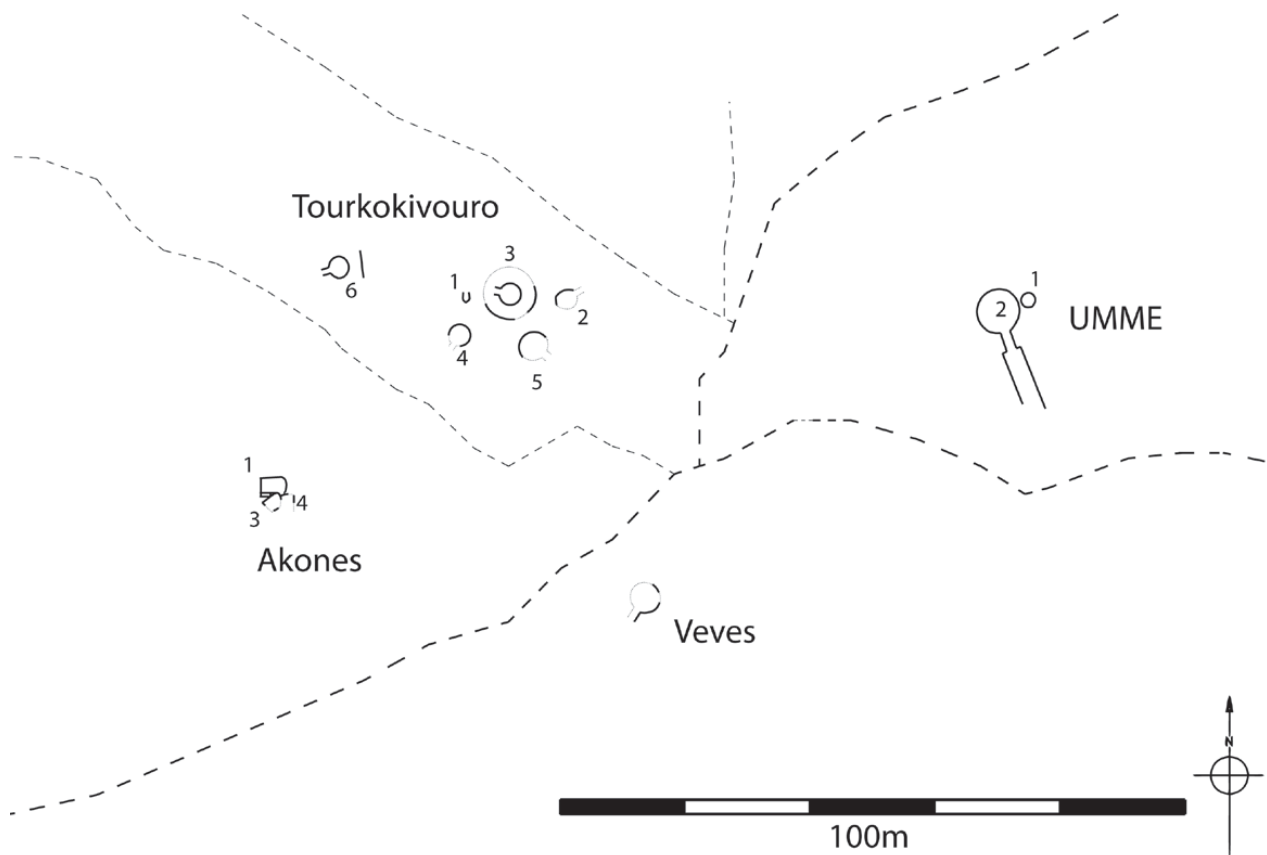


Figure 13.4. Clustering of tombs at Nichoria, Messenia.
After Boyd 2014a, figure 151.

