

DEATH AND POWER AT MYCENAE : CHANGING SYMBOLS IN MORTUARY PRACTICE

In Aegean studies we are fortunate to have a highly refined chronology and an accessible and large body of mortuary data widely distributed in time and over space. Recently there has come a spate of studies of some of this material ¹, and, although some focus on the relation of mortuary remains to social organization, most remain in the descriptive and historical frame of study, traditional within the area of classical and prehistoric Aegean archaeology. This colloquium is an opportunity to reconsider how scholars working in our region are approaching this important subject, and I hope that the papers will inject new ideas and interest into this most fundamental, albeit final, act of the human drama.

In this paper I wish to use some of the ideas current in mortuary studies to examine the degree to which symbolism was employed in burials at Mycenae, particularly as it developed in social and political complexity. Advances in the study of mortuary practices have established certain ground rules for their analysis. L. Binford, in an early article, demonstrated the inadequacy of assumptions about mortuary customs that were based upon idealist notions of culture, namely that custom was influenced by a conceptual, intellectual framework, that it was originally uniform within a society, and that variation was to be attributed to various models of interaction amongst different cultures ². Instead he challenged students of mortuary custom to develop methods of relating their archaeological observations to the "causative variables operative in the past" (p. 25). These were, of course, the operative systems of past societies

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- (1) T.W. JACOBSEN, T. CULLEN, "A consideration of mortuary practices in Neolithic Greece : Burials from Franchthi Cave", in S.C. HUMPHREYS, H. KING (eds.), *Mortality and immortality : the anthropology and archaeology of death* (1981), p. 79-101. H. MATTHÄUS, "Minoische Kriegergräber", in O. KRZYŻSKOWSKA, L. NIXON (eds.), *Minoan Society* (1983), p. 203-215. C. MEE, W. CAVANAGH, "Mycenaean Tombs as evidence for social and political organisation", *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 3 (1984), p. 45-61. O.T.P.K. DICKINSON, "Cist Graves and Chamber Tombs", *BSA* 78 (1983), p. 55-67.

I wish to thank Jeremy Rutter, Daniel Pullen, Mary Dabney and Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier for commenting on an earlier version of this paper.

- (2) L. BINFORD, "Mortuary practices : their study and potential", in J.A. BROWN (ed.), *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices. Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology* (1971), p. 6-29.

which he postulated were directly related to mortuary custom, such that, "the form and structure which characterize the mortuary practices of any society are conditioned by the form and complexity of the organizational characteristics of the society itself" ³. This direct relationship is related to two aspects of the social situation that are borne out by study of ethnographic data. On the one hand the social status of the deceased, his or her persona, varies directly with the status he or she enjoyed in life, thus continuing, at least in the mortuary rite, the relationship obtaining in life. On the other hand the status relations to the deceased by the social group to which he or she belonged will determine in large part the form of burial ritual ⁴. Again these factors are shown by Binford on the basis of examination of ethnographic material to be communicated by symbolic activity that can be broken down into three variables, 1) the treatment of the body, 2) the preparation of the burial facility, and 3) the form and/or quantity of grave furniture ⁵. The challenge of his study, then, was to find ways to work backwards through this argument such that meaningful statements could be made about social organization and change on the basis of the observed archaeological phenomena.

A number of scholars have accepted this challenge and issued others in return. Although this paper does not intend to review the history of scholarship of this problem, it is worthwhile to summarily discuss the state of research in order to clarify the limits within which such studies should be framed and also to establish what postulates are warranted based upon this research. This is particularly the case for the study of mortuary ritual in the Aegean since virtually all studies are oriented towards typological distinctions among burial types with consideration of possible chronological, geographical (qua diffusionist) implications. Only recently have studies begun to relate burial rituals to social organization, and even fewer on the basis of an explicit statement of method ⁶.

At the same time as the publication of Binford's article other scholars were directly attacking the problems he addressed. Primary amongst them was a dissertation by A. Saxe that derived a variety of hypotheses about the social meaning of mortuary practices as observed in ethnographic studies and in the archaeological record ⁷. Testing of these hypotheses, that is establishing reasonable links between the realm of past material culture and observable viable social organization, has been a paramount issue of archaeologists with special attention placed on the three above-mentioned variables of mortuary practice. Some scholars, such as J. Tainter ⁸, have focussed on such aspects of these as the treatment of the body and form of the

(3) *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

(4) *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

(5) *Ibidem.*

(6) L. GOLDSTEIN, *Mississippian Mortuary Practices. A Case Study of two Cemeteries in the Lower Illinois Valley* (1980); J. O'SHEA, *Mortuary Variability: An Archaeological Investigation* (1984).

(7) A. SAXE, *Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices* (1971).

