

LATE CYPRIOTE III SHAFT GRAVES : BURIAL CUSTOMS OF THE LAST PHASE OF THE BRONZE AGE

A simple pit was the type of grave most commonly used for Neolithic and Chalcolithic burials in Cyprus. Through the Bronze Age the custom implied successive interments in chamber tombs ¹. Still, the pit grave sporadically occurred; it was used for some single burials in contrast to those of the collective chambers ².

During the last stage of the Bronze Age, late Cypriote III, c. 1190-1050 B.C. ³, the more or less simple pit again became the commonest type of tomb ⁴. Even if it has become evident that at least some contemporary burials took place in traditional chamber tombs, the absolute majority of these tombs were constructed earlier and had already been used for generations of dead ⁵. A few chamber tombs were, however, made during the period under

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- (1) For Neolithic and Chalcolithic burials see a forthcoming dissertation by the present writer. For Cypriote Bronze Age tombs and burial customs, H. CASSIMATIS, "Les rites funéraires à Chypre", *RDAC* 1973, e.g. p. 116-152, and relevant summaries in *SCE* IV 1A-C. General works on burial habits in the Aegean and in Greece : J. WIESNER, *Grab und Jenseits* (1938) and D.C. KURTZ, J. BOARDMAN, *Thanatos. Tod und Jenseits bei den Griechen*. (Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt, 23 [1985]).
 - (2) *SCE* IV 1A, p. 216 (Philia), p. 222 (Ayia Paraskevi); *SCE* IV 1B, p. 9, fig. 6 and p. 10 (Nitovikla); *SCE* IV 1C, p. 44-45, fig. 25:2 and p. 49, fig. 27:8 (Akhera, Ayia Paraskevi, Politiko), p. 50, fig. 27:5 (Tamassos); DIKAIOS, *Enkomí*, p. 414-415, 421, 438, pl. 268, 269. Cf. however E. SJÖQVIST, *Problems of the late Cypriote Bronze Age* (1940), p. 15-16. For a LC IIC cemetery at Akhera, entirely consisting of simple earth-cut graves, see V. KARAGEORGHIS, *Nouveaux documents pour l'étude du Bronze récent à Chypre* (1965), p. 71-138. See also O.T.P.K. DICKINSON, "Cist graves and chamber tombs", *BSA* 78 (1983), p. 55-67.
 - (3) For the chronology I follow Åström, *SCE* IV ID, e.g. p. 762.
 - (4) In this context the term shaft grave refers to what E. Gjerstad in his *Studies on prehistoric Cyprus* (1926), p. 51, defines as..."a cavity sunk in the earth or rock and used for burial", and must thus not be confused with the Mycenaean shaft graves.
 - (5) Objects of LC IIIA date in chamber tombs constructed early in LC IA at Kouklia "Evreti" and "Asproi", e.g. F.G. MAIER, M.-L. WARTBURG, *AA* 1986, p. 148. For earlier tombs at Akhera, re-used in LC III, see *SCE* IV 1D, p. 828 and KARAGEORGHIS, *op. cit.*, e.g. p. 74, and for re-used chambers at other sites *SCE* IV 1C, p. 51 and 1D, p. 828-831. See *BSA* 73 (1978), p. 31-44, "The re-use of earlier tombs in the LH IIIC period", by W. CAVANAGH and C. MEE, for Greece, Crete and the Dodecanese.

study ⁶.

I have chosen the fairly limited group of shaft graves for study, and argue that they are representative of Late Cypriote III, and that they are numerous enough to allow at least some conclusions to be drawn.

Before turning to a summarized account of the burial customs, it should be emphasized that this change in the burial record, the shift from chamber tombs to shaft graves, occurs in a time of general change and unrest. The end of the preceding period, Late Cypriote II, is marked by a general destruction in which the major sites of the island were devastated. This catastrophe, or catastrophies, was succeeded by a second wave of devastations around 1175 B.C., events which may well be connected with the ravaging of the so-called Sea Peoples, before these were finally defeated by Ramesses III in his eighth regnal year. A third catastrophe about 1100 B.C. entailed that some sites were finally abandoned ⁷. It is against this frame of events that the new burial habits should be viewed.

Due to the uneven geographical distribution of the graves and to the fact that nearly half part of the evidence, the burials at Kouklia "Kaminia", has not yet been more precisely dated, the material is regarded as a unit; there are no marked chronological differences, but some features will be remarked upon.

