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A Tholos Tomb on the Kephala

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## A THOLOS TOMB ON THE KEPHALA

(PLATES 9-12)

THE ridge known as the Kephalá is the middle part of the long ridge that extends from Zafer Papoura on the south to Isopata on the north. The numerous Late Minoan and Protogeometric tombs uncovered on the west slopes of this ridge suggest that there was here in all probability a Minoan Appian Way connecting Knossos both with the harbour town at the mouth of the Kairatos and with the naval station at Amnisos. Years ago Professor Marinatos pointed out to me what appears to be a clear section of the same Minoan way where the modern road from the aerodrome dips to cut through into the Karteros valley.

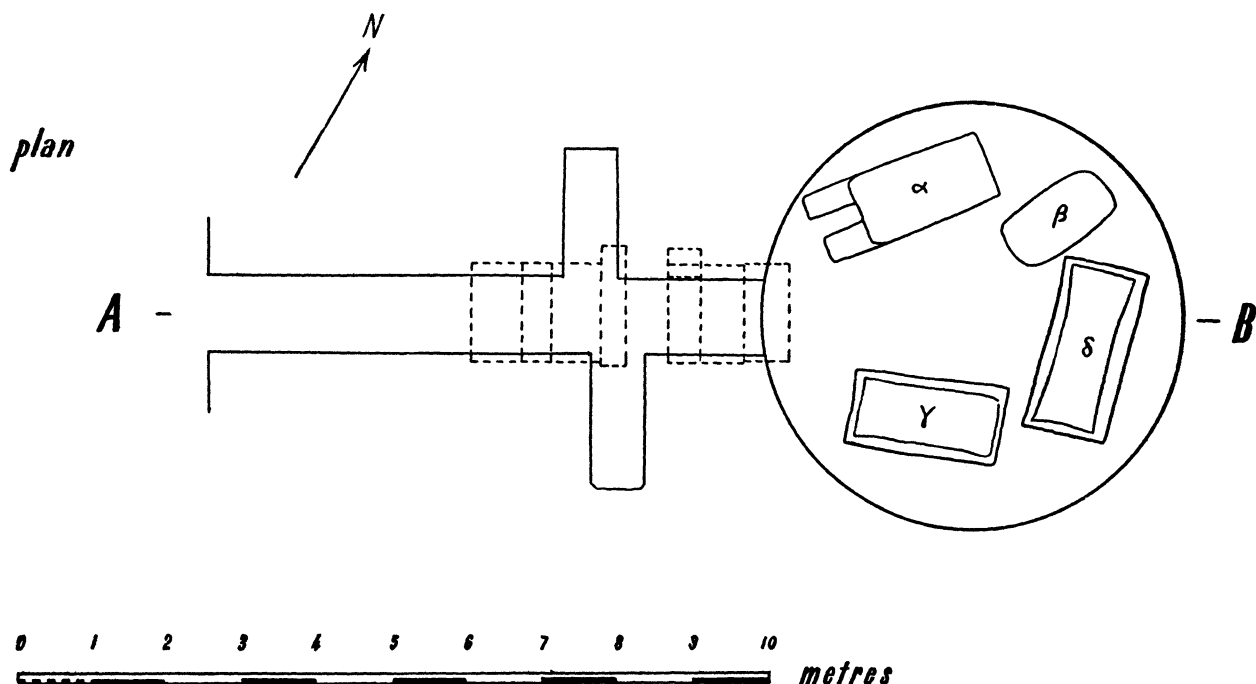
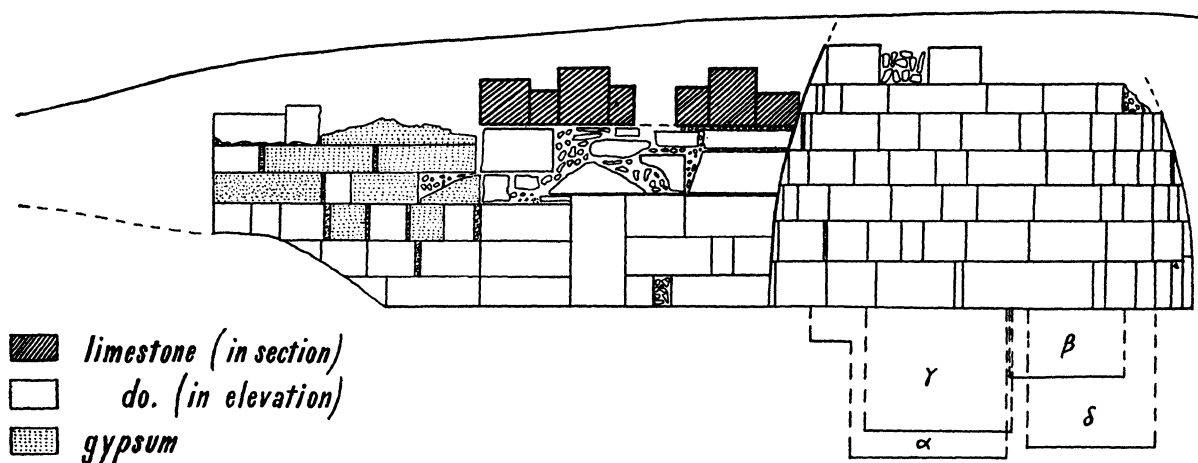
In December 1938 the Ephor Dr. Platon informed me of the possible existence of a Minoan tomb on this ridge, and permission was granted for me to excavate it on behalf of the British School at Athens. I was assisted by two students of the school, Mr. Vincent Desborough and Miss Vronwy Fisher (now Mrs. Hankey). Miss Fisher kept the catalogue of small finds and is responsible for the published account of them. Mr. Desborough was responsible for the planning and surveying of the tomb, and also for most of the photographs taken during the excavations. Mr. Gerald Young, then Director of the School, kindly came over and took some photographs of the tomb and the inscription (PLATE 10*b*). The foreman was my old friend the late Emmanuel Akoumianos.<sup>1</sup>

