

LISA 2002

Liverpool Interdisciplinary Symposium in Antiquity

Cult and Death

Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of
Postgraduate Researchers
The University of Liverpool, May 2002

Edited by

Danai-Christina Naoum
Georgina Muskett
Mercourios Georgiadis

BAR International Series 1282
2004

The Abodes of the Ancestors: tomb design, ritual and symbolism in Late Helladic IIIA-B Greece

Chrysanthi Gallou

For thousands of years human societies have devoted substantial resources to the procurement of goods and dwellings for their ancestors. Such consumption patterns were recorded in the mortuary agenda of Greek prehistoric mainland and were intensified during the Mycenaean period with the construction and ostentation of elaborate tholos and chamber tombs. However, the value of Mycenaean tombs as enduring signs of the presence of death and as memorials to past lives has often been treated with a certain theoretical simplicity. On the other hand, the appropriation of components from contemporary sacred and secular architecture indicates that for the Mycenaeans the choice and use of specific tomb types as the eternal dwellings of the dead were not determined merely by functional practicality but were rather connected with eschatological tenets, the requirements of post-funerary ritual and the socio-political conditions of LH times. Thus, the objective of this paper is to examine the degree to which symbolism was employed in Mycenaean funerary architecture, in particular as it developed in socio-political and religious complexity.

The élites, the gods and the ancestors in Late Helladic IIIA-B times

Following the deep political changes of the Early Mycenaean period, Late Helladic IIIA-B witnessed the emergence and consolidation of a highly hierarchical and centralised political system. Given the similarities observed in the construction and decoration of the palaces, the enclosure of the citadels within Cyclopean walls and the administrative patterns as recorded in Linear B documents, a process of political unification is apparent with, indisputably, regional variations. Despite the sense of regionalism observed, "this is the period of the Mycenaean cultural *koine*" (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 77, 134).

An increasing religious awareness is also attested during this time. Its components include the

establishment of official places of worship (Albers 1994; Whittaker 1997), the existence of religious personnel attached to the palace (Lejeune 1960; Hooker 1990; see also Aamont's paper in this volume), the tenure of sacred lands by religious officials, the possible management of a sacred calendar and the attribution of religious and priestly functions to the Mycenaean *wanax*, as suggested by the frescoed decoration of the palaces, the material evidence from the *megaron* (hearth, kylikes, grooves, tripod tables of offerings, libation tables), the Linear B evidence and perhaps the co-depiction of the *wanax* with fantastic creatures in the minor arts. The architectural organisation of the citadels at Mycenae and Tiryns could speak volumes for the display of political, religious and ancestral power to the benefit of the ruler (Wright 1987: 176-82; Wright 1995: 74; Gallou *forthcoming*). Large ramps led from the acropolis gate to the palace and a processional way linked the *megaron* at Mycenae with the Cult Centre. The entrance to the palace courts was definitely emphasised by the presence of grand staircases and elaborate *propylaea*. Open spaces leading to the *megara* would have allowed congregational assemblies (Cavanagh 2001: 127-8).

The stability of Late Helladic IIIA-B society is reflected in the relative uniformity observed in the burial practices of the period (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 61). The typical tholos and chamber tombs reached a high level of standardisation, whilst an increase in the number and size of the cemeteries occurred. The use of pit and cist graves declined, although they do appear alongside other tomb types in necropolises such as Deiras, Kokla and Tanagra (Lewartowski 2000: 55). Likewise, tumuli and built graves were restricted to certain areas and denote a sense of continuity from the Middle Helladic period. A certain uniformity is observed in the architectural plan of the tombs and the mode of disposal of the dead, though with indisputably regional variations, whereas it is during this period that a set of eschatological tenets and religious acts led to the establishment of an official cult of the dead. Despite the general scepticism and rejection of a Mycenaean ancestor veneration (see, for example, Mylonas 1948; 1951; 1966; Antonaccio 1995), it is possible to pinpoint religious action-moments in Late Helladic funerary record and to gain access in the identification and understanding of the desire in Mycenaean communities to ascribe sacred status to its ancestors

and to propitiate them with offerings and acts analogous to those addressed to the divine (Gallou 2002).

From tomb as house to tomb as religious statement in Mycenaean times

"Tombs may be the houses of the dead and, alternatively, the living may consider themselves to dwell within the houses of ancestors" (Parker Pearson 1999: 21). In modern Greece the tomb is referred to as "the last residence" and the belief is expressed for an immaterial existence therein. Turning to Mycenaean tombs, a great amount of effort was invested in their construction in order to ensure the facilities and the comforts of a "living" house for the dead. At the same time, the tomb was a sacred place where the ancestors were honoured and placated with customary rites and offerings.

In his study of the *Archaeology of Cult*, Renfrew has underlined the requirement of a sacred liminal zone between the human celebrant and the divine presence for "the performance of expressive actions of worship and propitiation" by the human towards the transcendent being (Renfrew 1985: 18). Therefore, it is essential for the understanding of cultic activity in Mycenaean tombs to examine whether their tripartite division fulfilled the requirements of Renfrew's cult indicators and the needs of the rites of passage connected with death. Before proceeding to the discussion of this issue, it is useful to provide a brief account of the issues of liminality, rites of passage and their connection to funerary cult.