(8) J.A. TAINTER, "Mortuary Practices and the Study of Prehistoric Social Systems", in M.B. SCHIFFER (ed.), *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* (1978), p. 106-141.

facility and how they relate to the expenditure of energy on the burial. Others, notably L. Goldstein ⁹, have examined further the relationship between the location of the burial facility and the community, especially the issue of its self-identification. Cautionary studies expressing various degrees of scepticism have pointed out the difficulties in establishing the direct relationship between archaeologically observed phenomena and the overlying social framework from which they emanated ¹⁰. These latter should be considered carefully by scholars in the Aegean because they emphasize the danger of simply assuming (as Binford would not have the student do) that the postulations on which interpretations of mortuary remains are made have been verified without taking into account alternative explanations. Furthermore these studies are particularly useful because they include examples from complex societies that show how much more involved the study of mortuary custom is than one might gather from Binford's "provocative" but all too simple analyses of data for hunters and gatherers, shifting agriculturalists, settled agriculturalists and pastoralists. Last of all some of these studies have been part of a new movement in archaeological theory that is essentially structuralist in form, urging consideration of the extent to which conceptual attitudes, ideologies and belief systems in contrast to Binford original contention, do in fact influence the formation and form of custom and our interpretation of them ¹¹. This position is advocated in the following analysis, which is concerned not so much with a functional reconstruction of social and political organization of Mycenae during the Late Bronze Age, as with identifying the archaeological evidence for the conceptual framework, and changes in that framework, of the persons who carried out the mortuary ritual and constructed the burial facilities.

The Tholos Tombs :

There are certain obvious measures that can be applied to the analysis of burial facilities. One of these is the concept of measuring and analyzing the effort expended on the preparation of a burial ¹². There are three factors to consider here. The most obvious and easy to recover is a measure of the necessary expenditure of energy for its construction. Related to this is the amount of time necessary for the construction. Third, and unrelated to the problem at hand, but of vital importance is the amount of energy expended in archaeologically non-recoverable

(9) Above, n. 4 and L. GOLDSTEIN, "One-dimensional archaeology and multi-dimensional people : spatial organization and mortuary analysis", in R. CHAPMAN, I. KINNES and K. RANDSBORG (eds.) *The archaeology of death* (1981), p. 53-69.

(10) P. UCKO, "The ethnographic interpretation of funerary data", *World Archaeology* 1 (1969), p. 262-280; E. LEACH, "A View from the bridge", in M. SPRIGGS (ed.) *Archaeology and Anthropology : Areas of Mutual Interest*, *BAR Supplementary Series* 19 (1977), p. 161-163; M. PARKER PEARSON, "Mortuary practices, society and ideology", in I. HODDER (ed.), *Symbolic and Structural Archaeology* (1982), p. 99-114.

(11) HODDER, *op. cit.*, and M.P. LEONE, "Some opinions about Recovering Mind", *American Antiquity* 47 (1982), p. 742-760.

(12) N. 8 above.

activities, such as ritual, from the time of death to that of deposition ¹³.

An example will clarify this issue. The construction of the Shaft Graves can be plausibly understood as happening at or shortly around the time of the death of the deceased. The act of digging the grave, constructing the shaft and building the tomb cannot have taken a large number of workers much time. In fact it is easy to imagine that the tomb was made at the time of death by a small crew of workers : Shaft Grave V is approximately 98 cubic meters and would have taken ten men about ten days to dig (this estimate is based on the calculation that one man can excavate about 1 cubic meter of soil per day; it does not calculate the number of persons necessary to remove the soil nor take into consideration excavation into sterile soil or bedrock) ¹⁴. Certainly the construction of such a tomb required much more of a communal effort than the preparation of the normal Middle Helladic cist tomb of less than 2 cubic meters volume, but compared to the construction of a tholos tomb it is understandable as a small and limited operation.

Taking the Aegisthus tholos tomb as an example, we can see that exclusive of the dromos, the chamber of the tholos required the removal of 1,810 cubic meters of earth and bedrock. Adding in the dromos would bring the total to 2,395 cubic meters, a job requiring the same ten men to dig for 240 days. And still the tomb would not have been built. Its construction required the gathering of suitable rubble stone, their transport and dressing, and the technical skills of specialized masons in the construction of the dromos walls and corbelled vault. Also massive blocs of conglomerate had to be quarried and set in place over the jambs of the stomion of the tomb. Such an operation may have taken as much as a year to complete and have required the administration of skilled masons and a large workforce ¹⁵.