The first trial trench was opened on 5 December 1938, uncovering four large stones belonging to a tholos tomb (one being a capstone of the fore-chamber and the other three belonging to the vault of the chamber). The first Protogeometric sherd appeared at a depth of 0.30 m. below the surface, and a few L.M. I sherds immediately above the capstones. The following day we uncovered all the roof of the fore-hall intact save for one block missing where robbers had broken in; they had also apparently broken into the chamber, since the lower part of the blocking wall between the fore-hall and the chamber consisted of solid masonry (PLATE 9*c, d*), while the upper part was comprised of loose rubble with a gap on the top exposing a Minoan inscription cut in the south jamb of the doorway into the chamber (PLATE 10*b*).

The upper strata of the chamber began to produce a little L.M. IIIC pottery and a large quantity of human bones, including battered skulls, but all in a very bad condition and scattered in all directions. The roof of the tholos had obviously collapsed at an early date, but the complete absence of stratification was probably due either to disturbance by treasure-hunters or to stray persons squatting in the ruins. The tomb consists of a walled but unroofed dromos, a fore-hall with two side-chambers all roofed, and a circular chamber with false vaulting of the ordinary corbelled type. The site is on the top of the ridge, and the surface was probably as flat in Minoan times as it is today. There may have been some denudation since Minoan times, but not, I think, to any great extent. The dromos had been cut in an easterly direction on a fairly steep slope into the native *kouskouras*, that white marl which is so conspicuous a feature in Central Crete, and its axis was perhaps at right angles to the suggested Minoan Appian Way, which must have almost coincided with the modern footpath to Isopata. The dromos as we found it was lined with walls of squared stones and closed at its west end by an undamaged blocking wall of huge and frequently uncut stones. One cut stone, however, in the blocking wall bore a deeply incised mason's mark which we shall discuss later. The dromos wall did not bind

<sup>1</sup> I am also greatly indebted to Mr. Sinclair Hood for taking additional photographs and revising the typescript, though the responsibility for the views expressed must remain mine.

## KEPHALA THOLOS TOMB

section *AB*

with that of the fore-hall and contained a number of blocks of gypsum, a material not used elsewhere in the tomb. It is therefore likely that the dromos was originally unwallled, and was later lined with masonry taken from some ruined building containing gypsum blocks. We found no roof slabs from the dromos, but the west blocking wall would have been useless unless there had been some sort of covering, possibly of wood with earth on top.

The line of the dromos was continued by an equally narrow fore-hall with a side-chamber issuing from it on each side. This fore-hall corresponds to what Professor Wace calls 'the doorway' of the Mycenaean tholos; but I have retained the name fore-hall, because the side-chambers recall those of the Royal Tomb at Isopata. The fore-hall of our tomb was roofed with large and roughly trapezoidal blocks of limestone set on edge, and carefully counter-balanced so that the heavier ends faced alternately north and south. The side-chambers were not walled at the back, and we were thus enabled to burrow behind the side walls and obtain valuable evidence for dating the tomb.

Since tholos tombs are usually considered more characteristic of the Helladic mainland than of Minoan Crete, this tomb has naturally been compared to those of Mycenae and it has even been suggested that it was the burial place of a Mycenaean prince ruling at Knossos. Let us then compare it to the Mycenaean series, while bearing in mind Professor Wace's caution that his typology, however valid at Mycenae, is not necessarily equally valid for other districts than the Argolid. Wace's first group, assigned to the sixteenth century B.C., was characterized by short dromoi cut straight in the soft rock, by short straight lintels, and by façades and vaults of rubble masonry. The second group, assigned to the fifteenth century B.C., was marked by ashlar façades, by longer lintels with a relieving triangle above, by the presence of grave-pits in the chamber, and by the better quality of the masonry. The third group (assigned to the fourteenth century) with its long narrow dromoi and sawn conglomerate does not concern us here.