Liminality, rites of passage and the sanctity of funerary ritual

Van Gennep's theory of the *Rites of Passage* and Hertz's contribution to the collective representation of death, introduced *liminality* into social anthropology. With emphasis placed on the ritual data of Madagascar, both scholars viewed death rituals as "a symbolic representation of the ambiguous state of the deceased while in passage from life toward some fixed eternal condition" (Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 111). Hertz focused on the parallel transitional stages, transformations, readjustment and redefinition experienced by mourners, corpse and soul, and

accepted that the passage of the soul as a homology or model of this event might be an invariable universal, a supposition recently questioned by Parker Pearson (Hertz 1960: 78-9; Parker Pearson 1999: 22).

Van Gennep investigated the ritual activities marking the individual's life cycle and set a tripartite structure of transition from one social condition to another, viz. *preliminal rites* (or *rites of separation*), *liminal* or *threshold rites* (or *rites of marginality/transition*) and *post-liminal rites* (or *rites incorporation/re-integration*) (van Gennep 1960: 10-1)

Van Gennep emphasised the importance attached to the transformative power in these rites - a power often referred to as *liminality*- an indication of "the status of the transition stage as outside the normal constraints of human time and space and as a different set of conditions that are both more powerful and dangerous" (Cunningham 1999: 59). Other scholars have defined *liminality* as "the institutionalised categorisation of certain moments in time and specific locations in the landscape as sacred, both outside of ordinary time and betwixt and between the world of the 'here and now' and the other world of the supernatural" (Turner 1967: 94; Leach 1976: 33-36, 77-79, fig. 8; Parker Pearson 1993: 204). Interestingly, the variability of rites surrounding death seems to contrast with the seemingly universality of van Gennep's tripartite system of rites of passage (van Gennep 1960: 46-65; Branigan 1993: 120-1; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 105, Murphy 1998: 32-5; Parker Pearson 1999: 22).

For Leach, "in the case of mortuary ritual it is often a dogma that death is only a gateway to future life", whereas according to Murphy, "the basic function of funerary rituals is a rite of passage between life and death" (Leach 1976: 79; Murphy 1998: 32). Tambiah's remark that "rites...enact and incarnate cosmological perceptions", led Cavanagh and Mee to state that "the pair mortal/immortal indicate that death is almost in the definition of religion" (Tambiah 1979: 121; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 106). Their synopsis of prehistoric ritual actions negotiating the relationship between the living and the dead and beliefs concerning the soul and its fate refers to the primary treatment of the corpse and its characterisation through offerings, rites of separation, the negotiation of power and status and the human experience of death (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 106-107).

Nevertheless, in a special relation to the sacred rituals of life, stand death and the religious ceremonies, associated with the passage from life to the hereafter.

Turning to the rites of passage connected with death, the pre-liminal stage entails the detachment of the dead from the settlement and their placement in a formal disposal area that acts as the liminal zone. Purification, banqueting and drinking ceremonies may accompany this act. During the liminal or transitional stage the deceased moves 'betwixt and between' the world of the living and the plane of the ancestors, while the mourning period continues in the living community. By the end of this stage and the beginning of the re-aggregation phase, the deceased is fully incorporated into the realm of the ancestors, an event celebrated with the performance of a family or communal feast and by repeated ceremonies in honour of the ancestral spirits. Following a contextual analysis of ritual acts connected with ancestor veneration in LH III times and the criteria of ritual action established by Renfrew, it is plausible to suggest that the first stage of Mycenaean funerary cult might have been the establishment and performance of secondary burial treatment traditionally connected with the post-liminal stage (Gallou 2002). The handling of human bones is generally accepted as the termination of the funerary process incorporated into the re-integration stage and, concurrently, as the period during which the re-consolidation of the bereaved community is processed and communion with the sacred ancestors is achieved. The manipulation of ancestral skeletal remains and the incorporation of the dead into an anonymous mass of bones carefully handled would have aimed at bringing the dead into the orbit of the living in order to familiarise the Mycenaean community with its forebears and, consequently, at effacing the deceased's individuality and their incorporation into the ancestral collectivity. Thus, the next section will provide examples supporting the thesis that the introduction and consolidation of the tripartite division of Mycenaean collective tombs was inextricably linked with the evolution of a set of ceremonials connected with the custom of secondary burial treatment and the Mycenaean cult of the dead.

Post-funerary ritual and the tripartite division of Mycenaean tombs

The typical Mycenaean tholos and chamber tombs feature a tripartite plan, which comprises the *dromos* (passageway) that leads to the *stomion* (entrance) opening in turn to the *thalamos* (burial chamber) (figs.1, 2). Apart from its general functional practicality, the *dromos*, which leads to the darkness of the burial chamber, would have contributed to the creation of contrast images and feelings. Inferences for the performance of ritual acts in honour of the sacred dead in this part of the tomb can be drawn from certain structural elements (pits, cists and niches), the presence of shattered pottery, jewellery, animal bones and the remnants of secondary burial treatment ceremonies as well as the remains of ritual feasting in the fill of the *dromoi*. Public participation in the ancestral ceremonies would have been possible as suggested by the care taken for the white-stuccoed *dromoi* of a number of tholos tombs and the presence of an open area before others (e.g. the Atreus Treasury and the Tholos of Clytemnestra). Interesting is the observation that on certain occasions special care was taken for the careful formation of the tomb's passageway as contrasted to the careless construction of the burial chamber (note the case of the chamber tombs at the Mycenaean necropolis of Tanagra, Spyropoulos 1969: 7; 1970: 31).