Without considering the potential social, political economic implications of this comparison, certain conclusions may immediately be drawn from these observations. In contrast to the shaft grave for which the difference in time between the death of the person to be entombed and the act of entombment was probably rather brief, a much longer time elapsed before the tholos could have been used. The involvement of many persons in its planning and execution and the long time required for its construction allow the observation that its preparation was a much more public phenomenon than the shaft graves. A simplistic interpretation would suggest, following Binford's analysis, that in the former instance, the smaller group of persons involved with the act of preparing the burial facility and carrying out the burial rite represents a smaller societal group, while the larger number and their increased complexity of organization associated with the latter burial represents a larger more complex

(13) See the critique of TAINTER by O'SHEA, *op. cit.*, p. 16-20.

(14) See the study by R.J.C. ATKINSON, "Neolithic Engineering", *Antiquity* 35 (1961), p. 292-297, who calculates the work in terms of man hours.

(15) Compare: C. RENFREW, "Social Organization in Neolithic Wessex", in *Approaches to Social Archaeology* (1984), p. 234. Here again the calculations are in man hours. Translating those of the shaft grave and the tholos into man hours, and including time for removal of the earth, I reckon the shaft grave to equal about 2,400 man hours and the tholos to roughly be 57,600 hours *excluding the masonry work*.

societal group ¹⁶. The changing relationship between the group and the burial facility on the one hand and the group's perception of symbolic function of the burial facility are the questions to which this paper is directed.

Symbolic Expression :

At this point the issue of the importance of symbol in mortuary practice at Mycenae needs to be introduced. In the Shaft Graves symbolic behavior can be recognized at two different levels (whatever symbolic activity transpired during the ritual of burial is not for us recoverable). Outwardly and of a lasting and public value are the symbols denoting the burial after the fact. The mere marking off of a distinct burial area, as demonstrable by the *peribolos* of Circle B, makes a statement about the special nature of the burials there, particularly, as L. Goldstein has demonstrated, about the relation of the living to the deceased and their corporate claims on certain resources ¹⁷, of which a basic form is that of territory ¹⁸. More specifically the grave stelae announce the place of burial of distinct individuals and the iconography of the scenes carved on the stelae announces in an explicit manner something about the behavior contemporaries were to associate with those interred. The second level of symbolic use is illustrated by the goods placed within the graves. Whether or not these goods belonged to the deceased ¹⁹ is irrelevant because in the instance of the Shaft Grave burials we are able to associate the iconography of the stelae with the objects found within the tombs, which tend toward the identification of male burials with militaristic activity.

Studies of the relation of types of grave goods among the Shaft Graves, the chamber tombs and the tholos tombs, indicate that these militaristic symbols were employed frequently in burials from the Shaft Grave period into the Late Helladic IIIA period ²⁰. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to think that the robbed tholos tombs at Mycenae originally contained equally grandiose expressions of this military character of the deceased ²¹. This apparent continuity in the assemblage of grave goods in high status burials at Mycenae presumably reflects some continuity of burial custom from the early to the later Mycenaean periods, although it is admitted here that this problem needs much further study. But the outward expressions, as seen in the burial facility, changed dramatically over time as is evident with the shift to the

(16) BINFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 18-23, where, of course, the emphasis is not on the size of the burial form, but on the complexity and variability of mortuary practice.

(17) GOLDSTEIN, *Mississippian Mortuary Practices. A Case Study of two Cemeteries in the Lower Illinois Valley* (1980), p. 8.

(18) Cf. C. RENFREW, "Megaliths, Territories and Population", in *Approaches to Social Archaeology* (1984), p. 178-182.

(19) UCKO, *op. cit.*

(20) MATTHÄUS, *op. cit.*, p. 203-215, *nota bene* : the tholos at Archanes, at Tragana and at Nichoria cited on page 206, 12; ID., *Die Bronzegefäße der kretisch-mykenischen Kultur* (1980), p. 17-31.

(21) Compare the wealth of meager remains discovered in the robbed tholoi at Mycenae in A.J.B. WACE, *BSA* 25 (1921-1923), p. 353-357 (Atreus), p. 334-337 (Argive Heraion), p. 365-73 (the unplundered burial in the dromos of the Klytemnestra tomb).

construction of tholos tombs.

Considering the latest tholoi at Mycenae, the Klytemnestra and Atreus examples, the expenditure of energy and its relation to the outward symbolic expression of the burial is of an even greater magnitude than in the other tholoi. The question arises when looking at structures such as these late tholoi, to what extent are they monumental expressions of power? To examine this question we need consider briefly the tholoi as a general phenomenon amongst the burials at Mycenae. A number of scholars here in this symposium and elsewhere have demonstrated beyond any doubt that the equation : tholos = ruler is not valid ²². At Mycenae the apparent date of six of the tholoi to LH IIA is clear evidence of the difficulty of this position ²³. Furthermore, the distribution of the tholoi amongst the chamber tomb cemeteries is, as Tsountas observed long ago ²⁴, probable evidence that they should be associated in some fashion with the organization of social groups within the society Late Bronze Age Mycenae. We are probably witness to expressions of horizontal social groupings, sodalities, moieties, or clans, with the tholoi as expressions of the upper stratum within each group ²⁵. Taking this into account does not, however, prevent us from thinking that certain individuals or certain groups attained dominance over others. There needs, though, to be some way of demonstrating this from the archaeological record.