The masonry of our tomb is not far removed from that of the Panayia and Kato Phournos tombs at Mycenae, though much inferior to that of the Lion Tomb. Thus the masonry and the grave-pits recall the second group of tholoi at Mycenae, though the rather short lintel with no relieving triangle above recalls the first groups.<sup>1</sup> The only feature recalling Wace's third group, the walling of the dromos, may be a later addition. The side-chambers opening off the fore-hall on the other hand remind us of the Isopata tomb rather than anything on the mainland. Other features common to our tomb and to the Royal Tomb at Isopata were the use of small stones in the interstices of the ashlar masonry, the presence of masons' marks, and the short, steeply sloping dromos due to the fact that both tombs lie on the crest of the ridge, and were not cut into the slope like most Mycenaean beehive tombs.

The inscription on the jamb of the entrance (PLATE 10*b*) at first glance might seem to favour a date after 1500 B.C., since the first letter  is a well-known character of the Linear Scripts (occurring in both Linear A and B), and very closely paralleled by thirteenth-century examples from Orchomenus.<sup>2</sup>

The second letter , though resembling a form that occurs in both Linear A and B according to Evans (AB 12 in *Scripta Minoa* ii), is more exactly paralleled by Sundwall, who regards it as a separate character confined to Linear Script A (it is No. 32 in his series). No. 133 in the Hieroglyphic Script also resembles our second symbol, though it is usually regarded as distinct from it. Our first symbol also occurs among the alphabet-form signs on the 'bone fishes' found

<sup>1</sup> The block above the lintel is missing, but since the lintel is wedge-shaped like the other ceiling-blocks of the fore-hall, I think we may assume there was never a relieving triangle.

<sup>2</sup> Sign AB 49 in *Scripta Minoa* ii. 17.

in a drain-shaft deposit of the Palace of Minos, and dated by Evans 'not later than the sixteenth century B.C.'. It appears therefore that our inscription might on epigraphical grounds be dated as early as M.M. IIIB or L.M. IA, but may equally well be as late as L.M. II.

It is not certain whether the inscription was written when the tomb was constructed or at a later date; but we are entitled to speculate why the inscription was written *en échelon*. It is not due to mere carelessness, as is shown by the fact that the individual letters are perfectly vertical. Was the inscription written by some official, who examined and sealed the tomb after the blocking wall had been broken by the robbers and when the remaining wall finished with a sloping surface? It is not a very satisfactory explanation but I cannot think of a better.

Neither Myres nor Bennett quotes our second symbol in this form, and so I presume both regard it as a variant of AB 12. This view may well be correct, but until more evidence is forthcoming I would prefer to follow Sundwall, or at least to say that the identity of the symbols is non-proven. If we were to employ the Cypriote syllabary to transliterate our inscription we might read it as KU-SI, and we may recall Cretan names (and probably Pre-Hellenic names at that) beginning with KU such as Kydon, Kydas; but according to Dr. Ventris's transliteration of the linear Script B the symbols should be interpreted as A-PI. Whatever may have been the interpretation, however, of this inscription it seems evident that the signs are not to be reckoned merely as masons' marks, and that they were intended to be read by people entering the tomb. The short line (top right in PLATE 10*b*) I take to be a punctuation mark, though it might be the numeral 1.

But masons' marks are not lacking. One of the roof-blocks of the fore-hall bears a deeply cut mason's mark, which is only partly visible but appears to be the arrow sign (Mark 33 in Sir Arthur Evans's series). Such deeply cut signs are characteristic of the earlier Palace of Minos (that is to say 2000-1700 B.C. approximately), but this block had perhaps been intended for some other building and reused in its present position.

We discovered also two examples of the trident sign (mason's mark no. 27), both neatly incised in the shallow technique characteristic of marks on the M.M. III walls at Knossos; one block was in the bottom course of the south wall of the fore-hall, and the other appeared to have fallen from the dome of the tholos. These masons' marks in the style of the later Palace seem to rule out any date earlier than M.M. IIIB for the construction of the Tomb. A stone of the outer blocking wall bore a deeply cut , Chapouthier's *signe des bras levés*.<sup>1</sup>

The tomb probably contains a few intrusive fragments of pottery, and as such I should reckon the occasional sherds of the Geometric, Hellenistic, and Mediaeval periods, and the solitary fragment of a Roman glass cup; but the position of the tomb on the crest of the Kephala ridge and its apparent freedom from early buildings renders it improbable that much material should have washed in from the surface.