Instructive of the repeated use of the *dromos* for the deposition of offerings in honour of the dead are the instances reported from Berbati tomb XII and Zygouries tomb XXV; in particular, "near the surface, 4.75 and 5.80m from the opening of the chamber on the longitudinal axis of the *dromos* (of chamber tomb XII at Berbati), were four stones in a row beneath which, under a protective covering of earth, lay vase no. 23 (i.e. a hydria)" (Säflund 1965: 71, 78, figs.49, 59-60). Interestingly, all pottery reported from the tomb is dated to LH IIIA1-III A2^{early} apart from the hydria from the *dromos*, which is datable to LH IIIA2^{late}. Similarly, near the bottom of the *dromos* of tomb XXV at Zygouries, a sepulchre that featured no burial chamber, no interments and no remains of other artefacts, appeared a large slab of poros laying partly on its side and beneath it an intact jug of LH III date (Blegen 1928: 65). Based on the careful deposition of offerings in the *dromos*, the care taken for the formation of the walls of the *dromoi* of a number of tombs –on certain occasions the floor was also

covered with a layer of whitish clay- and the remarks made by the excavators of Asine chamber tomb I:2 and Dendra tomb 14 (Frödin and Persson 1938: 162, 166, 169-70; Åström 1977: 106), it would be plausible to suggest that the *dromoi* of a number of tombs, if not all, might have stayed open for some time before and after the burial. Moreover, the presence of two recesses cut into either side of the outer end of one of the two *dromoi* leading to the frescoed royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli (Thebes), which have been interpreted as guard posts (Spyropoulos 1972: 310; 1973: 255), could also be taken as an indication of the fact that the *dromos* was left open for some time. However, the lack of a detailed report on the finds and the fact that such recesses are open to various interpretations, it seems wise to leave the issue of these 'guard posts' open.

The use of the inner end of the *dromos*, close to the entrance, as the focal point of cultic activity is indicated in the case of Aidonia chamber tomb 14, a tomb without a chamber, featuring a carelessly constructed passageway and a false *stomion* in front of which the skeleton of a horse was found *in situ* and, at a lower level, the jawbones of fourteen more (Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 25). Similarly, at the inner end of the *dromos* of the tholos tomb at Kokla, two well-preserved skeletons of sheep/goats were unearthed (Demakopoulou 1990: 122). The absence of human remains in both instances renders it highly probable that these animal sacrifices were connected with commemorative rites in honour of the ancestral spirits or with the worship of chthonic deities. *Post festum* remains consisting of animal bones, shattered pottery, cooking ware, ashes and charcoal point to the use of the *dromos* as a locus of ceremonial acts.

Specific architectural elements and the remains of ritual activity are suggestive of the *stomion*'s key role in the negotiations between life and death (note also the desire for the formation of entrances in collective tombs of earlier date, Cavanagh 1987: 167). The general symbolic importance of the threshold in Mycenaean religious beliefs and superstitions is most probably reflected on the distributional pattern of terracotta figurines associated with doors and thresholds in the citadels (Kilian 1988: 148). In iconographical terms, the function of the tomb, in particular the *stomion*, as a symbolic barrier between the living and the dead is supported by the presentation scene on side A of the Haghia Triadha

sarcophagus, the long side of a larnax from chamber tomb 51 at Tanagra depicting a sphinx and a priestess on either side of a sacred column and the end panel of another larnax excavated at the same necropolis in 1977, illustrating a winged figure, possibly a soul, before a rectangular structure crowned by two pairs of horns of consecration (Long 1974: 49-50; Spyropoulos 1971: 12; 1977: 19). The frescoed decoration of the tomb illustrated on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus is reminiscent of a class of decorated tombs, a feature that would have reflected the special status of the tomb's owner and it would have had a psychological effect on the celebrants attending the ceremonies, acting as focusing-of-attention device and as mnemonic of similar decorative patterns from contemporary secular and sacred contexts.

This choice of tholos and chamber tomb types make sense in LH IIIA2-B times when their elaboration reached its peak with the Atreus Treasury and the Tholos of Clytemnestra at Mycenae, the Minyas Treasury at Orchomenos and the royal chamber tomb at Megalo Kastelli, Thebes. These elaborately decorated tholos and chamber tombs must be seen as an advertisement of wealth and social display, whereas, at the same time, the use of decorative elements and architectural features from palatial and religious architecture would have acted as symbolic devices and as the means of advertising the rulers' authority, by advertising their capacity to employ sacred features in their tombs. The desire to mimic the elaboration of certain tholos and chamber tombs is evident in the existence of a class of similarly decorated, albeit of lesser quality, tombs in Mycenaean necropolises of the Argolid. In the case of Boeotia, the imitation of the originals painted in the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli is evident in the decoration of larnakes with mourning figures at the cemetery at Tanagra. Another instructive example of the attempt to imitate the monumentality of a tholos tomb by people of lesser status is apparent in the case of chamber tombs 70, 83 and 84 at Mycenae, Palaioikastro (Arkadia) and Volimidhia (Messenia). All the cited examples feature circular chambers hewn into the rock with a slight compression of the sidewalls, a lofty beehive-shaped vault whose top ends in a small asymmetrical cavity and relatively large dimensions. It is noteworthy that the recently reported θολοειδής tomb from Pellana, Laconia, which is dated to LH II-IIIa times, is the largest of its type on the

mainland with a diameter exceeding 10m, whereas the spiral cutting of the roof, as in the neighbouring tombs, is reminiscent of the successive layers of stones forming the cupola of a proper tholos (Spyropoulos 1998: 30-33). Furthermore, its decorated façade, the remains of precious goods and the fact that a palatial centre has recently been uncovered in the area, may be suggestive of the choice of the local ruling group to be buried in this type of tomb as opposed to their rivals at Vapheio; a pattern also observed in Boeotia.