1972, figure 8.13). From the MH-LH transition, however, tombs were also situated in the immediate vicinity of the palace: two tholos tombs during MH-LHI, a third probably during LHII, with the construction of one or two chamber tombs from LHIIA, and others following in LHIII (Boyd 2002, 147–52; Galanakis 2011; Murphy 2014). Similarly at Peristeria, five tholos tombs are clustered at the site beginning from the MH-LH transition, the latest probably being constructed in LHIIA. In LHII tholos tombs are clustered at sites such as Mycenae (six tombs) and Kakovatos (three tombs), though isolated tombs were also constructed. By LHIII chamber tombs also began to be more commonly constructed and by LHIII are found widely distributed. Some were built in groups that included tholos tombs (for example, at Mycenae or Kokla in the Argolid, Portes in Achaia, or Englianos in Messenia); some are found singly or in small groups, while others began to be clustered in definite cemeteries. In LHIII some very large chamber tomb cemeteries were in operation, although smaller clusters perhaps remained the norm.

The positioning of tombs in proximity (or short walking distance) to each other and to important landscape locales is one of the key developments in Mycenaean funerary practice. These tombs – especially the large and impressive tholoi, but also in many ways including the smaller tombs – constituted an embellishment of landscape, routes, and locale of a very particular nature. The repeated choice to enhance the experience of moving through the landscape near important locales using funerary monuments – with very little evidence of similar embellishment using other devices – is an indicator of the emphasis laid on the funerary experience and its visible and permanent presencing in the everyday routine of moving through the landscape. At Mycenae, for example, the ongoing inscription and advertising of lives and histories through the construction and maintenance of funerary monuments led over an extended period to the construction of multiple cemeteries (twenty-seven known so far: Shelton 2003) located, in many cases, along routes of access to the site from many directions

(Boyd in press). The everyday experience of moving through the Mycenae landscape would have been hedged around with whispers of the past and inscribed claims of ancestry and association, with different zones around the acropolis recalling group histories and their claims of association with and moulding of the changing institutions represented there.

Mycenae is an unusual example, its 'reach' over the centuries forever drawing in people and groups whom we can now faintly recognise through their tombs in the surrounding landscape. But other important sites also underwent a process of funerary embellishment in their immediate surroundings. The approaches to and environs of Englianos, for example, were from the end of the Middle Helladic period altered to include funerary structures at significant locations (Galanakis 2011): the monumental tholos IV, for example, situated so that its entrance would face in a straight line the staircase of the main entrance in the enclosure wall of the site, some seventy metres distant. At Peristeria, the number of tombs is limited (five tholoi found so far, with no chamber tombs as yet located), but their striking monumentality dominated the acropolis area. Although other structures were built there, there can be no doubt that routes of movement and lines of sight would have been dominated by the tombs.

While tombs clearly became an important part of the everyday experience of movement in many places, they also played a significant role during funerary ceremonies (Boyd forthcoming a). Procession – the act of moving in an organised group while transporting the corpse and the accoutrements of the funeral to the grave – was accomplished by negotiating the route from startpoint to endpoint through the landscape of memory that was the Mycenaean cemetery. Nodes on the route, defined by tombs as well as other features, were opportunities for action, for individuals or groups to assert their presence through their claimed association with different tombs. More than one tomb may have been visited en route to the final destination of the procession. The processional route was created through inhabiting the cemetery, and the cemetery grew with the notion of future processions in mind. The importance of the procession is also highlighted by the architectural design of the tripartite Mycenaean tomb: tombs were in part designed to facilitate the separation of groups at the end of the procession and to allow filtered movement between the interior and exterior in a controlled manner (Boyd forthcoming a).

The Roles of Material Culture in Funerary Contexts

Material culture is found within funerary contexts throughout the second millennium. Prior to the Middle-Late Helladic transition, however, few graves are found with more than one or perhaps two items, and some contain none. At the transition, however, yet another significant aspect of the development of Mycenaean funerary practices is the marked increase in quantity of material associated with funerary activities (Dickinson 1977, 59; Papadimitriou forthcoming). This material has often been seen as a passive indicator of wealth or status, its role in the funerary process reduced to elite signification, conspicuous consumption, or the presumed material requirements of the dead in the after-life. Recent approaches to material culture suggest that meaning is always 'actively and meaningfully constituted' (Hodder 1982; Shanks & Tilley 1992, 121–33; Shanks & Tilley 1987, 107, 114), is ascribed to an object by an agent in a moment of observation or action, is dependent on memory and context, and is constantly open to revision in the light of the actions of self or others. The explosion in material culture use during the development of Mycenaean funerary practices is significant in revealing 'the nature of specific practices' (Barrett 1988, 32).