There were, however, eighty-odd M.M. III sherds. Some of these sherds were found in the dromos or at high levels in the tholos, but the great majority were found deep in the chamber covered by the fallen dome and the L.M. III material; and twenty-five M.M. III sherds were found in one of the grave-pits.

I have not quoted a large number of coarse sherds which might also belong to the M.M. III period, because it seemed desirable only to quote the unequivocal evidence.

A few M.M. I and M.M. II sherds were also found in the deeper strata of the tholos, and must presumably be explained as derived from the surrounding earth when the cutting for

<sup>1</sup> *Études crétoises* ii. 77, 78; Pernier, *MA* xiv. 432; this stone and the one with the arrow sign must have been reused stones from some building of M.M. I or M.M. II date.

the tomb was excavated. Professor Wace indeed suggested to me that all the Middle Minoan material had been so derived, since he considered it unworthy of the tomb in quality, and would prefer to date the tomb by the similar quantity of L.M. IB pottery, which was well distributed in the deeper levels of the fore-hall and chamber.

To this suggestion I would make two objections. Firstly the earth immediately round the tomb is shallow and somewhat barren, and the nearest deposit of M.M. III material thick enough to account for 80 sherds is a structure about 50 m. east of the tomb, too far away for them to have been washed into the chamber on flat ground. Secondly, supplementary excavations behind the base of the vault of the tholos chamber, behind the walls of the side-chambers, and in the structure of the roof of the south side-chamber and the north wall of the dromos, disclosed only two sherds as late as L.M. IA and some sherds of the M.M. III period. If the tomb had dated from the L.M. IB period one would have expected one or two sherds of that period, and a larger amount of L.M. IA material would have been found in the structure of the tomb or in the filling behind it.

I therefore suggest that the Kephala tholos was built in all probability soon after the beginning of L.M. IA and was reused in the L.M. IB period. Either in the latter period or at some time during the third Late Minoan period the dromos, originally cut in the *kouskouras*, was revetted with masonry which included blocks and fragments of gypsum from some earlier building. In the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C. the chamber seems to have been used as a tomb and also as an ossuary, and probably continued as such until the time of the Dorian invasion.

In post-Minoan times the tomb was abandoned, except that perhaps occasionally some Proto-geometric or Hellenistic labourer after digging his vines or pruning his olives may have lunched in the shadow of its walls.

The result of these events is that the earlier burials were completely dispersed, and the majority even of the later skeletal material could not be assigned to any one burial or associated with any particular vases (PLATE 10c, d).

The chamber during its use as an ossuary must have contained the bones of quite a number of persons; but the first three bone deposits to be excavated, all between 0.70 m. and 1 m. below the datum level, were in a very bad condition and produced no skull. The fourth deposit, between 1 m. and 1.70 m., produced two adult skulls.

The fifth bone deposit produced four skulls at a depth of about 2.10 m. below the datum, one from the west and three from the east side of the chamber, the latter being fairly well preserved. To this deposit belong two of the stirrup-vases (PLATE 10d), two decorated globular bowls (PLATE 10c), and a plain aryballos; and we may assume that the skeletal material belongs chiefly to the twelfth century B.C. The vases are entirely Minoan with apparently no Helladic, despite the fact that an Achaean dynasty was presumably ruling in Crete at the time.

The sixth deposit just above the floor of the chamber hardly counts as a bone deposit at all, and the deposit presumably dates from the period when the tomb had been looted but before the tholos had collapsed. The pottery includes no whole vase, but only scattered sherds dating from M.M. IIIA to L.M. IIIA. Two sherds of a M.M. III saucer show signs of burning, but this is exceptional and there was no deposit of ashes.

L.M. IIIA, L.M. I, and M.M. III sherds appear in the fill of the tholos chamber in about equal proportions; but the finest are some fragments of Palace Style amphorae (PLATE 11c). The M.M. III sherds included two fragments of a conical cup with returning spirals in white on the black slip, and the rim of a Vapheio cup with a kidney pattern in white on black. Twenty M.M. III sherds appeared in the lowest half-metre of the chamber, and five

in the rough rubble filling above the only part left intact of the wall blocking the doorway of the chamber.

Shaft-grave  $\Delta$ , however, contained twenty-three M.M. III fragments, and one sherd with orange paint that must come from a M.M. IA cup, as against only two pieces of Palace Style amphorae and two sherds of L.M. IIIA stirrup-cups. The latter might be intrusive; but the twenty-four M.M. sherds suggest that Shaft Grave  $\Delta$  might have been dug for a burial as early as the M.M. IIIB period or in the succeeding LM IA period.