I would propose that the symbolic expression of power at Mycenae underwent a major change from the period of the Shaft Graves and the early palace period (LH IIIA) to the later palace period (LH IIIA:2/IIIB) that is reflected in the planning and construction of the later tholos tombs at Mycenae and that is related to changes in the complexity of the political organization of Mycenae. Further I argue that these changes related to a changing conception of territory, now no longer confined to the resource area necessary for the subsistence of the corporate group at Mycenae, but extended beyond it to include a political boundary determined in relation to other centers of power in the region ²⁶. In essence they exhibit an outward expression of power that was developed to be immediately understandable to anyone approaching the citadel. The symbolism employed consisted of monumental architectural forms combined with a monumentalized iconography. As a monumental public symbolism it contrasts with that employed in the Shaft Graves which is restricted in size and placement as befits a small-scale society. The following discussion will attempt an analysis of the elements of this public symbolism and an explanation of its use.

(22) MEE, CAVANAGH, *op. cit.* P. DARQUE, "Les tholoi et l'organisation socio-politique du monde mycénien", this volume.

(23) O.T.P.K. DICKINSON, *The Origins of Mycenaean Civilisation* (SIMA 49 [1977], p. 62).

(24) TSOUNTAS, MANATT, p. 131-132.

(25) C. PEEBLES, S. KUS, "Some Archaeological Correlates of Ranked Societies", *American Antiquity* 42 (1977), p. 421-428.

(26) See Binford's observation, *op. cit.*, that "when a cultural system is altered in its organization, new units of organizational relevance are generated by the human participants. [This may] result in a proliferation of symbols within the socio-cultural system". See also RENFREW, *op. cit.*

The Masonry of the Tholoi :

At Mycenae there are two masonry traditions evident in the tholoi, the working of poros limestone and the working of conglomerate. In his studies of the tholoi Wace documented the appearance of these stones and in part used them as features for distinguishing three phases for the construction of the Mycenae tholoi ²⁷. By comparing the relative uses of these two stones in the tholoi, it is also possible to distinguish the rise of a masonry style that is distinct for the tholoi at Mycenae and becomes a hallmark of the architecture of Mycenae during the 13th century B.C. This architecture is characterized by the use of conglomerate stone cut and set as ashlar masonry. It can be shown that this masonry style was used as a symbolic form for expressing the power and authority of the ruler or ruling group of Mycenae and his or their dynastic relation to ancestors who preceded.

The key to this development is the exploitation of conglomerate. It is readily available around Mycenae occurring abundantly on the Panagia and Kalkani ridges ²⁸. With the exception of Prosymna the stone is not locally available elsewhere in the Argolid. As a result the stone is only exceptionally employed outside Mycenae.

The details of this development are clearly illustrated in the accompanying chart (p. 178). It shows that in the tholoi conglomerate masonry gradually displaces poros limestone in use and as this process develops the conglomerate is cut increasingly as ashlar-like blocks, laid in courses, and given careful dressing including polished and sawn surfaces.

The growing preference for conglomerate in these tombs reaches its maximum expression in the latest three, the tomb of the Genii, the Atreus and the Klytemnestra tholoi ²⁹. Contemporaneously it is employed in strategic parts of the major extension of the citadel of Mycenae which includes the extension of a new wall around the southwestern part of the citadel, the erection of the Lion Gate, the refurbishing of Grave Circle A and the erection of the great Ramp leading up to the palace, the rebuilding of the palace, and the erection of the House of Columns and so-called East Wing of the Palace ³⁰.

The decision to build the Lion Gate and its flanking walls of conglomerate in the same style and in a similar form to the tholos tombs underlines the importance this masonry style had assumed. The similarities in their plan and appearance, I believe, represent a conscious monumental symbolism that links them together in a blatant advertisement of the continuing power of the ruling group. A description of some of the details of the Lion Gate and the tholoi

(27) A.J.B. WACE, "Excavations at Mycenae", *BSA* 25 (1921-1923), p. 387-396.

(28) Geologic maps of Greece : SGRS sheets for 1960, 1963; see also A.J.B. WACE *Mycenae. An Archaeological History and Guide* (1949), p. 135-136.

(29) A.J.B. WACE, *BSA* 25 (1921-1923), p. 389-390.