In front of the entrance of a typical Mycenaean tomb, the *dromos* widens to a certain degree, an element that could reveal the desire of the Mycenaeans to create more space for the performance of the customary ancestral rites (Cavanagh 1987: 160, 167). Whole or fragmentary pots, especially kylikes and other drinking vessels, are frequently uncovered before or under the walled entrance or in its packing fill. These finds have been interpreted as potsherds belonging to vases that were either broken and thrown out during cleaning operations in the chamber or as being part of a customary act associated with the rites of separation and a last toast in honour of the dead (*inter alios*, Papavasileiou 1910: 26-27; Wace 1932: 131; Blegen 1937: 237; Mylonas 1948: 72; Vermeule 1964: 299; Andronikos 1968: 93; Niklasson 1981/2: 14; Laffineur 1986: 82; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995: 118; Cavanagh 1998: 106; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 114-115). The deliberate destruction of pottery and grave furnishings in prehistoric funerary contexts has attracted scholarly interest (see, for example, Wiesner 1938: 141, 152, 170, 180; Grinsell 1961: 1973; Andronikos 1968: 100; Fossey 1985; Åström 1987: 213-7; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 122; Parker Pearson 1999: 26).

The destruction of goods at the time or after the burial is often associated with rites of reversal whereby "the dead man is given food he cannot eat, objects he cannot use, and rights he cannot exercise" (Goody 1962: 72). For Soles, the ritual killing of a vessel denotes ownership on behalf of the deceased, whereas ritual breakage may be connected with superstition and/or the emotional state of those who perform the rite as well as an expression of surplus wealth and status (Soles 1999: 787). According to Leach, the "killing" of grave artefacts can be linked to concerns about pollution and to the means by which possessions become "dead" so that they may

accompany the dead to another dimension (Leach 1976; Parker Pearson 1999: 26). Along the same line of argument, the smashing of the drinking vessels would have entailed the pouring of the appropriate liquids to the ancestral spirits and the belief that the dead could acquire the essence of the object offered through breakage. A similar function may have been served by another phenomenon that has been neglected to a certain extent, that is the hiding of precious objects in pits in front or under the *stomion* of several Mycenaean tombs, e.g. chamber tomb 2 at Dendra (Persson 1931: 75-7).

Noteworthy is the case of chamber tomb 523 at the Kalkani cemetery, where plain kylix stems were placed *en masse* in an irregular recess at the top of the right doorjamb, possibly an indication of the continuous and repeated performance of libation rituals after the burial and the post-funerary offerings to the dead (for the tomb, see Wace 1932: 35, 131, fig.18) (fig.3). This is further supported by the fact that the chamber contained exclusively the remains of secondary burials. Instructive is the fact that at the outer end of the *dromos* of the tholos tomb at Berbati a heap of ashes and charcoal was found over a small pit filled with animal bones, whereas a similar heap was found just in front of the tholos' *stomion* (Frizell 1984: 27). Corresponding evidence from Kolonaki/Thebes 4 and 12 (Keramopoulos 1917: 130-1), Faraklas tomb 1 (Faraklas 1967: 218)) and Tanagra 76 (Spyropoulos 1974: 9) suggests that food was, on certain occasions, prepared and consumed at the grave.

The function of the *dromos* and the entrance as foci of repeated ceremonies in the context of funerary cult is also indicated by the presence of a single or pairs of grooves overlapping the *stomion* or being restricted to its area. Such grooves occur in tholos and chamber tombs in Messenia, the Argolid, Korinthia, Boeotia and Kephallenia (Korres 1982: 91; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 151; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995: 119; Blegen 1937: 175, 207; Persson 1942: 21, 53; Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 23; Keramopoulos 1917: 159, 194; Marinatos 1933: 71) (fig.4). Dendra tomb 8 and Thebes Kolonaki 4 feature grooves in the side chamber (Persson 1942: 40; Keramopoulos 1917: 130). Valuable comparable material is provided by the libation channel associated with miniature kylikes uncovered next to the throne of the *megaron* at Ano Englianos and the alabaster slab with a shallow oval

depression in the floor of the porch of the Mycenae palace (Hägg 1990: 180-1; Rehak 1995: 100).

Several scholars have connected the presence of grooves with the need for the smooth running of the funeral cart and the protection of the doorjambs against contact and abrasion by the hearse's wheels (Keramopoullos 1917: 159, 194; Persson 1942: 155-7; Vermeule 1964: 298; Andronikos 1968: 132-4; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 151). Pelon has attributed it to the tomb maker's or the owner's personal taste for refinement of the tomb construction (Pelon 1976: 326-8), whereas Wells has suggested that grooves might have been of merely constructional significance and they would have been obliterated, had time allowed (Wells 1990: 135). The presence of a single groove in the Kephallenian tomb and the observation that the grooves at Dendra tomb 8 were covered with carefully placed stones, led Kontorli-Papadopoulou to attribute cultic significance to the feature (Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 151). Åkeström construed grooves as channels intended to facilitate communication –by means of pouring libations– between the mourners and the deceased after the *stomion* had been blocked (Åkeström 1988: 203-5). Cavanagh and Mee, who conceived the *stomion* of Mycenaean tombs as the focal point for ritual performance, a passage and a barrier literally and spiritually at the same time, suggested that grooves should be interpreted from this perspective (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 49).