In the hope of obtaining material thrown out from our tomb we excavated several trial trenches round it the following May from the 10th to the 16th. Three test pits were opened west of the dromos. Virgin soil appeared in No. 1 at 0.45, in No. 2 at 0.50, and in No. 3 at 1 m. from the modern surface. No. 1 contained one or two M.M. sherds, and a few Hellenistic and Mediaeval sherds; but the other two test pits proved to be quite barren.

On the 13th we started to probe for dating material under one of the blocks south of the entrance to the chamber, and also opened a trial trench inside the ruined modern house lying a few metres south of the tholos. From the first probe under the block we extracted two light-on-dark sherds, probably L.M. IA, certainly not later; they were very poor specimens and might have been M.M. IIIB. The trial pit inside the house provided a mass of M.M. III sherds and one or two L.M. Five more trial trenches were opened between the house and the tholos. All contained foundation walls of poor masonry and abundant M.M. III pottery. The native *kouskouras* was reached at depths varying from 0.60 m. to 0.75 m. On 10 May the back of the wall of the north and south side-chambers and one adjacent wall of the tholos were probed for sherds. The material found was very poor and scanty, but all M.M. III in character.

### *Inventory of the Finds*

1. Ear-ring (PLATE 12a). Gold. L. 0.03 m. Massive, apparently of solid gold throughout. The lower part decorated with fine granulations. The horned ends overlap to clasp the ears. From 'Tomb (?) of the Alabaster Vase': Knossos Survey 151.

2. Fragment of ring (PLATE 12a). Thin gold plate, which evidently in its original state covered a core of some other material. L. as preserved 0.025 m. Original D. c. 0.025 m. W. 3 mm.

3. Rosette (PLATE 12a). Gold leaf. Damaged round the edges. D. 0.026 m.

4. Rosette (PLATE 12a). Very thin gold leaf. Broken, and only about half preserved. D. 0.022 m.

5. Two rivets (PLATE 12a). Bronze, plated with gold. The heads slightly oval, shaped to fit the curve of the handle of the sword or dagger to which they must have belonged. D. of heads 0.013 m.  $\times$  0.014 m. and 0.012  $\times$  0.013 m.

6. Knife or sickle (PLATE 12b). Bronze. Apparently single-edged with two rivet-holes in tang.

7. Tweezers (PLATE 12c). Bronze. Complete, but broken in three pieces. L. 0.53 m. W. 5-6 mm.

8. Tweezers. Bronze. Fragments, too broken to restore; but the tips were evidently splayed.

9. Tool(?). Bronze. L. 0.062 m. Section more or less rectangular.

10. Finger-ring (PLATE 12d). Bronze. D. 0.021 m. Th. 5 mm. There were fragments of two other similar finger-rings.

11. Ear-ring(?). Thin bronze or copper wire with circular section. Broken in three pieces. D. restorable as c. 0.022 m. There were remains of what seem to be a pair of similar ear-rings stuck together. D. c. 0.022 m.

12. Large pin (PLATE 12c). Bronze. Five joining fragments; head and tip both missing. L. of shaft as preserved 0.13 m. Shaft with circular section (D. c. 6 mm.). The shaft may have been ribbed or fluted, but was too badly corroded for this to be certain.

13. Large pin (PLATE 12c). Head and tip missing. L. of shaft as preserved 0.056 m.; circular section (D. c. 4 mm.).

14. Pin. Thin bronze or copper wire with circular section. Broken, but apparently complete except for the head. L. as preserved 0.09 m.

15. Fragments of bronze or copper plate (PLATE 12c), enough to fill a large cigarette box, varying in thickness from 1-2 mm. Three human teeth showing traces of green corrosion were apparently found with the fragments, which might be remains of a helmet. But the fragments of plate as preserved do not seem sufficient for a helmet, and there is no sign of holes for sewing the metal to some backing. The fragments are more probably therefore from a vase of some kind.

16. Fragment of bronze (PLATE 12c). Twisted like an airplane propeller broken at one end. L. as preserved 0.045 m.

17. Ivory plaque (PLATE 12f). Fragment, broken at the bottom and at the right side. L. 0.038 m. W. 0.022 m.

Th. 6 mm. Carved in low relief with what appear to be two helmets(?), one of them with a plume. The plaque is presumably part of a box. In the right edge is a hole, evidently for fastening this plaque to another which doubtless continued the same scene.

**18.** Sealstone (FIG. 2). Lentoid (Mus. No. 1608). Black steatite. Damaged at the back, and worn. D. 0.015/16 m. Engraved with what appear to be two women facing each other.