(30) G.E. Mylonas established the archaeological sequence of construction in this area during his work during the late 1950's and showed it to be a) Lion Gate and West Wall, b) Grave Circle and c) Great Ramp (*ArchEph* 1962, p. 113-129; *Mycenae's Last Century of Greatness*, Australian Humanities Research Council, *Occasional Paper* 13 [1968]; "The East Wing of the Palace at Mycenae", *Hesperia* 35 [1966], p. 419-426).

TOMB	POSITION							TECH.	
	chamber	lintel	stomion	facade	dromos base at facade only	entire base of dromos	entire dromos	hammered	sawn
Cyclopean									
Epano Phournos									
Aegisthus 1st		●							
Panagia		●	●		●				
Aegisthus 2nd		●			●				
Kato Phournos		●	●	●				●	
Lion		●	●	●				●	
Genii	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Atreus	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Clytemnestra	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Distribution of conglomerate masonry in tholoi at Mycenae

will illustrate the intimate relation between them. In plan each has a gateway with a relieving triangle and decorated stone facade ³¹. The gate wall is built of coursed conglomerate. The gates are flanked by the walls of a dromos; in the case of the Lion Gate the defensive walls form the dromos. These walls are also of cut conglomerate, but the blocks in each case are larger and more irregular than those in the facade. The best section is that of the south flanking wall, where massive squared blocks form an impressive coursed megalithic facade. As Mylonas has pointed out, the conglomerate work is only a facade over the actual and earlier cyclopean wall ³².

These striking similarities in masonry technique must also be considered from a chronological point of view. The Atreus tholos must post-date the Atreus bothros deposit of LH IIIA:1 phase ³³, and, as Dickinson and Hope Simpson have pointed out, the figurines from areas representing the construction of the dromos allow a date only slightly later since the LH IIIB:2 sherds beneath the threshold in the stomion are easily enough understood as being deposited after the construction of the treasury (perhaps during the filling of the dromos ? see below p. 183) ³⁴. If the Klytemnestra tholos actually post-dates the Atreus, it cannot date later than LH IIIB:1 ³⁵. Hope Simpson and Dickinson have argued that since the construction of the buildings that lay within the circuit of the SW extension of the fortifications belongs to LH IIIB:1 ³⁶ along with the construction of the terrace supporting Grave Circle A, the southwestern extension of the fortification including the Lion Gate must also date to this phase. Thus the major rebuilding of the fortifications employing conglomerate masonry is contemporary with the construction of the major tholos tombs.

I think that the construction of the Lion Gate in conglomerate masonry was a conscious choice as part of a well-conceived building program by the reigning group at Mycenae to

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- (31) The original form of the decoration of the relieving triangles of the Atreus Tomb and Lion Gate is not a central concern of this paper, although I adhere to the restoration of the facade of the Atreus Tomb that recognizes the relieving triangle was a separate element in the facade. See the reconstruction of C.K. WILLIAMS in A. and H. WACE, *The Mycenaean Room in the National Museum of Athens* (1964), Pl. 1; S.E. ELLIS, R.A. HIGGINS, and R. HOPE SIMPSON, "The facade of the Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae, *BSA* 63 (1968) p. 331-336. Of the Klytemnestra tomb little remains of the facade : A.J.B. WACE, *BSA* 25 (1921-1923), p. 359-360. Various reconstructions have been proposed for this facade and for the Lion Gate relief : see the review of theories in MYLONAS, *Mycenaean Age*, p. 173-175, which gives a balanced and thoughtful account of the Lion Gate; see also P. ÅSTRÖM, B. BLOME, "A Reconstruction of the Lion Relief at Mycenae", *OpAth* 5 (1964), p. 159-191; E. PROTONOTARIOU-DEILAKI, *ArchEph* 1965, p. 7-26; and most recently M.C. SHAW, "The Lion Gate relief at Mycenae reconsidered", *Philoi epi eis Geogion E. Mylonan* (1986), p. 108-123.
- (32) G.E. MYLONAS, *ArchEph* 1962, p. 62-63.
- (33) E. FRENCH, "Late Helladic IIIA:1 Pottery from Mycenae", *BSA* 59 (1964), p. 241-261.
- (34) *Gazetteer* I, p. 36.
- (35) Against a late date for the Atreus tholos see E. FRENCH, "Pottery Groups from Mycenae : A Summary", *BSA* 58 (1963), p. 46, n. 29.
- (36) Above n. 34.

advertise itself as the sole and legitimate heir of power. Beyond the employment of the special masonry form of conglomerate already discussed, there are two aspects to this program that represent the conscious creation and manipulation of symbols for affirming power. The first that I shall discuss is the careful placement of large monumental constructions as markers within the immediate outlying area of the citadel. The second is the utilization of iconographic conventions that clarify the meaning of the monuments.