At least forty-seven LC III shaft graves have been excavated hitherto : at least twenty-two at Enkomi ⁸, twenty-one at Kouklia "Kaminia" ⁹, two at Kition ¹⁰, and single graves at

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- (6) SCE IV 1C, p. 50-51 and IV 1D, p. 828-831. For a recently discovered LC III chamber tomb at Khalassa "Pano Mantilaris" see S. SWINY, *AJA* 89 (1985), p. 50.
- (7) E.g. Åström's résumé in SCE IV 1D, e.g. p. 775-779, and Muhly's contribution in V. KARAGEORGHIS, J.D. MUHLY (ed.) *Cyprus at the close of the late Bronze Age* (1984). C. BAURAIN's *Chypre et la Méditerranée orientale au Bronze récent* (1984), is also relevant here. Ramesses III reigned between 1184 and 1153 B.C. according to E. HORNUNG, *Grundzüge der ägyptischen Geschichte* 2nd ed. (1978), p. 163.
- (8) Cypriote Tombs : 4, 4A, 8, 8A, 23, 24, see DIKAIOS, *Enkomi*, p. 140, 151, 152, 186, 419, 431-434, 438, 457, 471, 518, 532, 698, pl. 24:6, 26:3, 4, 33:2, 220:1-4, 256, 257, 273, 290:4-9; SCE IV 1D, p. 698, 805, 829. French Tombs: 1 (1947), 15 (1934), 16A, 16B, C.F.A. SCHAEFFER, *Enkomi-Alasia I* (1952), p. 230-237, fig. 66, 67, 85-89, pl. LXXX; ID., *Missions en Chypre 1932-1935* (1936), p. 80 with n. 1. See also RA 31-32 (1948) 2, fig. 5; SCE IV 1C, p. 51 and IV 1D, p. 695, 808, 829, 830. For the shaft graves 430 and 979, and the possible shaft 634, excavated in 1960-1963, see J.C. COURTOIS, *Alasia II* (1981), p. 271-278. Swedish Tombs : 5, 7A, 11A, 13C, 14, 15, 16 and 19A, SCE IV:1C, 51, fig. 27:11-12; IV:1D, p. 695, 697, 698, 810, 813, 815, 830; SJÖQVIST, *op. cit.*, p. 25, 134, fig. 5:4. These graves have also been discussed by DIKAIOS, *Enkomi*, e.g. n. 325, p. 428, 433. In addition there is still another probable shaft grave : T. 17 of the British Museum's excavation in 1896, see DIKAIOS, *Enkomi*, p. 433 and SJÖQVIST, *op. cit.*, p. 25. But cf. Åström, who dates this grave to LC II, SCE IV 1D, p. 429.
- (9) MAIER, WARTBURG, *op. cit.*, p. 148-149 with references.
- (10) V. KARAGEORGHIS, *BCH* 84 (1960), p. 515, 561-569, fig. 8, 10 ("La fosse funéraire") and ID., *Annual report of the Director of the Department of Antiquities for the year 1976* (1977), p. 32.

Kourion ¹¹ and at Hala Sultan Tekke ¹².

Among the *individuals* found in the graves the majority were adults. A few children and very few infants have been reported ¹³. Only a fraction of the skeletons have been scientifically studied ¹⁴.

Most graves were used for *single burials*, but *double-* and *triple interments* are attested. In some cases the burials were successive, in other more than one body was buried at the time ¹⁵.

With only one exception it is a question of *inhumations* (the sole example of cremation, in Kourion "Kaloriziki" T. 40, is discussed below). There are two instances of burials possibly of a secondary character ¹⁶.

When it has been possible to determine the *location* of the graves one sees that the majority were dug within habitation areas, often in open courtyards, and not in separate cemeteries as was earlier and later the practice. Contemporary activity is for all these instances attested in the surrounding buildings. A few graves were, however, dug into the low tumuli of earth situated above chamber tombs of earlier periods ¹⁷.