In ethnographical terms, the passage from the *dromos* and the *stomion* –symbolising day and light– to the burial chamber –connected with darkness and night– is often conceived as a metaphor of the transition from life to death. The burial chamber is the last resting place of the deceased and the eternal dwelling of the soul, connected with the final stage of the incorporation of the dead to the realm of the ancestors. The suggestion that the chamber of Mycenaean tombs imitated actual houses is validated in the case of rectangular-shaped chambers, but this could not explain the choice of circular shape commonly attested in Mycenaean typical tombs. The circular shape of Mycenaean tombs has been unconvincingly compared to the Homeric *καλύβη* (Tsountas 1885: 32) and the female anatomy of the womb (Goodison 1989: 85).

Although mycenologists lack written accounts on religious acts connected with the dead, the presence of shattered pottery, animal bones, black earth, ashes and carbon point to the performance of ritual acts addressed to the ancestral spirits. The deposition of valuable items in cists, pits and niches sanctions their characterisation as receptacles of ritualistic nature. Traces of fumigation and the discovery of incense burners, scoops, ladles and lamps may reflect concepts of purification and cleanliness as well as the employment of experience inducing devices in the course of post-funerary rites. The care taken for the formation, and occasionally decoration, of benches as well as their association with offerings and service sets of ritualistic nature are revealing of their ceremonial significance, in particular, of their function as altars, a feature whose counterparts can be sought in analogous installations in Mycenaean sanctuaries.

In correspondence to the subsidiary rooms uncovered in connection to the central rooms of several Mycenaean sanctuaries, a number of Late Helladic tombs feature one or more side chambers (fig.4). Although our understanding of their function depends on a handful of examples, the presence of *disiecta membra*, traces of ashes and charcoal, animal bones and offerings point, at least in the majority of the reported examples, to a nexus of ceremonial acts related to the propitiation of the ancestral spirits. Nevertheless, the introduction and development of Mycenaean custom of secondary burial treatment must have dictated the creation of extra space for the deposition of the ceremoniously handled skeletal remains and the performance of the appropriate rites. The elaborate decoration of the side chamber of the Minyas Treasury, followed possibly by the example of the Atreus Tholos, led Kavvadias and Pelon to propose that the side chambers in these tholoi might have been used for primary burials, while the main chamber was intended as a cult place (Kavvadias 1909: 643; Pelon 1990: 111), a supposition rejected by Tsountas and Wace (Tsountas 1888: 135 note 1; Wace 1932: 351-2).

To summarise. Like cult buildings, Mycenaean collective tombs were intended to fulfil two main functions: to shelter the remains of the ancestors and to provide special locus for ritual activity by means of a specialised and purpose-built structure equipped with the necessary facilities for the performance of religious ritual. Accordingly to Renfrew's second

indicator of ritual, the boundary zone, between the Mycenaean mortal celebrants and the plane of the ancestors would have reflected special aspects of the liminal zone.

The introduction and consolidation of collective tombs in Late Helladic III Greece encouraged the evolution and development of a ritual set of ceremonials connected with the custom of secondary burial treatment. The emotional response to direct confrontation with the skeletal remains of earlier interments, which collective burial entails, would have contributed to an interaction between the architectural design of the tombs and development in ritual (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 116, 118). The care taken for the construction of passageways and entrances in Mycenaean tombs is suggestive of their contribution to the periodical re-opening of the tombs with the aim of coming into contact with the ancestral relics and the offering of the customary rites and "gifts".

Mycenaean tholos and chamber tombs with their typical tripartite plan were also "tombs for the living" creating with the purpose of providing an enclosed environment for the performance of ritual acts reinforced by an element of public display and hidden mystery. The *stomion* formed the focal point of ritual action, the element of liminality in Mycenaean funerary architecture; it constituted the boundary zone between the burial chamber, a metaphor of death and

the world of the ancestors, and the *dromos*, symbolic of light and life. It seems highly improbable that the burial chamber entertained large congregations. Restricted participation to the ritual acts performed within the chamber would have been imposed by the controlled access as well as to the limited space available. The interplay of light and darkness created by the architectural plan of the tomb *per se* as well as the employment of lighting devices would have created a sense of awe and mystery in those attending the ceremonies, feelings fundamental in religious experience.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the encouragement and support of my research supervisor Dr W.G. Cavanagh who devoted the time to read and comment on this article. Many thanks are also owed to Ioannis Georganas, Merkourios Georgiadis, Eugenia Zouzoula and Christina Aamont for fruitful discussions and comments. I am most indebted to the 'J.F. Costopoulos Foundation Scholarship' and the Greek Archaeological Committee (UK) for providing me with the financial means to undertake my PhD research, which also led to the production of this paper. The responsibility for all views and mistakes of fact or judgment in this article remains entirely mine.