As just demonstrated, the tombs and the Lion Gate were constructed and visible at the same time and they are both constructed of the same masonry. They are not, however, the only examples of this masonry form; others are located in strategic positions along the major approach to the citadel, and because of the limited use of this masonry outside the tholoi, it is reasonable to assume that they all belong to the period of construction of the great tholoi and of the Lion Gate. The first of these is the bridge below the chapel of Ayios Georgios which has a distinctive coursing of conglomerate and limestone Cyclopean masonry and which lies at an important crossing of the road leading from Prosymna up to the citadel ³⁷. Continuing along this road one would pass along the Panagia ridge until one encountered the conglomerate terrace wall of the Atreus tholos, the tholos itself ³⁸. Thereafter, swinging around the eastern side of the House Outside the Citadel, one passed along the road fronting them ³⁹ and in front of the Klytemnestra tholos before ascending to the entrance before the Lion Gate ⁴⁰. After

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- (37) The masonry of the bridge or causeway below the chapel of St. George is a curious alternation of slabs of much worn conglomerate and squarish cyclopean blocks of limestone. Although the construction is not strictly ashlar, even under the loose rubric of its appearance in conglomerate at Mycenae, the mixture of flat conglomerate slabs and massive limestone boulders shows it to fit squarely in the masonry tradition of this period. Blegen (*Prosymna*, p. 19-20) believed this bridge to be Geometric in date, principally on the masonry style, which he compared to the great upper terrace at the Argive Heraion, but also because of the large number of Geometric sherds scattered on the ground around the bridge. Cook's discovery of the Agamemnoneion in this area (*BSA* 48 [1953], p.30) explains the presence of the pottery. See also J. WRIGHT, "The Old Temple Terrace at the Argive Heraeum and the Early Cult of Hera in the Argolid", *JHS* 102 (1982), p. 187-201, where the relationship between this style and the Heraion terrace is analysed. See also A.J.B. WACE, *Mycenae. An Archaeological History and Guide* (1949), p. 25-26, and Mylonas, *Mycenaean Age*, p. 87, who discovered traces of a road system below the southwest slope of the citadel, which he thought might precede that to which the Ag. Georgios bridge belonged, cf. his reconstruction of the early approach to the citadel, p. 25-26.
- (38) I do not know of direct evidence for this road. Since the Ag. Georgios bridge leads one over the Chaos ravine to its west bank, it seems natural that the road then turned to the northeast to proceed along the east slope of the Panagia ridge toward the citadel. Indirect evidence is gained from the presence of a cluster of houses northeast of the Atreus tomb (see G.E. MYLONAS, *PraktArchEt* 1962, p. 104-106; 1963, p. 65-66) for they must have been located along a route of access to the citadel.
- (39) Verdelis discovered this road passing at the base of the House of the Oil Merchant and extending along the terrace of the House of the Shields : *PraktArchEt* 1962, p. 87-88.
- (40) I know of no evidence to demonstrate where the road leading past the Houses Outside the Citadel went. Following Mylonas' argument (*Mycenaean Age*, p. 87) the original road would have skirted in front of the Aegisthus tomb and up around grave Circle A before leading into the citadel. After the plans to extend the circuit wall, construct the Lion Gate and the Klytemnestra tomb, this route would have been

passing through the Lion Gate one saw the newly constructed Grave Circle A. At the original time of construction this view would have been unobstructed since the "Granary" had not yet been built ⁴¹. Anyone coming through the gate, already having passed the tombs would already be sensitive to the suggestion of the relation between the power of the dead and the living rulers. The re-erected grave stelai would clearly evoke the concept of the lineage of power (regardless of its authenticity) at Mycenae ⁴². Here a generalized juxtaposition of monumental forms created a symbolic whole -first via a specialized masonry style, then in terms of similar spatial forms (tholos tomb with dromos and facade; gateway with dromos and facade), and finally through a traditional form, the burial enclosure with grave stelai. This

impossible. Thus the most reasonable assumption is that it continued north from the House of the Shields in full view of the dromos of the Klytemnestra tomb and then veered to the northwest to skirt the western side of the tomb before turning around its back side to cut along the crest of the ridge towards the Lion Gate, see the map in *BSA* (1954), p. 230, Fig. 1.

