

Hybridisation: Shaft Graves and Early Mycenaean Greece



Entanglements

Cultural Hybridity

- “...cultural mixture is the effect of the practice of mixed origins” (Friedman 1995: 84)
- Hybridisation: construction of new identities & **new social practices** in a contact zone
 - Mix of cultural similarities & differences
 - Social practice involving active social agents



Feasting scene, Ugarit

Cultural Hybridity

- “What is significant about the adoption of alien objects – as of alien ideas – is not the fact that they are adopted, but **the way they are culturally redefined & put to use**” (Kopytoff 1986: 67)
- “Foreign & exotic objects are particularly able to upset existing material relations & create new ones” (Van Wijngaarden 2012, 61),



Rock crystal vase, Mycenae

Middle Ground

- Interaction creates new social structures & practices
 - Mutually beneficial social interaction & exploitation of differences
 - Development of mutually understood system of values
- Social interaction made binding through exchange of culturally appropriate gifts appealing to values of both sides



Gold signet ring, Tiryns

Lost in Translation

- Transformation of external influences by merging them with existing values/practices
- Translation:
 - Foreign practices, objects, ideas made accessible
 - Value depends on their integration into social practices
- Social Imaginary:
 - Negotiation of value & meaning linked to how people **perceive** the world
 - How they choose to attach significance to the exotic
 - Objects are what they **become**



Amber necklace, Mycenae

Early Royal Burials in Greece

- Dramatic increase in wealth of Greek mainland at beginning of LBA, c. 1650 BC:
 - MH III-LH I: Shaft Graves, Mycenae
 - LH I: development of tholos tomb, e.g. Vapheio tholos
 - LH II: Griffin Warrior Tomb, Pylos
- Emergent elites consuming luxury goods from Crete



Wealthy Burials

- Exclusive burial grounds:
 - Massive statement of power & conspicuous consumption
- Extensive use of gold for personal adornment & drinking equipment
- Transformation of material world, social practices & ideologies of Mycenaean elite
 - Manipulation of exotic imagery & objects



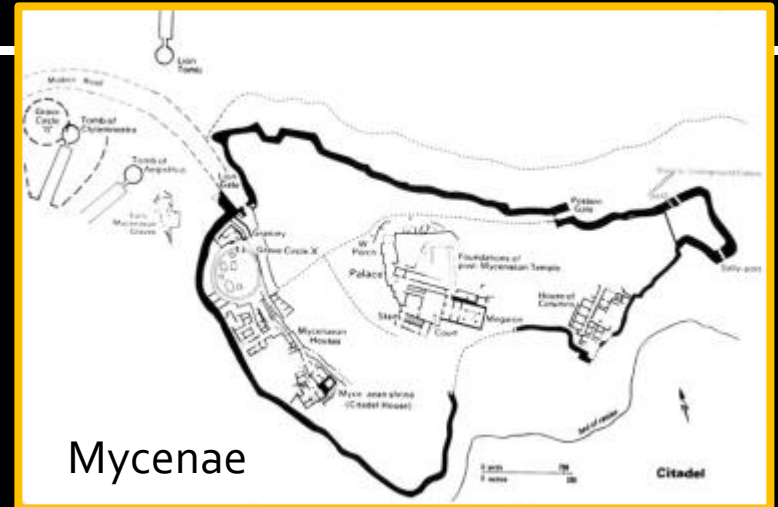
Grave Circle A, Mycenae



Vapheio tholos

Mycenae Shaft Graves

- Grave Circle B:
 - Established over ancient burial ground in MH III
 - Enclosed for elite burials
- Grave Circle A:
 - Established LH I, overlapping Circle B
 - Later remembered as burial place of the kings of Mycenae
- Influence from Minoan Crete in construction of Mycenaean world



Grave Circle B

Circle B Grave Goods

- Pottery
- Latest burials are most wealthy
- Exotic grave goods:
 - Amber necklace
 - Rock crystal duck vase
 - Minoan amethyst seal
 - Electrum mask



Grave Circle A

- Stands out for consumption of gold
- More explicit adoption of Minoanising elements:
 - Luxury vessels & ritual performance
 - Signet rings
 - Weapons



Gold jewellery

Drinking Sets

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



Luxury Drinking Sets Vessels



Conspicuous Consumption

- Libation vessels (*rhyton* – *rhyta*):
 - Ritual performance: liquid offerings
 - Extensive use of gold & silver
 - Ostrich egg rhyta
- New Minoanising practice?