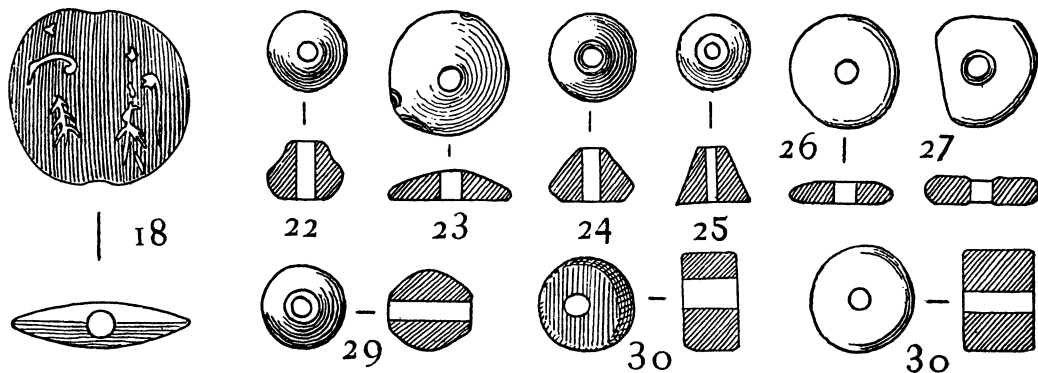


FIG. 2. SCALES 3:2 (18), 1:1 (24-27), 1:2 (OTHERS)

**19.** Fragment of a mould (PLATE 12e). Purple-green steatite. L. preserved 0.04 m. W. 0.024 m. Th. 0.013 m. The upper side has moulds for making 'sacral ivy' and 'pendant crocus' ornaments. The edge of a third mould is preserved on the under side.

**20.** Spindle whorl. Conical. Softlight-brown steatite. Finely made and in good condition. D. 0.019 m. Ht. 0.01 m.

**21.** Spindle whorl. Conical. Purple steatite. Badly damaged. D. 0.023 m. Ht. 0.017 m.

**22.** Spindle whorl (FIG. 2). Conical. Purple steatite. Rather worn and battered. D. 0.018 m. Ht. 0.013 m.

**23.** Spindle whorl (FIG. 2). Flat conical. Green steatite. Edges battered. D. c. 0.034 m. Th. 0.01 m.

**24.** Small spindle whorl or bead (FIG. 2, PLATE 12d). Conical with rounded base. Green steatite. D. 0.012 m. Ht. 7 mm.

**25.** Small spindle whorl or bead (FIG. 2, PLATE 12d). Conical. Green steatite. D. 0.01 m. Ht. 7 mm.

**26.** Bead (FIG. 2, PLATE 12d). More or less circular. Black steatite. D. 0.014 m. Th. 3 mm.

**27.** Bead or pendant of irregular shape (FIG. 2, PLATE 12d). Green steatite. L. 0.015 m. W. 0.013 m. Th. 4 mm.

**28.** Spindle whorl. Conical with rounded base. Soft brown clay, much perished. D. 0.02 m. Ht. 0.015 m.

**29.** Bead (FIG. 2). Rounded biconical. Dark brown clay. L. 0.022 m. D. 0.023 m.

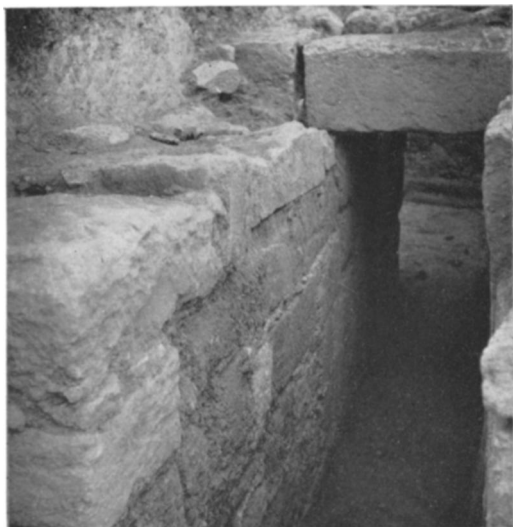
**30.** Eight large beads, cylindrical or sections of cones; one virtually flat (FIG. 2). Orange clay, except for the largest, where the clay is greenish-buff. Three or four of the beads preserve traces of a black or brown lustrous wash. D. varies from 0.021 to 0.033 m. Ht. from 0.015 to 0.03 m.

**31.** Beads (PLATE 12d). Dark blue-grey faience. One nearly complete, and half of another similar, together with two fragments of others. Moulded in low relief with a double nautilus. The most complete example (L. 0.012 m., W. as preserved 0.01 m., Th. 4 mm.) has the sides broken away, but preserves three parallel string-holes passing from top to bottom.