- (41) The Granary was built after the Lion Gate and the renovation of the Grave Circle, apparently in LH IIIB, with the addition of the east and west corridors even later (A.J.B. WACE, *BSA* 25 [1921-1923], p. 40; S. IAKOVIDES, "Destruction Horizons at Late Bronze Age Mycenae" *Philica Epe eis Georgion E. Mylonan* 1 [1986], p. 241 and n. 65). The Granary rests on a fill excavated by Wace (*BSA* 25 [1921-1923], p. 42) and stated by him (p. 43) to be comparable to the material found in strata I-V of the Lion Gate stratigraphy which includes deep bowls of Classes A and B (Pl. Vb, d, e and text Fig. 5, 6, 7 p. 20-27). Mylonas also put the Granary later than the Lion Gate (above n. 30) and that is an obvious conclusion because of its forced position wedged between the Lion Gate, the wall and the grave circle.
- (42) The interpretation of the LH IIIB form of Grave Circle A has long eluded scholars. Recently, C. Gates in an excellent review of the evidence for the history of Grave Circle A ("Rethinking the Building History of Grave Circle at Mycenae", *AJA* 89 [1985], p. 263-274) has argued that it was largely forgotten between the end of LH II and LH IIIB periods. Although his revisionist interpretation of the archaeological sequence might be correct, it does not affect fundamentally the interpretation here except to suggest that the reconstruction of the circle in the 13th century B.C. marked a re-discovery of the Shaft Graves and the creation of a cult venerating them out of respect for the unknown predecessors of the present rulers. Nevertheless I think the attempt by Gates is flawed and lacks perspective. First we need take note that the latest shaft grave burials in A and B date to LH II at which time the earliest tholoi are already constructed. Second one of the earliest of these tholoi is that called "Aegisthus" (in its first phase), which is located closest to the graves of circle A and the latest burials of the "prehistoric cemetery" and continues the tradition of burial in the area, later continued by the Klytemnestra tholos (see also : A.J.B. WACE, *BSA* 45 [1950], p. 205, fig. 1; and the general plan in *BSA* 49 [1954], p. 230, fig. 1). Third, the assemblage of burial goods of the Shaft Graves and of the chamber tombs of LH II and IIIA date, and almost certainly of the tholos tombs is very closely related (above n. 20). This continuity in grave goods is a powerful argument for the continuity of rulers at Mycenae, a part of which tradition would be the keeping up of burial plots. This respect would be sufficient argument to understand why the burials were not, for the most part, robbed during the course of time (*contra* GATES, *op. cit.*, p. 269). Re-reading the stratigraphy of this area is fraught with inadequate records and likely a misleading business, and though the attempt to do so may be lauded, the result is no less a reconstruction than any other and as any field excavator would agree, nor more a factual reality than selection of observations of the original excavator and the person attempting to piece the stratigraphy together.

extended visual complex would promote a link between the monuments of the living and those of the dead and inspire a sense of awe and respect that would surely have lasted as one moved up the grand rampway towards the palace at the top of the acropolis.

Such a wide spatial distribution of monuments reflects the changes in the use of symbolism as a vehicle for advertising power from the spatially confined use of symbols in the grave circles. Furthermore, this impression would have been amplified by the use of an iconography of power that had a long tradition in Mycenaean and Minoan art. The primary example of this is the Lion Gate relief with its facing standing lions, each with forepaws on an altar and on either side of a central column. As Mylonas had stated, this relief is like a heraldic coat of arms identifying the reigning family and its palace ⁴³. The large literature that discusses the problems with the reconstruction of this relief has thoroughly covered its iconographic background in the minor arts, in sealstones, ivory and in frescoes ⁴⁴. I would add to the discussion the probability that the consideration of this iconography be extended to include the tholos tomb facades. The use of the column as an architectural symbol on the Lion Gate relief is matched by the decorative and architectural elements that form the facades of the Atreus and Klytemnestra tombs, each a double-storeyed colonnade in a Lakonian marble ⁴⁵ framing the facade. Here too there are numerous examples in the art of the Late Bronze Age that show the symbolic significance of the column ⁴⁶. Scholarship has also not discussed two aspects of the issue of such use of iconography that may at least be raised here. First is the reversal of the normally assumed relation between minor and major or monumental arts, i.e. that the latter influence the former. Here we seem to have the reverse. An explanation is required and may be sought in recognizing that the iconographic forms occur on rather specialized objects in the minor arts as noticed above (footnote 44). As we know from their archaeological contexts, usually tombs with luxury or prestige items, and analyses of their use or appearance ⁴⁷, they circulated primarily amongst the ruling elite of Late Bronze Age society. Thus we might offer explanation for the transference of their iconography into the monumental arts as a development of the extension of power and of the symbols of power to a wider audience. Parenthetically it may be observed that this development can also explain the otherwise nearly inextricably sudden appearance of monumental stone carving in Mycenaean society.

Of course these symbols worked together only as long as the dromoi of the tholoi remained open. As in other cultures, such as Egypt, which employ elaborate grave architecture containing precious grave goods and important personages, a concern for the

(43) MYLONAS, *Mycenaean Age*, p. 173.