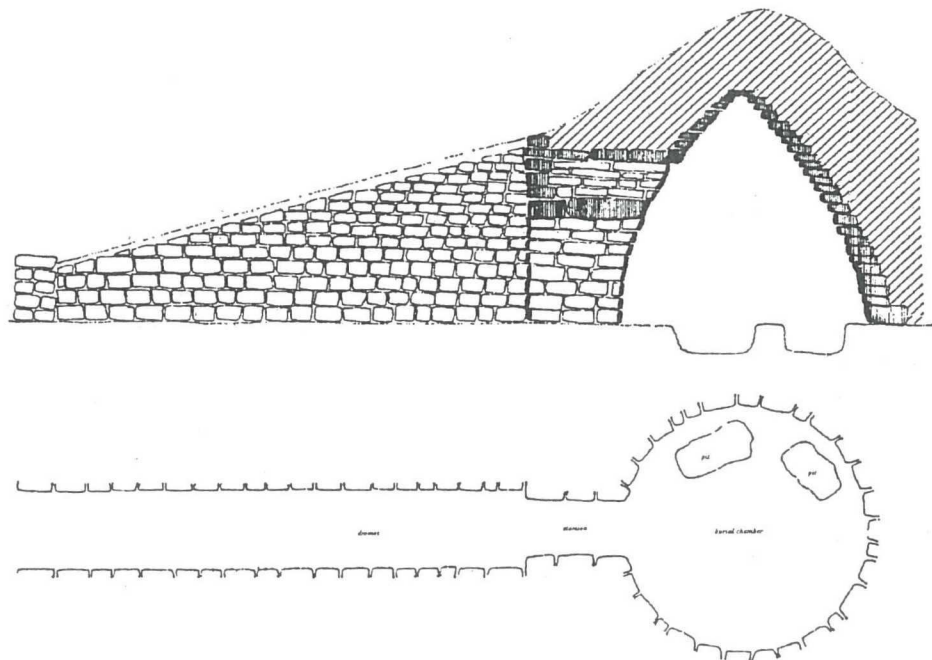


Fig. 1. Plan and section of a typical Mycenaean tholos tomb (redrawn after Mylonas 1966: 119, fig. 24)

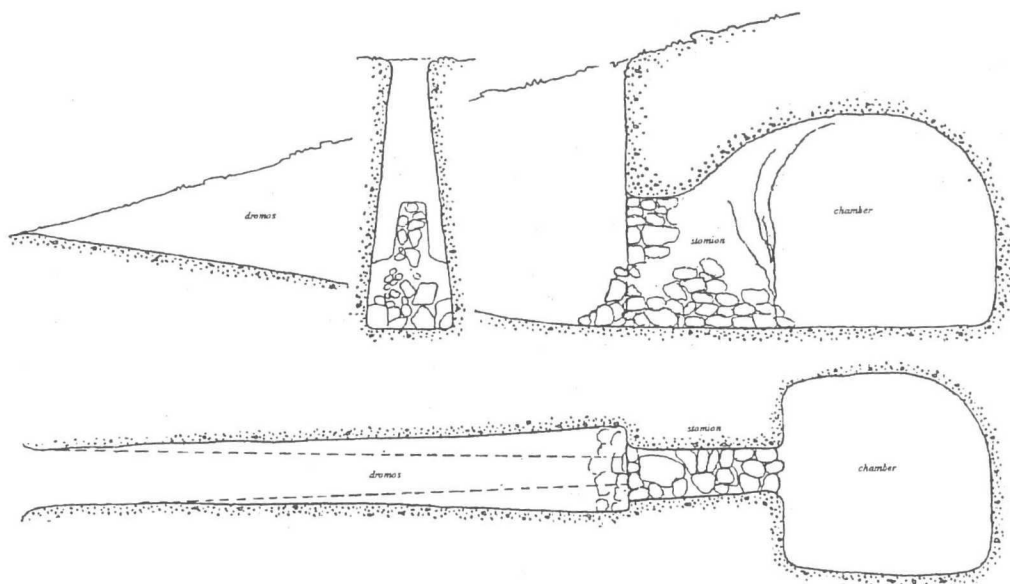


Fig. 2. Plan and section of a typical Mycenaean chamber tomb (redrawn after Wace 1932: 87, fig. 36)

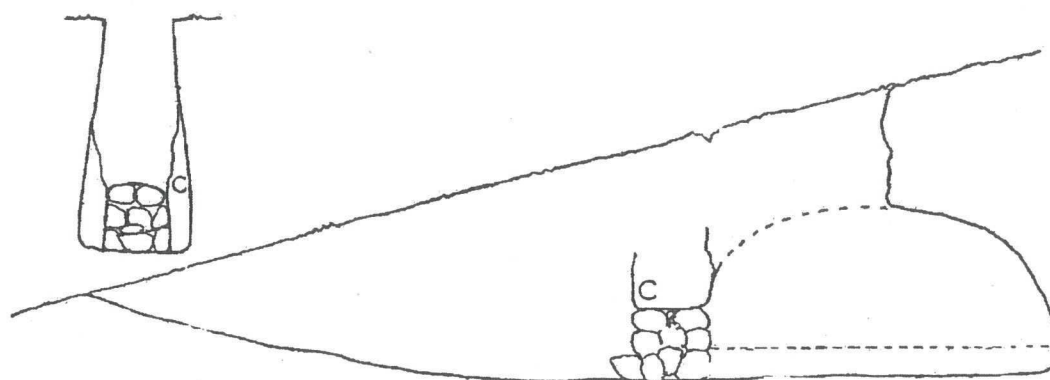


Fig. 3. Chamber tomb 523 at Mycenae (letter *c* marks the position of the recess in the *istomion* containing kylix stems) (redrawn after Wace 1932: 35, fig. 18)