**32.** Bead (PLATE 12d). Ribbed. Pale blue faience. D. c. 0.017 m. Th. 10 mm.

**33.** Fragment of faience. Possibly inlay.

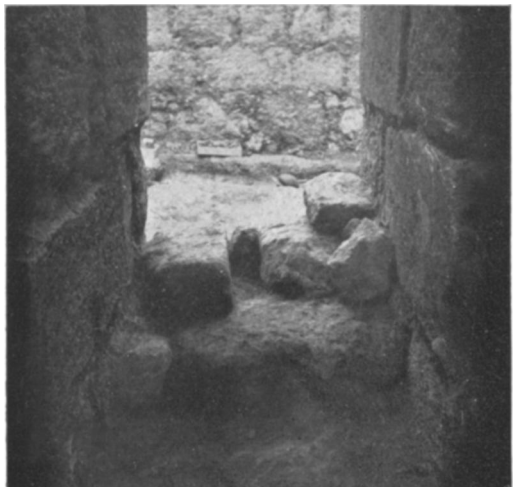
R. W. HUTCHINSON



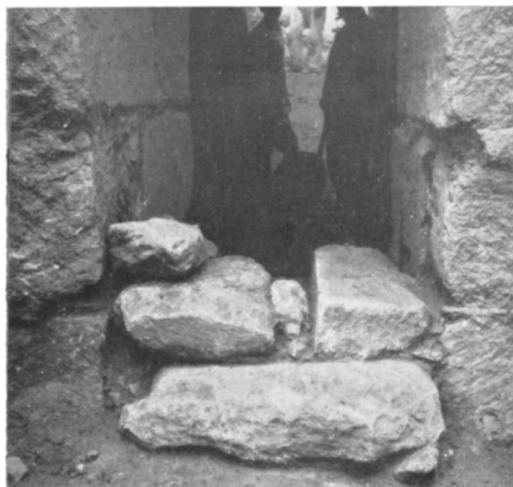
(a)



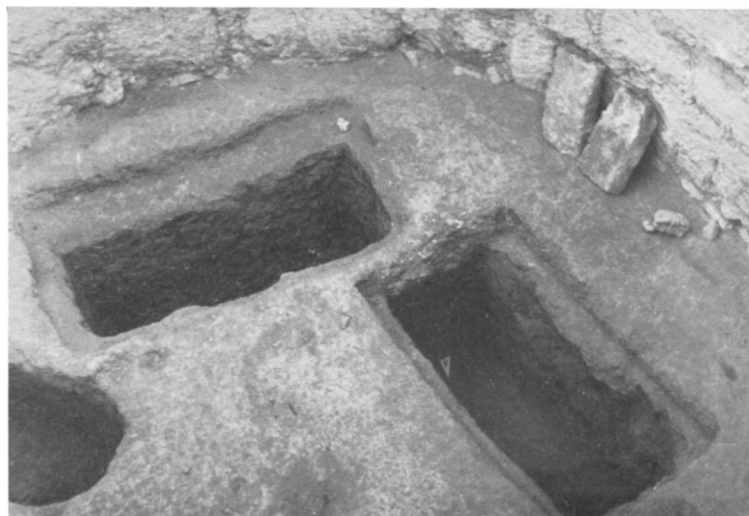
(b)



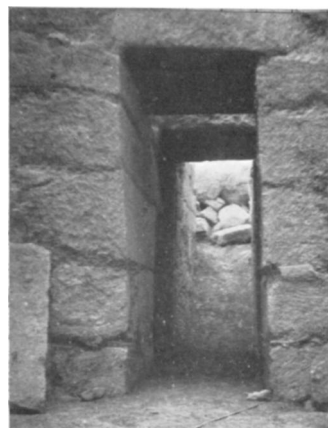
(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

### A THOLOS TOMB ON THE KEPHALA

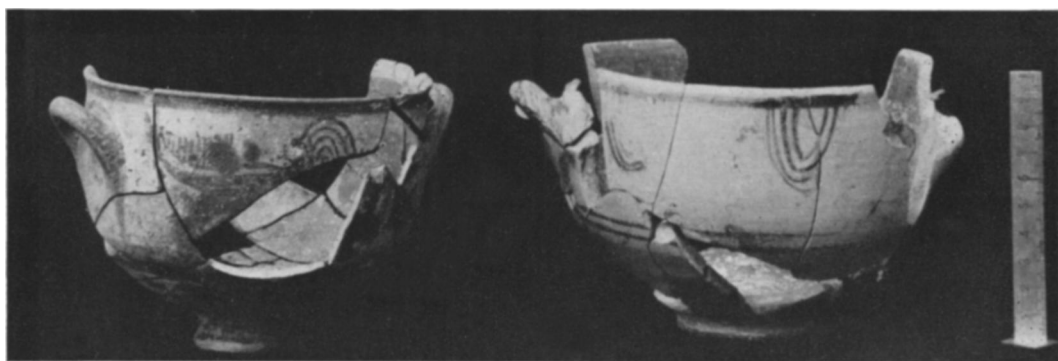
- (a) VIEW DOWN DROMOS TOWARDS ENTRANCE INTO THOLOS CHAMBER. (b) THOLOS CHAMBER FROM ABOVE ENTRANCE.  
 (c) BLOCKING WALL OF ENTRANCE FROM DROMOS SIDE. (d) BLOCKING WALL OF ENTRANCE FROM INSIDE THOLOS  
 CHAMBER. (e) Left to right: PITS  $\beta$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\gamma$  IN FLOOR OF THOLOS. (f) ENTRANCE FROM INSIDE THOLOS.