There are three broad modes of deposition in Mycenaean tombs: direct, consequential, and transformational (Boyd 2002, 32). The first and third directly evidence activities in the tomb, while the second more usually references activities in the preparation of the corpse. Direct deposition refers to the meaningful deposition of material directly in the tomb where the meaning of the action is expressed in the deposition itself. This applies most directly to the deposition of the corpse, but could also apply to any material taken to the tomb primarily for the purpose of deposition. Consequential deposition refers to the deposition of material in consequence of some other factor. Primarily this refers to material adorning or attached to the corpse before the funeral and then deposited in the tomb in consequence of its being attached to the corpse. In this case the actions involving this material precede the deposition phase of the funeral. Finally, transformational deposition refers to the use of material by mourners during the funeral whereby the meaning of the material is reshaped in relation to the funeral and thus the object is incorporated into the funerary tableau, which, at the end of the funeral, acts as a material record of the activities that have taken place (Boyd in press; 2014b).

All of these types of deposition contribute to the meaningful production of context within the tomb; however, objects deposited through transformational deposition play some other role in advance of deposition. The production of the funerary context is a multi-phase process, with action in differing spheres contributing to its culmination: the preparation of the corpse, which may well happen away from the tomb, before the procession, though it may be completed at the tomb, is a central aspect of the production of context, as is the preparation of the tomb before the arrival of the corpse, and the rearrangement of material therein; the gathering of material to be used in the tomb and its transport there, probably during the procession, and perhaps involving interventions in other tombs in order to gather additional choice material; and finally the funeral itself, utilising all these carefully procured and curated resources.

The categories of material recovered from Mycenaean tombs are principally items of decoration for the corpse (such as bead items, sealstones, and gold leaf decorations), items such as swords and knives falling under a broad category of martial culture (Harrell 2010), and vessels of pottery and sometimes metal. The vessels usually relate to pouring and drinking shapes, though larger shapes such as palatial jars (Kalogeropoulos 2011) are common in LHII, and shapes such as alabaster and stirrup jars, thought to be associated with unguents and perfumed oil, are also very common. Metal vessels, when found, may often be drinking shapes, and occasionally large bronze open shapes are found. In LHIII small clay figurines are often found, and sometimes ivory furniture fittings and other ivory items (see also Papadimitriou 2011, 471). This is in fact a rather restricted range of material (and of course exceptional items are sometimes found), which allows us to suggest a coherent range of activities mediated by material culture. Items adorning or adhering to the corpse refer to the dressing and preparation of the body, and the presence of the stirrup jars and alabaster allows for the possibility that some anointing ritual might take place in the chamber (Cavanagh 1998). The weaponry, if worn or otherwise affixed to the corpse, may also relate to the preparation phase, though these were often deposited beside the corpse within the chamber as part of the production of the funerary context. The drinking and pouring vessels suggest a long-standing drinking ritual, evidenced throughout the Mycenaean period (and the few items of material culture found in graves of the preceding Middle Helladic period are often drinking vessels, usually of restricted shape such as *kantharoi*). In contrast

to drinking, which is very commonly attested, sacrifice and eating of animals, while not unknown (for instance, at the shaft graves), are not often attested (and virtually no tombs have been examined for archaeobotanical evidence: Margaritis 2014; for exceptions near Nemea, see Wright et al. 2008, 643; Smith et al. forthcoming). The vessels used in the toast are usually of normal, domestic shapes (though occasionally made of precious metal), but having been used in the tomb they are then incorporated into the tableau at the end of the funeral, their physical presence among the other detritus of the tomb attesting to the completion of the ceremony.

On later occasions, as noted, these objects continued to play a role (Boyd 2014b). In different instances activities such as gathering, burying, stacking, smashing, and removing represent repeated instances of engagement with the material past. As with the anthropological material, these activities tended to de-emphasise and obscure the individual pristine burial context in favour of understandings of material based on the commingled mass. This general tendency does not prevent the curation of specific items with understood and maintained histories, which might often be removed from tombs, moved from tomb to tomb, displayed, reused, and ultimately perhaps reincorporated in new burial contexts. One likely instance of this behaviour surrounds the early-style swords of Messenia, found in later contexts (Harrell 2010; see also Harrell 2014 for the shaft grave swords).