Lion's-head rhyton

Libation Vessels



Ostrich rhyton



Signet Rings

- Only 3 Minoan seal stones:
 - In contrast to 43 from Vapheio
 - More than 50 from Pylos
- Not fully integrated in Mycenaean lifeways?
 - Or too precious to be buried?
- 2 gold signet rings in Tomb IV:
 - Minoan material item
 - Iconography adapted to Mycenaean taste



Battle in the Glen



Chariot scene

Conspicuous Consumption

- Warrior elite: ceremonial weapons
- Swords:
 - Elaborate gold leaf hilts
 - Chased decoration on blades
- Inlaid daggers:
 - Mix of cultural influences on iconography



Sword



Inlaid daggers

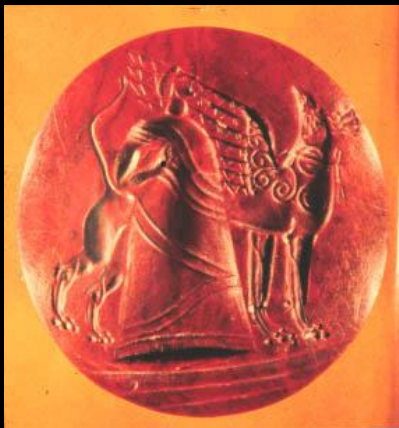


Vapheio

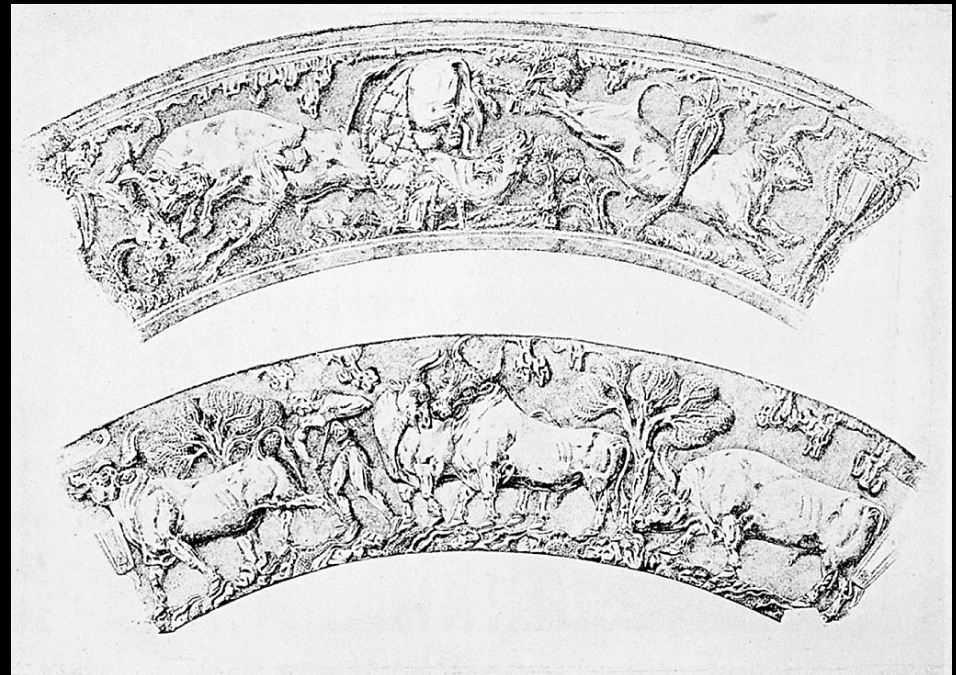
- Tholos tomb, LH I
- Although looted some finds from cache in floor:
 - 2 gold cups
 - 43 sealstones
- Minoan(ising) influences