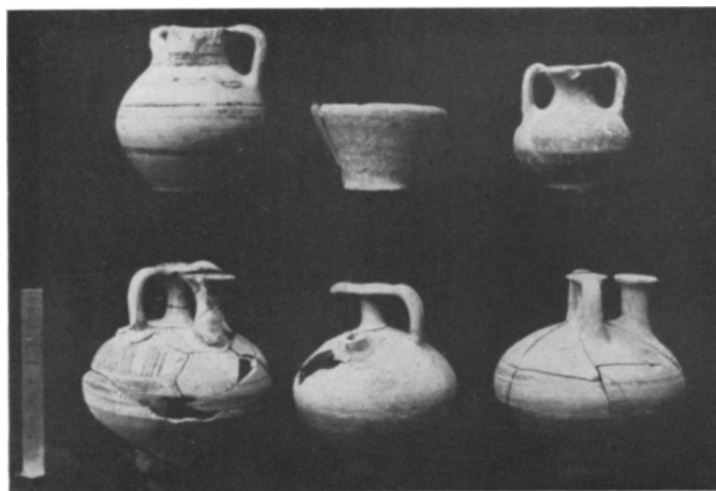
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

## A THOLOS TOMB ON THE KEPHALA

(a) ENTRANCE FROM INSIDE THOLOS. (b) INSCRIPTION ON JAMB OF ENTRANCE. (c) L.M. III VASES FROM THOLOS CHAMBER. (d) L.M. III STIRRUP-VASES, L.M. I CUP, AND PG AMPHORISKOS FROM THOLOS CHAMBER



(a)



(b)



(c)



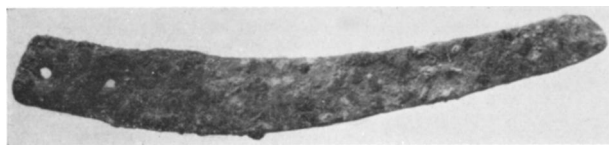
(d)

## A THOLOS TOMB ON THE KEPHALA

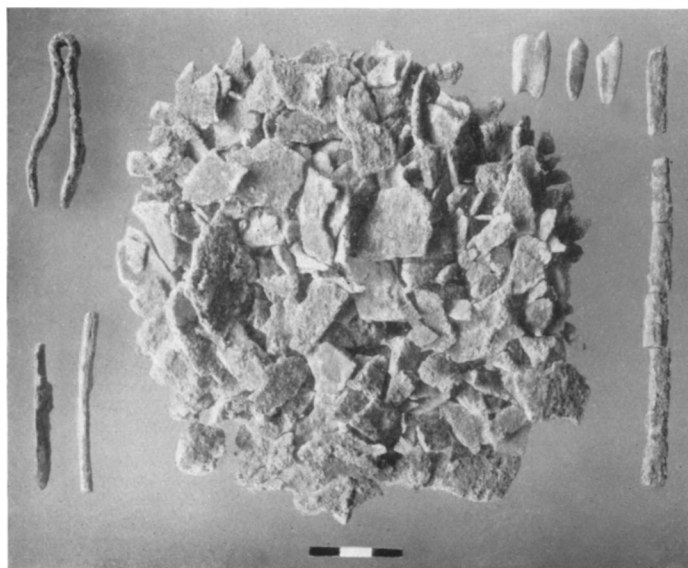
SHERDS FROM THOLOS CHAMBER (p. 11): (a, b) L.M. IA SHERDS. (c) PALACE STYLE AMPHORAE. (d) PITHOS RIMS.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

## A THOLOS TOMB ON THE KEPHALA

(a) GOLD (top row, left to right) RING 2, EARRING 1, ROSETTE 3; (bottom row, left to right) RIVETS 5, ROSETTE 4. (b) BRONZE KNIFE BLADE 6. (c) (Top left) TWEEZERS 7; (bottom left) FRAGMENT 16, PIN 13, (centre) BRONZE PLATE 15; (right) PIN 12. (d) (Top row, left to right) STONE WHORLS, ETC., 27, 24, 25, 26; (bottom row, left to right) FAIENCE BEAD 31, BRONZE RING 10, FAIENCE BEAD 32. (e) STEATITE MOULD 19. (f) IVORY PLAQUE 17.