THE LIVING, THE DEAD, AND THE ANCESTORS

The foregoing account has sketched the development of the basic principles of Mycenaean funerary practices, mainly during the Early Mycenaean period. It must be emphasised once again that different sites and tombs have their own histories and these general principles are intended as an interpretative framework within which diverse bodies of evidence can be understood. Variation is to be expected, and one of the most obviously divergent pathways is the shaft grave sequence at Mycenae, where the aim of secondary rites was most conspicuously not to de-emphasise the individual, and an attempt was made to maintain original contexts during episodes of reuse (Boyd in press).

These principles, taken together, show first that by the placement of tombs in the occupied landscape and by their visibility and accessibility in the routines of movement, the dead – through the naming and knowledge of locales, the memory of action, and regular encounters

with tombs and their contents – were presenced (if only in the background) and made apparent in the everyday routines of life.

Second, they show that association was one of the key principles structuring most aspects of dealing with death. Tombs were most often sited in association with others, perhaps in many cases as a result of some expressed relationship between groups. This association could be performed during the procession through the cemetery landscape. Tombs and cemeteries were sited in the landscape often in association with major sites or routinised routes of movement. The dead were associated in the tomb with those previously interred there, and the funerary process involved the production of a particular context for the interment utilising the existing resources within the tomb, making those associations explicit. Later rituals dissolved the context of the funeral and advanced the place of the dead from association to amalgamation with others within the tomb. During the funeral and other interventions, the associations between the living and the dead were expressed through material culture (among other media), some of which, by the various modalities discussed, could be incorporated into the material within the tomb.

Third, they show that death was conceived of as at least a two-stage process, and that there were at least two kinds of dead³. The newly dead were conceived of primarily through their erstwhile participation in the social group and were treated individually. The initial phase of mourning was represented materially through the preparation of the corpse, the procession to the grave, and the interment. However, the choices made during the funerary process prefigured the transition from recently deceased, lately active member of the social group, to a longer-term status where individual identity is evidently less important than membership of corporate groups of the dead, both in a particular tomb and in the wider cemetery (see also Insoll, this volume: ancestors become ‘amorphous, immortal but personally indistinct’). This transition occurred after the funeral and was marked by the return to the grave to disassemble the context of the funeral and to mingle the remains of the most recently interred with those of the older dead.

The use of the term ‘ancestors’ has recently been criticised as often uncritically applied (Whitley 2002; discussed widely in this volume). However, in this case it seems clearly apposite. The physical remains of funerals – including anthropological remains – were curated within tombs over several generations by users who found

meaning in the material through the activities they carried out using it. The conspicuous mixing and gathering of material strongly suggest that it was understood primarily in a group sense rather than as the remains of individuals. The incorporation of the dead into the group of the ancestors was achieved by the ‘second funeral’ rituals of dismemberment and comingling. The ancestral group were then called on to participate in the transition of the dead into their membership in that group through the use of the mixed material in the tomb in the production of new funerary contexts.

The principle of association – between the living and the newly dead, the newly dead and the ancestors, and the living and the ancestors – can be seen in operation in all of the developments in funerary activities throughout the second millennium BC. Agency in all this lies undoubtedly on the part of the living, but the newly dead and the ancestors were supremely meaningful media to which relationships could be claimed and onto which agencies were no doubt projected through the agency of the living. Both during periods of funerary and other mourning activity, and during the routines of daily life, the dead as a corporate group (presenced in the cemetery) and as smaller ancestral groups (presenced in individual tombs) were a powerful concept whose negotiation was a principal part of the funerary process and a consistent backdrop of everyday life.