(44) MYLONAS, *Mycenaean Age*, gives a balanced and thoughtful account of the Lion Gate; see other references in above n. 31.

(45) The marble is from Kyprianon : S.E. ELLIS, R.A. HIGGINS, R. HOPE SIMPSON "The Facade of the Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae", *BSA* 63 (1968), p. 331-336.

(46) Above n. 33. For representation of columns in symbolic contexts see : M.P. NILSSON, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* 2nd ed. (1950), p. 250-256.

(47) E.g. J. BETTS "New Light on Minoan Bureaucracy. A Re-examination of some Cretan Sealings", *Kadmos* 6 (1967), p. 15-40.

safety of the burial prompted its removal from immediate accessibility to tomb robbers and other unwonted persons. In Mycenaean burial custom, sealing the stomion and filling in the dromos accomplished that purpose. Yet there is some slight evidence that the dromoi of the tholoi remained open, perhaps for a considerable period of time. As mentioned in passing above, the presence of LH IIIB2 sherds under the threshold of the Atreus tomb might be interpreted as belonging to the filling in of the dromos (above n. 35). Stronger evidence is found in the Klytemnestra dromos where Wace observed that the west dromos wall had collapsed and was rebuilt employing coping stones that originally had lined the top of the wall⁴⁸. Although these instances give no measure of the length of time these dromoi were exposed after completion of the tomb, they permit the following observation. If the monuments assembled in this discussion argue for a kind of royal building program, then its efficacy for the patrons would most naturally lie within the period of their rule; the removal from sight of one or another or both of the tomb facades after the death of its patron would not affect the message originally intended by these constructions.

Although as far as we know, the Lion Gate relief is unique, a similar relief is restored above the "Steintor" at Tiryns and a probable ornamental gate is known to exist on the Larissa at Argos⁴⁹. These, too, are built of the conglomerate stone employed at Mycenae. The exceptional use of this stone in key monuments at neighboring centers needs explanation, if one accepts the above arguments for the significance attached to its use at Mycenae. One could hardly expect that the stone could be quarried and removed from Mycenae for use at Argos and Tiryns without the knowledge and permission of the rulers of Mycenae. The same might hold true for the masons who worked the stone, assuming that only the masons at Mycenae were familiar with its special properties. Moreover, the use of conglomerate in gateways, though explainable as an emulation of its use at Mycenae, seems best understood in the context of its use there, namely as a propagandization of the rulers of Mycenae. Thus it would be valuable to know what form the relief over the lintels of these gates took. Perhaps the public symbolism employed at Mycenae was part of a program of pronouncing the consolidation of power of her rulers over the general region of the Argolid. In such an instance, admittedly very hypothetical, the distribution of this form of power symbolism could be compared in general way to the use of monumental sculpture adorning the gates of Hittite centers such as Bogazköy and Alaja Hüyük.

But the distribution was limited. Aside from the Lion Gate we have only the evidence from frescoes at Pylos, which have recently been used skillfully by M.K. Shaw in studying the Lion Gate⁵⁰. Perhaps these iconographic devices were still new, were only now being

(48) A.J.B. WACE, "Notes on the Construction of the Tomb of Clytemnestra", *BSA* 50 (1955), p. 197; I. PAPADEMETRIOU, *ArchEph* 1948-1949 *parart.*, p. 43.

(49) Steintor : see Sulze's restoration in MÜLLER, *Tiryns* III (1930); Argos : V. VOLLGRAFF, *Mnemosyne* 56 (1928), p. 6 and J. WRIGHT, *Mycenaean Masonry and Techniques* (unpub. diss. Bryn Mawr College, 1978), p. 228-236 (available at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Greece).

(50) Above n. 31.

transformed through glyptic and fresco representation from the Minoan palace culture to the Mycenaean one. Perhaps, then, placing Mycenae on a scale of political development, we might conclude that its rulers had only recently achieved the consciousness of self and of their power to begin to develop and exploit symbols for the public display of power.

This comparison of the use of symbols of power in the Shaft Graves and the tholos tombs clearly reflects the wholesale yet organically related changes that had taken place in Mycenaean mortuary custom between the early and late Mycenaean periods. From an inward, restricted, and temporally brief exhibition of symbolic conceptions about the deceased in the location, form and contents of the Shaft Graves there develops an outward, monumental, and public symbolism that uses the tholos tombs only as a part of a larger statement of power. These changes were necessitated by the changes in the structure of the society, from an early form (like a chiefdom) that emphasized the ties among the social group to a complex form (an early form of state) with an extensive administrative, ideological apparatus of government based over a wide territory.

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