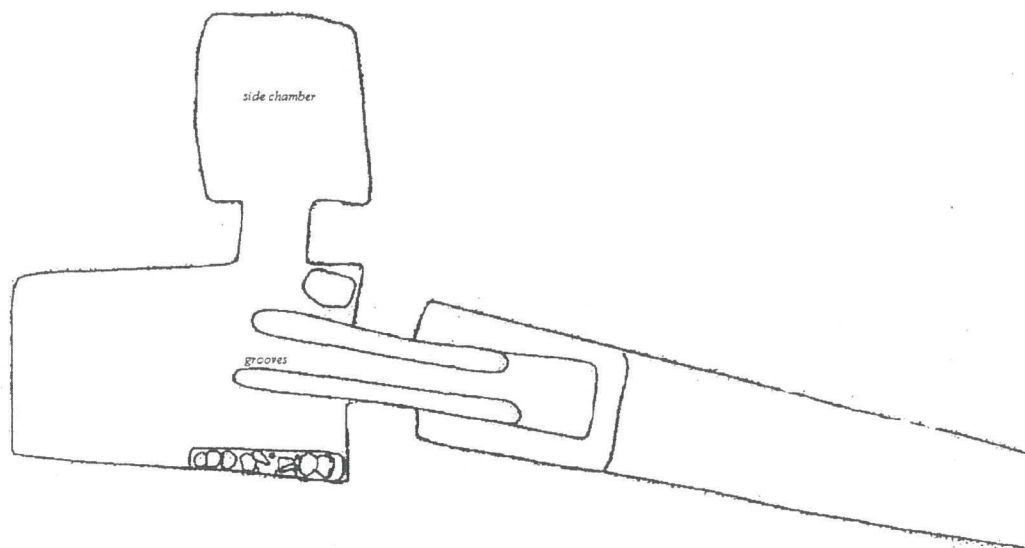


Fig. 4. Plan of the chamber tomb 6 at Dendra; note the grooves and the side chamber (redrawn after Persson 1942: 21, fig. 20)

Bibliography

- Åkeström Å. 1988. "Cultic installations in Mycenaean rooms and tombs", *Problems in Greek Prehistory. Papers presented at the Centenary Conference of the British School at Athens, Manchester April 1986*, E.B. French and K.A. Wardle (eds.), Bristol: 201-10.
- Albers G. 1994. *Spätmykenische Stadtheiligtümer. Systematische Analyse und vergleichende Auswertung des archäologischen Befunde* (BAR-IS 596), Oxford.
- Andronikos M. 1968. *Totenkult*, [ArchHom III], Göttingen.
- Antonaccio C.M. 1995. *An Archaeology of Ancestors. Tomb cult and Hero cult in Early Greece*, Lanham, Md.
- Åström P. 1977. *The Cuirass Tomb and other finds at Dendra. Part I: the chamber tombs*, [SIMA 4], Göteborg.
- Åström P. 1987 "Intentional destruction of grave goods", *Thanatos- Les coutumes funéraires en Égée à l'Âge du Bronze*, [Aegaeum 1], R. Laffineur (ed.), Liège: 213-8.
- Blegen C.W. 1928. *Zygouries: A prehistoric settlement in the valley of Cleonae*, Harvard.
- Blegen C.W. 1937. *Prosymna: the Helladic Settlement preceding the Argive Heraeum*. Cambridge.
- Branigan K. 1993. *Dancing with Death- Life and Death in Southern Crete c. 3000-2000 BC*, Amsterdam.
- Cavanagh W.G. 1987. "Cluster analysis of Mycenaean chamber tombs", *Thanatos. Les coutumes funéraires en Égée à l'Âge du Bronze*, [Aegaeum 1], R. Laffineur (ed.), Liège: 161-9.
- Cavanagh W.G. 1998. "Innovation, Conservatism and Variation in Mycenaean funerary ritual", *Cemetery and Society in the Aegean Bronze Age*, K. Branigan (ed.), Sheffield: 103-14.
- Cavanagh W.G. 2001. "Empty Space? Courts and Squares in Mycenaean Towns", *Urbanism in the Aegean Bronze Age*, Branigan K. (ed.), Sheffield: 119-34.
- Cavanagh W.G. and Mee C. 1998. *A Private Place: Death in Prehistoric Greece*, [SIMA 124], Göteborg.
- Cunningham G. 1999. *Religion and Magic- Approaches and Theories*. Edinburgh.
- Demakopoulou K. 1990. "The Burial Ritual in the Tholos tomb at Kokla, Argolis", *Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid. Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 11-13 June, 1988*, R. Hägg and G.C. Nordquist (eds.), Stockholm: 113-23.
- Faraklas, N. 1967. "Mykhnaikoi tafoi eis lofon Megalo Kastelli Boiwias", *ArchDelt Xpoviká* 22: 227-8.
- Fossey J.M. 1985. "The Ritual Breaking of Objects in Greek Funerary Contexts: A Note", *Folklore* 96: 21-3.
- Frizell B.S. 1984. "The tholos tomb at Berbati", *OpAth* 15: 25-44.
- Frödin O. and Persson A.W. 1938. *Asine: Results of the Swedish excavations 1922-1930*, Stockholm.
- Gallou C. forthcoming. "The Power of Ancestors: Defining the sacred and ancestral landscapes of Late Helladic IIIB Mycenae", *Seascapes and Landscapes Conference*, organised by the Prehistoric Society and the University of Sheffield Archaeology Society, 8-9 February 2002.
- Gallou C. 2002. *The Cult of the Dead in Central Greece during the Mycenaean Period*, (PhD thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham).
- Goodison L. 1989. *Death, Women and the Sun. Symbolism of Regeneration in Early Aegean Religion*, [BICS Supplement 53], London.
- Goody J. 1962. *Death, Property and the Ancestors. A study of the mortuary customs of the Lodagaa of West Africa*, Stanford.
- Grinsell L.V. 1961. "The Breaking of Objects as a Funerary Rite", *Folklore* 72: 475-91.
- Grinsell L.V. 1973. "The Breaking of Objects as a Funerary Rite: Supplementary Notes", *Folklore* 84: 111-4.
- Hägg R. 1990. "The role of libations in Mycenaean ceremony and cult", *Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid. Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 11-13 June, 1988*, R. Hägg and G.C. Nordquist (eds.), Stockholm: 177-84.
- Hertz R. 1960. *Death and the Right Hand*, London.
- Hooker J.T. 1990 "Cult Personnel in the Linear B Texts from Pylos", *Pagan Priests. Religion and Power in the ancient world*, M. Beard and J. North (eds.), London: 159-74.
- Kavvadias P. 1909. *Προϊστορική Αρχαιολογία*, Athens.
- Keramopoulos A.D. 1917. "Ανασκαφαί εν Θηβαίς", *ArchDelt* 3: 2-252.
- Kilian K. 1988. "Mycenaeans up to Date, Trends and Changes in Recent Research", *Problems in Greek*