LEADERSHIP AND ELITE STATUS

The discussion so far has avoided questions of hierarchical social structures and their reflection – or not – in funerary practices. It has recently been perceptively remarked that while ‘status differences *were* reflected in LH burials’, ‘to suggest that the transformation of burial customs was *stimulated* by the desire to express such differences is ... unwarranted’ (Papadimitriou 2011, 483, emphases in original). The discussion so far has similarly given no cause to suggest that status differentiation was a primary motivator in the development of Mycenaean funerary customs. However, in trying to trace developments and motivations over a long period, I have thus far underplayed the exceptional or obviously enhanced aspects of the evidence. Traditional accounts, on the other hand, tend to begin with the wholly exceptional shaft grave sequence at Mycenae, and proceed from there. To what extent then did the concerns of elite groups, competitive display, or conspicuous consumption manipulate, co-opt, or undermine emerging and established funerary practices?

The funerary process involves the consignment of an individual to the grave and her staged incorporation – initially through association and the construction of an inclusive context, and latterly by mingling and destruction of the funerary context – into the ancestral group represented within the tomb, and more widely in the cemetery. These activities emphasise group identities: the group carrying out the funeral, and the group of ancestors to which reference is being made. However, different groups may be involved: narrower groups representing claimed inheritors or those otherwise identifying themselves closely with the deceased, and wider groups, perhaps occasionally drawn in from elsewhere, or simply representing the local community. In ancestral terms, too, different groups might be claimed to have an interest, from specific named individuals and lineages, to wider sub-groups or the entire body of the ancestors. The composition of these different groups, and the opportunities of moving among them, offer one avenue for the foregrounding (or perhaps creation: Voutsaki 1995) of differentiation between individuals and groups.

It is perhaps possible to detect some tension between the aggrandisement of the individual and the pre-eminence of the group. I have recently argued that the shaft grave sequence at Mycenae, which includes considerable emphasis on the position of the individual, came to an end when the shaft grave practices no longer seemed tenable in the face of new customs adopted by competing groups that more effectively emphasised corporate and ancestral groupings (Boyd in press). It is remarkable that at Mycenae, which in LHIII is widely thought of as the *primus inter pares* of the Mycenaean world and was already in LHI a site with great reach, it was felt necessary to abandon well-established funerary customs glorifying the individual for new group-oriented practices that situated the dead within a wide ancestral tradition, rather than venerating them more specifically as individuals. However, this change can nonetheless be understood as a late instance of the transition from clustered to collective burials outlined for the MH-LH transition previously, and the accompanying ideological shifts need have been little different than those at other sites where this transition took place.

Within the collective tombs, however, and against the backdrop of the collective ideology of the tombs, we do sometimes see instances when some effort has been made to retain the splendour of an individual funerary context. We can only speculate about the Mycenae tombs, as no intact contexts remain: it would not be surprising if,

initially at least, in the Aegisthus and Lion tombs, some effort was made effectively to replicate shaft grave practices within the tholos, and to conserve individual funerary tableaux long after burial. The large chamber sizes would be helpful in this cause.

In terms of surviving contexts, the most apposite example is the underfloor burial in the tholos at Vafio (Tsountas 1899). A recent study has proposed a position of leadership for the person buried in the cist, not only on the traditional grounds of the quantity of material deposited there, but also on the basis of iconographic evidence present on seals and interpretations of some of the material in the grave as symbolic of office and of economic activity (Banou & Hitchcock 2011). The creation of this context must indeed have been a spectacular event, comparable to those of the shaft graves, involving large numbers of mourners perhaps contributing to the production of the interment context, and larger numbers filing past the grave after completion of the funeral (Boyd 2002, 90–1). The very long dromos of this tomb also contributes to the possibility of large numbers of persons being involved (Papadimitriou 2011; Boyd forthcoming a). The interment within a cist is not unusual in itself, but the preservation of the contents intact is. This may have been an aspect intended through the choice of burial in a cist, but for success this strategy required active curation – the funeral would not have been quickly forgotten – and a conscious disregard of ‘normal’ customs. However, Laconia is not a region with many tholos tombs⁴, and the Vafio tholos is specifically of the elaborated type widely – but relatively sparsely – dispersed during LHII. This may suggest that an imported and locally unique architectural form and its associated traditions were in part reinterpreted in a local context. However, even in Messenia there are occasional hints of the maintenance of particular contexts. At Routsis tholos 2 (Marinatos 1957a, 1957b; Boyd 2014b) the final burial in the tomb lay on the floor surrounded by material as it had been left at the end of the funeral. Moreover, another burial in a pit, although damaged in its lower half, had been preserved in its upper half. Both of these burials exhibited significant amounts and quality of material culture, including inlaid knives of the type known from the shaft graves for the burial in the pit. The entire interior arrangement of the tomb is unusual (Boyd 2002, 190), and it might be possible to imagine that in its latest period of use it had been rearranged to preserve and present certain contexts. It is also conceivable that the subsequent collapse of the tomb

was brought about deliberately in order definitively to end the sequence of interventions in the tomb.