With regard to the *orientation* of graves and burials, no strict rules seem to have been applied ¹⁸. Graves situated among buildings were probably dug in accordance with the

- (11) Kourion "Kaloriziki" T. 40, G.H. McFADDEN "A Late Cypriote III tomb from Kourion "Kaloriziki" No. 40", *AJA* 58 (1954), p. 131-142. See also *SCE* IV C, p. 51 and IV 1D, p. 699, 820, 831; *JHS* 73(1953), p. 133-34 with references; *BCH* 99 (1975), p. 821-826.
- (12) K. NIKLASSON, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, p. 169-213, T. 23.
- (13) Children were found in Swedish T. 14 (two) and 19 (one) and Cypriote T. 8 (one) at Enkomi, as well as in the "fossa" at Kition (remains of four children -disturbed). Single infants were buried in Enkomi Cypriote T. 4, 8A and 24. For references see n. 8 and 10. In this connection it should be mentioned that four infants' pot burials were excavated by Dikaios, all in LC III levels, see DIKAIOS, *Enkomi*, e.g. p. 109 115, 116, 194, 431, 432, pl. 40:2, 254, 276.
- (14) The human remains from the Kourion tomb showed to be from a woman 50-70 years old, and a man in his late 30's or early 40's was buried in T. 23 at Hala Sultan Tekke. For Kourion see McFADDEN, *op. cit.*, p. 133 and for Tekke, C. SCHULTE-CAMPBELL, *Appendix V*, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, p. 249-253 and P.M. FISCHER, *Applications of technical devices in archaeology* (*SIMA* LXIII [1980]), p. 16-18.
- (15) The latter is seen in Enkomi Swedish T. 14, where two children had been deposited across the legs of an adult (a female?); according to the pottery and the condition of the human remains no longer time seems to have passed between the interments, see *SCE* I, p. 536, fig. 203, 204:1-2 and IV 1D, p. 830 and SJÖQVIST, *op. cit.*, p. 134, 135.
- (16) Among the three badly preserved skeletons in Enkomi French T. 15 (1934) was one which was found with the right femur turned upside-down; this disturbance may, according to the excavator, have taken place at the time of one of the other two, later, interments, see C.F.A. SCHAEFFER, *Enkomi-Alasia I* (1952), p. 135. The adult in Enkomi Cypriote T. 24 was discovered with the lower jaw between the femora, DIKAIOS, *Enkomi*, p. 151.
- (17) For shafts situated in courtyards see for example DIKAIOS, *Enkomi* fig. 257 and K. NIKLASSON, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, fig. 412. Swedish T. 7A, 11A and 13C at Enkomi were dug into tumuli above chamber tombs: *SCE* I, p. 498, 510, 528, e.g. fig. 194:2, 195:7, 201:6.
- (18) It may be noted that only one grave was dug in what is today a purely north-south direction, Enkomi Cypriote T. 24, DIKAIOS, *Enkomi*, e.g. p. 257.

surrounding structures ¹⁹.

The graves are of varying *dimensions*, at least in the majority of cases the size was adjusted to the size or number of the person(s) to be buried. Some are regular shaft graves, others are mere pits. The latter is especially relevant for infants' graves.

The *shapes* are the simplest conceivable. A few shafts were, however, more elaborately constructed, they were for example entirely or partially lined with rubble or masonry ²⁰.

Generally the dead were placed in the dorsal, outstretched *attitude*, commonly found in Cypriote Bronze Age tombs. The deceased were deposited directly on the earthen floors of the shafts. A few adults had one (left) or both hands resting in their bosom ²¹.

It is difficult to know whether the deceased were buried with some sort of clothing, or not. Since evidence of cloth is very seldom preserved in Cypriote tombs ²², one has to rely on the presence of dress-accessories such as pins, buttons and fibulae. We have only two, possibly three such instances among the LC III shaft grave burials : an ivory button was discovered at the waist of an adult at Enkomi, a bronze fibula was recovered from a grave at "Kaminia", and the man buried on the courtyard at Hala Sultan Tekke seems to have been not dressed but simply covered by a garment ²³.

All adults except for two had *accompanying objects*, as well as children and infants when buried together with adults. The objects were in all instances carefully arranged in the graves.

A hemispherical bronze bowl and a pottery jug appear to have constituted a kind of *standard equipment* for eating and/or drinking, real or symbolical. Sometimes there were more than one such set in a grave and often there were two or more bronze bowls. In some cases there were bowls made of metal and bowls made of clay (White Painted Wheel-made). The bowl-jug combination is seen in twelve graves. The bronze bowl was once replaced by one made of pottery, and in another grave a bronze bowl was the only object deposited. The frequency of the hemispherical bronze bowl is remarkable. An important fact is that graves lacking this type of object are all late within the period. The jugs are of Plain White Wheel-made and Bucchero Hand-made and Wheel-made wares. Thus only local pottery was deposited. This strikingly contrasts with the abundance of Mycenaean III B wares in the

(19) Illustrated for example by T. 23 at Hala Sultan Tekke, dug in a corner formed by two already existing walls, K. NIKLASSON, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, fig. 413.