Vapheio cups

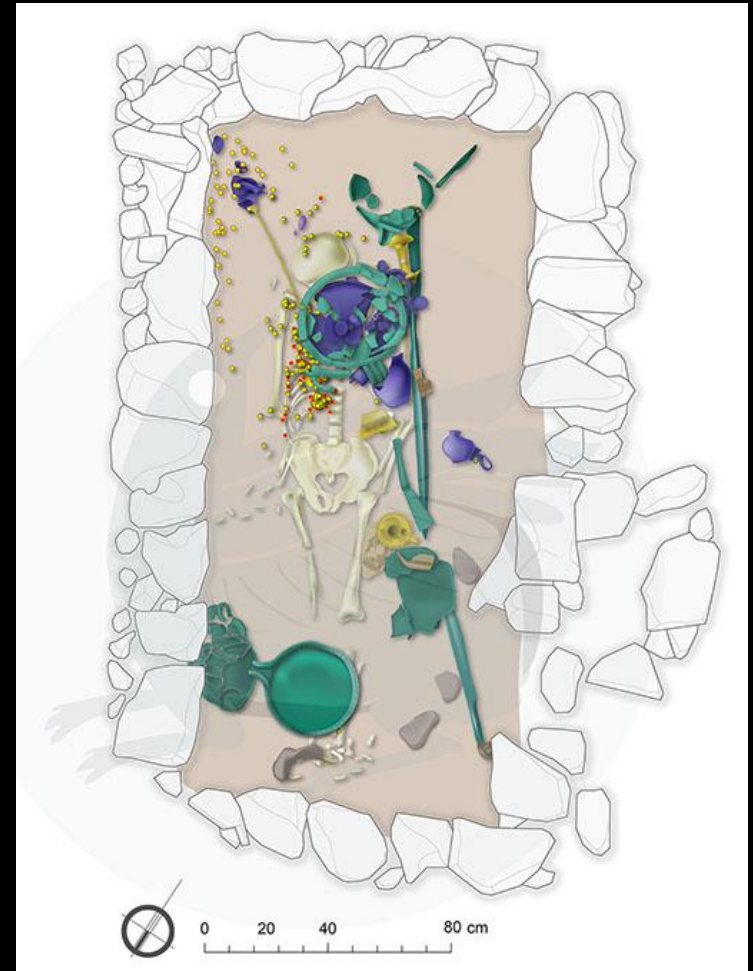


Seal stone



Griffin Warrior Tomb, Pylos

- LH II Pylos
- Incredible intact burial in stone lined cist
- Male burial provided with over 1400 objects:
 - Primarily Minoan luxuries
 - Imported Baltic amber
 - Metal weaponry & vessels



Griffin Warrior Tomb, Pylos

- Grave goods:
 - 4 Minoan gold signet rings
 - Gold necklace
 - Necklace of 1,000 carnelian, amethyst, & jasper beads
 - 50+ Minoan sealstones
 - Toiletry articles: 6 combs & bronze mirror
 - Silver cups
 - Elaborate bronze sword with an ivory hilt.



Ivory comb



Bronze mirror

Adoption of Minoan Seals

- Seal stones & signets used on Crete for some 300 years
 - Development of sophisticated lapidary techniques
 - Iconography
- Ones available for study:
 - Pristine: use life?
- How are these incorporated in Pylian society?
 - Status symbols?
 - Used as seal stones?
 - Personal effects?



Seal stones



Combat Agate

- “arguably the finest work of Aegean glyptic ever discovered” (Stocker & Davis 2017, 584)
 - 3.6 cm long: minute scale & detail of the engraving is unparalleled
- Minoan (LM I) product for Mycenaean consumption:
 - Parallels with gold signet from Mycenae



Combat agate



Signet ring, Mycenae

Rings from Griffin Warrior Tomb



Summary

- Transformation of Mycenaean society at beginning of LBA through contact with Minoan Crete
- Adoption of certain aspects of Minoan culture (but variable – time & place)
- Adaptation of Minoan iconography to meet Mycenaean ideologies
- Mixing of social practice: new ways of doing things in ritual performance