- Prehistory- Papers presented at the Centenary Conference of the British School at Athens, Manchester April 1986*, F.B. French and K.A. Wardle (eds.), Bristol: 115-52.
- Kontorli-Papadopoulou L. 1987 "Some aspects concerning local peculiarities of the Mycenaean chamber tombs", *Thanatos. Les coutumes funéraires en Égée à l' Âge du Bronze*, [Aegaeum 1], R. Laffineur (ed.), Liège: 145-160.
- Kontorli-Papadopoulou L. 1995. "Mycenaean tholos tombs: some thoughts on burial customs and rites", *Klados- Essays in honour of J.N. Coldstream*, [BICS Supplement 63], C. Morris (ed.), London: 111-22.
- Korres G. 1982. "Burial Customs in Tholos Tomb 2 at Routs/Myrsinochori", *Concilium Eirene XVI. Vol. III: Mycenaeanological Colloquium- Proceedings of the 16th International Eirene Conference*, O. Pavel and A. Frolikova (eds.), Prague: 91-7.
- Krystalli-Votsi K. 1998. "Η ανασκαφή του Μυκηναϊκού νεκροταφείου των Αηδονίων", in *Ο Θησαυρός των Αηδονίων- Σφραγίδες και κοσμήματα της Υστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού στο Αιγαίο*, K. Demakopoulou (ed.), Athens: 21-31.
- Laffineur R. 1986. "Fecondité et pratiques funéraires en Égée à l'Âge du Bronze", *Archaeology and Fertility Cult in the Ancient Mediterranean. Papers presented at the First International Conference on Archaeology of the Ancient Mediterranean. The University of Malta, 2-5 September 1985*, Malta: 79-95.
- Leach E. 1976. *Culture and Communication: the logic by which symbols are connected. An introduction to the use of structuralistic analysis in social anthropology*, Cambridge.
- Lejeune M. 1960. "Prêtres et prêtresses dans les documents mycéniens", *Hommages à Dumézil*, [Collection Latomus, vol. 45], Latomus: 129-39.
- Lewartowski K 2000. *Late Helladic Simple Graves. A Study of Mycenaean Burial Customs*, [BAR-IS 878], Oxford.
- Long C. 1974. *The Ayia Triadha Sarcophagus: A study of Late Minoan and Mycenaean funerary practices and beliefs*, [SIMA 41], Göteborg.
- Marinatos S. 1933. "Αι εν Κεφαλληνία ανασκαφαί Goekoop 2", *AE*: 68-100.
- Metcalfe P. and Huntington R. 1991. *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (2nd edition), Cambridge.
- Murphy J.M. 1998. "Ideology, Rites and Rituals: A view of prepalatial Minoan tholoi", *Cemetery and Society in the Aegean Bronze Age*, K. Branigan (ed.), Sheffield: 27-40.
- Mylonas G.E. 1948. "Homeric and Mycenaean burial customs", *AJA* 52: 56-81.
- Mylonas G.E. 1951. "The Cult of the Dead in Helladic times", *Studies presented to David Moore Robinson on his 70th birthday*, G.E. Mylonas (ed.), Washington: 64-105.
- Mylonas G.E. 1966. *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age*, Princeton.
- Niklasson K. 1981/2. "Mycenaean vase forms from Dendra", *Πρακτικά του Β' Συνεδρίου Πελοποννησιακών Σπουδών, Πάτρα 25-31 Μαΐου 1980*, Volume B, Athens: 208-18.
- Papavasileiou G.A. 1910. *Περί των εν Ευβοία αρχαίων τάφων*, Athens.
- Parker Pearson M. 1993. "The Powerful Dead: Archaeological Relationships Between the Living and the Dead", *CAJ* 3: 209-29.
- Parker Pearson M. 1999. *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Somerset.
- Pelon O. 1976. *Tholoi, tumuli et cercles funéraires. Recherches sur les monuments funéraires de plan circulaire dans l' Égée de l' Âge du Bronze (III^e et II^e millénaires av. J.-C.)*, Paris.
- Pelon O. 1990 "Les tombes à tholos d'Argolide: architecture et rituel funéraire", *Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid. Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 11-13 June, 1988*, R. Hägg and G.C. Nordquist (eds.), Stockholm: 107-12.
- Persson A.W. 1931. *The Royal Tombs at Dendra near Midea*, Lund.
- Persson A.W. 1942. *New tombs at Dendra near Midea*, Lund.
- Rehak P. 1995. "Enthroned figures in Aegean art and the function of the Mycenaean megaron", *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean*, [Aegaeum 11], P. Rehak (ed.), Liège: 95-118.
- Renfrew C. 1985. *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, [BSA Supplement 18], London.
- Säflund G. 1965. *Excavations at Berbati 1936-1937*, Stockholm.
- Soles J.S. 1999 "The Ritual 'Killing' of Pottery and the Discovery of a Mycenaean Telestas at Mochlos", *Meletemata- Studies in the Aegean Archaeology presented to M.H. Wiener as he*