At sites such as Mycenae, Peristeria, Vafio, Englianos, and ultimately Orchomenos, we can discern the activities of local elites as they seek to operate within, co-opt, and in part undermine the prevailing ethos surrounding death. At Englianos and Peristeria in LHI-II large and impressive tholoi were constructed within or adjacent to existing central places, where previously cemetery areas had been more distant. At Vafio and Mycenae in LHII tholoi were introduced in their most impressive, fully developed form. At Mycenae the larger tholoi close to the acropolis in LHII, and the very large tholoi of LHIII, were all set within an existing and contested landscape of shaft graves, tholos, and chamber tombs. They sought to present the existing paradigm of burial within an architectural context whose meaning could be seen as both part of and extending beyond the norm. The Orchomenos tholos was constructed as a specific and close imitation of the Treasury of Atreus in a region where tombs of that size and type were unknown. In one sense all of this is trivial – groups trying to differentiate themselves, and present themselves as elite or otherwise superior, have always looked to grander versions of everyday reality. But the point is that the source of innovation has not been shown to be specifically elite groups, and that elite innovation where it exists is usually in the grander projection of widely held customs. Ultimately the underlying collectivist notions of Mycenaean burial practices were far from ideal for the projection of elite status, and as spatially and hierarchically more complex social institutions developed, those in the upper echelons chose other arenas for the projection of power and elite status.

DEATH, IMMORTALITY, AND THE DIVINE

The evidence for Mycenaean religion is limited (Lupack 2010), though in some respects remarkably informative: the unexpected richness of the written evidence continues to yield new insights, the identification of some buildings as cultic has allowed for the recognition of some aspects of ritual practice, and the limited iconographic repertoire has been widely discussed. However, during the development of Mycenaean funerary practices, at the MH-LH transition and in the Early Mycenaean period, none of this evidence applies. The adopted Minoan iconography present in the shaft graves and in a few other tombs can tell us little directly of the involvement of religion in burial practices.

The evidence from tombs is in fact rather stark: there is little that can be ascribed to religious practice. Practices of libation or toasting, while possibly invoking the divine, may equally have been addressed directly to the dead and the ancestors (Cavanagh & Mee 1998, 115, do associate this practice with elite religious practices). Perhaps the main category of evidence is the common small clay figurine, usually either female or sometimes animal, found in Late Mycenaean tombs (Tzonou-Herbst 2002; French 1971). Some observers have linked these figurines, which can be found in many other contexts, including the domestic and the cultic, with representations of divinities, but this is not a universally accepted explanation (they have even been regarded as toys). It may, however, be significant that larger figurines were in LHIII an established aspect of cult buildings. The potential role of the latter in processions has been suggested: the Cult Centre of Mycenae has been suggested to be furnished with a processional way along which the larger cult figures might be carried in procession (Mylonas 1983, 145). If procession is accepted as an important aspect of Mycenaean religious practice (in LHIII, at least), then it may provide our most significant link between funerary and other religious practices.

During the Late Mycenaean period the site at Mycenae was a warren of potential processional routes. Beyond the acropolis, many routes were marked out in the landscape by funerary monuments. The establishment of these routes stretched into the past, and the acropolis as a central node seems always to have been important, if not paramount. The embellishment of the acropolis in LHIII is most obvious through the creation and reworking of the massive enclosure wall (Wright 1987). This served to limit and define approaches to and routes from the acropolis, and to monumentalise them. It is no coincidence that the nearest comparandum for the Lion Gate is the dromos and stomion arrangement of tholos tombs, most conspicuously the great tholoi of Mycenae (Wright 1987, 2006b). The interior area was also monumentalised in relation to movement: not only the processional way detected in the Cult Centre, but also the approaches to the megaron are designed for procession and gathering (Thaler in press; Maran 2006; Wright 2006a; Cavanagh 2001). Procession, whether directed at individual shrines or the megaron itself, was an essential aspect of ritual activity within the LHIII acropolis, and procession was just as essential in the surrounding mortuary landscape (Boyd forthcoming a).