(20) Lined : Enkomi Swedish T. 14 and 19A, French T. 1 and 15. The "fossa" at Kition was partially built of mud-bricks. Partially lined : Enkomi French T. 16 and T. 23 at Hala Sultan Tekke (for references see n. 8, 10 and 12).

(21) Enkomi Swedish T. 11A, 13A, 15 and 16 (n. 8 for references).

(22) P. ÅSTRÖM, *OpAth* 5 (1965), p. 111-114; P. ÅSTRÖM, A. PIERIDOU, *RDAC* 1967, p. 25-29, pl. IV-V. See also S. HADJISAVVAS, *RDAC* 1967, p. 164.

(23) *SCE* I, p. 540, fig. 204:4; MAIER, WARTBURG, *op. cit.*, p. 148; concerning the burial in T. 23 at Tekke, the proposed interpretation is conditioned by the discovery of three ivory buttons and two bronze pins in positions indicating that they were possibly fastened to cloth but not that they held any clothes together, K. NIKLASSON, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, 171, fig. 419.

chamber tombs of the preceding phase ²⁴.

The vessels were often placed near the head or hands of the deceased. If there were more than one set of vases, one pair was sometimes found at the foot-end of the shaft (forming a spare equipment?).

Animal remains, indicating *supplies for the dead*, were preserved in two related adults' burials at Enkomi : goat bones were discovered in a jug beyond the feet of one, bird remains were lying in a jug close to the head of the other ²⁵.

The remaining objects from the graves may be grouped together as being more or less *personal belongings* which followed their owner into the last resting place. The group comprises different utensils as well as items for adornment ²⁶.

The standard LC III shaft grave burial was thus relatively sparsely furnished, with the set of vessels and one or a few small objects ²⁷.

As a contrast stands the Hala Sultan Tekke grave, where the man, about forty years old, was interred with an unusually large and varied assemblage of goods ²⁸. Around his neck was a necklace of beads of gold and semi-precious stone, of types current in the Aegean and the Near East. As central piece was a gold-mounted scarab with the cartouche of Ramesses II. Bronze weapons were deposited along his left side, and a huge bronze trident and an ivory gaming-board were placed beyond his feet. There was a set of vessels, this time made entirely of bronze : a bowl and a jug with fluted body were placed within a platter ²⁹. The scarab and the set of vessels, the jug with a stylized lotus on its handle, are Egyptian features; a silver finger-ring has a Hittite-inspired motif on its bezel.

In contrast to these international traits are two pottery vessels of local fabric, a White Painted Wheel-made pilgrim flask and a Plain White Wheel-made jug. The jug was found smashed, fragments were lying all over the grave, the base was found upside-down above the head of the deceased.

At the foot-end were two faience bowls, at least one originally containing some organic

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- (24) See DIKAIOS, *Enkomi*, p. 434, 471 for a fragment of a Mycenaean IIIC 1b bell krater which was found near the edge of T. 24 excavated by Dikaïos; it was probably not at all connected with the burial.
 - (25) French T. 16A and B respectively, see C.F.A. SCHAEFFER, *Missions en Chypre 1932-1935* (1936), p. 142. It is interesting to note the use of closed vessels for the storage of solid "nourishment".
 - (26) Small stone tripod mortars and pestles are frequent. A steatite cylinder seal and a possible bone polisher (Enkomi Swedish T. 7A and 14) may be distinguished, e.g. *SCE* I, pl. LXXX:8,11. A piece of jewellery, a comb or a mirror are among the objects considered to be of a more personal character.
 - (27) Cf. MAIER, WARTBURG, *op. cit.*, n. 16 p. 149, where this sparsity is named "Armut". Catling's idea, that the differences may have been determined by race or class, seems reasonable, particularly the latter explanation (MAIER, WARTBURG, *op. cit.*, for reference).
 - (28) For this burial see K. NIKLASSON, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, p. 169-213. For the jewellery, Egyptian and Hittite features, see e.g. p. 172-173, 176-178 with references, and E. PORADA, *Appendix II*, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, p. 219-221.
 - (29) Such sets are known from Egypt and the Levant, they are usually considered to have been used for the mixing and drinking of wine. See ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, p. 172-173 for references and fig. 488-490.