Procession may therefore provide a link between the cultic buildings of the acropolis and the tombs where

reference to the divine is otherwise lacking. People may have transported their dead from some distance for burial in a group-sanctioned space at Mycenae. Part of their journey may have included access to religious space within the acropolis. It is possible that ritual specialists may have been implicated in both citadel religious rites and funerary rituals. This is clearly speculative, but the long view of the development of procession in religious and funerary practice at Mycenae justifies the suggestion of a possible link between the two. It is also conceivable that the appearance of small clay figurines in LHIII is another link between the two types of practice. While none of the larger clay figures known from the Cult Centre has been found in tombs, it is perhaps possible to see the smaller, commoner figurines being used in funerary practices in a manner similar to that posited for the larger figurines at individual shrines.

This tenuous link between death and the divine will be discussed further in the next section. But here it is clear that even if this link is accepted, it must be seen as manifested late in the development of Mycenaean funerary practices. Processions are an established part of funerary practice long before the first evidence for their use in religious practice, making it more likely that they were co-opted from the funerary to the palatial sphere during the development of palace-based cult. The concept of immortality, as perhaps an aspect of the divine, is present in early tombs in the notion of the ancestors. However the concept of the ancestral group was actually articulated (and this may have differed considerably from time to time and place to place), they were considered to have some kind of continuity after individual death – perhaps not with the permanency of existence embodied in the concept of immortality. Nonetheless, in the development of Mycenaean cosmologies, the importance of this group can be demonstrated before that of any divine entity, and this may be relevant in the development of Mycenaean religion.

BURIAL PRACTICES, SOCIETY, AND STRUCTURE

Social structures are made and remade in the routine of everyday practice. Burial practices are peripheral to this, though, as we have seen, the placement of the cemetery in the occupied landscape can make them less peripheral. The primary focus for the maintenance of differentiation and hierarchy in society could not have been burial practices, as hierarchy by definition is embedded in daily practice. The analysis of burial practices in order

to illuminate these aspects of society is therefore a questionable process.

We have seen that the basic principles of Mycenaean funerary practice in fact tell us more about the heterarchical potentials of society. The associative principle in tombs and cemeteries (and concomitantly among the mourners) implies the articulation of social groupings. These were open to negotiated or contested understandings, and rather than a simple member-non-member dichotomy, varying degrees of association are implied. Funerary and mortuary rituals drew upon and enacted these degrees of association, making them manifest for the participants for the duration of that event. The framework of these rituals offered opportunities both for differentiation (between individuals, between groups in both hierarchical and heterarchical senses) and for integration (whereby interpersonal and inter-group relationships could be articulated from specific points of view in an integrative, rather than divisive, fashion).

Funerary and mortuary rituals were therefore significant – but hardly decisive – opportunities for a whole complex nexus of relationships to be re-examined, rediscovered, and refashioned. Opportunities for differentiation were part of the process, but did not drive it. Thus strategies for differentiation in the funerary realm by those claiming elite or other elevated status or attempting to reify hierarchical divisions were a secondary – not primary – aspect of the development of both Mycenaean funerary practices and the hierarchical institutions apparent in Mycenaean society by LHIII. The integrative aspect of funerary practices, along with the tendency to emphasise the strength of the heterarchical, rather than hierarchical, aspects of society, would have tended to undermine any claims of strictly defined hierarchy in society, and thus made funerary practices as constituted a less than ideal arena for the claims of emergent hierarchical groups.

Which is not to say that they did not try! The carefully crafted hunter-warrior elite persona represented in some early graves (Harrell 2010), the rationed and contrived use of symbols in some funerary contexts, and the construction of large or architecturally elaborate tombs are all aspects of elite presencing in funerary activities. The issue of tomb scale is of particular interest (Boyd in press; forthcoming a). The construction of very large tombs, as at Mycenae in both LHII (the Lion and Aegisthus tombs) and LHIII (Atreus and Klytemnestra), refashions burial practices in two important ways. In most tombs – whether chamber or tholos – the scale is such

that the human body is facilitated: the tomb is neither too large, nor too small, for comfortable activity. In very large tombs, the scale is such that that tomb completely overwhelms the individual. Thus, although retaining the basic plan of other tombs, the mega-tholoi of Mycenae and elsewhere impress as being on a scale that significantly changes the experience of moving through the architecture. The concomitant of this is that much larger numbers of mourners could participate in funerary procedures: dozens in the chamber, hundreds in the dromos and on the slopes above. Such tombs were built for funerals where very large numbers of persons were called to participate. Thus while working within the heterarchical principles outlined previously, with these tombs hierarchy was made rather more apparent.

Nonetheless, rituals aimed at ancestral groups were too inclusive to be the main cosmological underpinning of expanding hierarchy. Rather, it is clear that at the 'palace' sites, certainly in LHIII, and perhaps earlier, hierarchy was underpinned by and articulated through religious practice that permeated the entire architectural complex, including not only identified shrines but also the main megaron complex, which was certainly itself (among other aspects) a centre of religious practice (Lupack 2010, 264–5). The pantheon of named, individual, immortal divinities partly revealed to us in written records was a far more amenable cosmological structure on which to build the hierarchical institutions of the Late Mycenaean palaces. Their influence beyond the palace complexes themselves – their reach into the periphery – is far from clear (and almost absent from funerary practices). But the ongoing importance of funerary practice in most areas is manifestly evident. Thus in LHIII we faintly discern a tension between two broad ways of understanding society: on the one hand, from the top down, a hierarchy controlling some religious and economic institutions; and on the other hand, an ever-receding heterarchy of relationships between individuals and groups that governed much of everyday life and, at times of mourning, was made manifest in the cemetery. Thus far we barely discern the outlines of these social principles in LHIII: it would be even more interesting to learn something about the initiation of this division in earlier periods.

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NOTES

- 1 There has been some past debate on the definition of a tholos tomb. This has classically been defined as a tripartite structure with the chamber and entrance ('stomion') built of stone (the 'dromos' or elongated passageway leading to the entrance is sometimes also stone-lined). Dickinson sought to reclassify smaller members of the group as 'smaller, less-regular stone-built tombs' (1983, 57) on the grounds that they may not have been 'domed like true tholoi', and that there ought to be a typological division between larger tombs, 'quite clearly the burial places of important personages', and smaller tombs (which are assumed not to be for important persons). It is however clear that many were corbel-vaulted. Papadimitriou (2001) proposed the classification 'built chamber tomb' to encompass both small tholos tombs and other small tombs built of stone, of disparate design (more recently he recognises 'small tholos tomb' as one tomb type among several in the early Mycenaean period: Papadimitriou, forthcoming). The position taken in this paper is that 'tholos tomb' is a technical term indicating a stone-built, corbelled chamber usually of tripartite design and that membership of this group should be based on the manifest design intent of the architects, rather than any assumption about the identity or status of any of the dead deposited within (cf. also Boyd 2014a).
- 2 The two exceptionally large tholoi at Englianos (IV) and Psari (1) skew this figure somewhat. Removing these from the average, it is 5.2 m. Of course, if the smaller tholoi in multiple-tholos mounds were included, the average would be even lower.
- 3 It is clear that in most places the overall numbers of dead represented in tombs is a subset of the numbers of persons who must have lived in the vicinity. Notwithstanding the loss of evidence over the millennia, it seems clear that other modalities of the disposal of the dead in the Mycenaean period are underrepresented in the data, and this allows for the possibility of another category (or categories) of dead: those (for whatever reason) not selected for burial in tholos and chamber tombs.
- 4 In LHII the nearest tholos is on the other side of Mt Täyētos at Kambos; a few distant chamber tombs are to be found at Pellana (about 25 km) and perhaps one at Krokees (20 km).

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