matter, the larger one had in a fragmentary state been put inside the other, and both were turned upside-down ³⁰. This turning of vessels and the probably deliberately smashing of the jug, are the only *actions possibly of ritual or religious character* found among the LC III shaft graves. It may, however, also be noted that a *Murex* shell had been placed on the middle of the chest of the man ³¹.

The contents of this grave vividly show the heterogeneity of the period. It would be impossible, by means of the objects to tell whether the man was a native Cypriote or not. He had, however, been subjected to artificial cranial formation, a custom with very long traditions in the island ³².

This summary will be ended by a brief description of Kourion "Kaloriziki" T. 40, belonging to the latter part of the period under study. This grave contained the cremated remains of a woman, 50-70 years old. The burnt human bones were put in a bronze urn which was covered by a strainer and placed on a rock-cut shelf ³³.

There were many objects in the grave, in the urn together with the human remains as well as on the bench and on the floor ³⁴. Among the woman's bones at least nine fibulae and a finger-ring of bronze and a gold pin were discovered, apart from the ring surely accessories to a dress, or more likely, a shroud, in which the woman had been placed on the funeral pyre ³⁵.

Intriguing are the theories and historical conclusions drawn out of this burial complex. I will, however, not go into this, nor into the problem of deducing the practice of incineration. Here it will suffice to state that McFadden's hypothesis, that the people buried in T. 40 were of Greek origin, appear reasonable ³⁶.

As we have seen, the LC III shaft graves indeed reflect a time of transformation.

(30) Dr. Birgit Arrhenius, Stockholm University, made the analyses which showed that the bowl N 1226a had contained what may have been an ointment or some kind of food; the substance contained one or more proteins mixed with lime and phosphorus.

(31) For vessels turned upside-down in graves and deliberately smashed vessels see K. NIKLASSON, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, p. 187, n. 53 and P. Åström's contribution to this volume. See also J.M. FOSSEY, "The ritual breaking of objects in Greek funerary contexts : a note", *Folklore* 96 (1985), p. 21-23. For the role of *Murex* in Late Bronze Age Cyprus, see P. ÅSTRÖM and K. NIKLASSON-SÖNNERBY, *Hala Sultan Tekke* 9 (*SIMA* XLV 9), forthcoming.

(32) See SCHULTE-CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, e.g. p. 250-251.

(33) Note 11 above. This burial is exceptional, the only other cremation burial recorded was in a 2nd century tomb at Amathus, *SCE* IV 3, p. 26, 33. The Kourion tomb was looted in 1903 and according to one of the illicit diggers, another urn (later recovered) which also contained human cremated remains, was taken away.

(34) See note 11 : the material comprises i.a. shield bosses and tripods of bronze, the well-known sceptre-head made of gold and enamelled glass, many pieces of Proto White Painted Pottery.

(35) According to the illustration, *AJA* 58 (1954), pl. 24:28, the fibulae seem to be in an at least fairly good state of preservation; due to this I would suggest that these objects were not subjected to any fire.

(36) McFADDEN *op. cit.*, p. 134.

But how do we explain the change in burial customs ? In this case I do not argue for an explanation in terms of altered concepts and beliefs. Instead we should be open for an interpretation based on changes due to external factors. The re-location of graves from cemeteries to inhabited areas, leads to the idea that there was no time, other possibility, or desire, to get the dead out of the settlement. The fact that some shafts were situated above the dromoi of earlier tombs, brings forward the strong assumption that the people in the shaft graves were related to those buried in the underlying chambers. But why were the chamber tombs not re-opened for these burials ? The impression of haste is only further confirmed ³⁷.

At the same time one gets a feeling of "isolation", that something or somebody meant a threat to the community and its members. In the introduction to this paper, a possible connection with the activities by the "Sea Peoples" was indicated. Hostile actions performed by foreigners may be at least part of an explanation to the situation. I agree with Dr. Dikaios, who believed that the people buried in the shaft graves and in the re-used chamber tombs at Enkomi, were Cypriotes who remained in the town after the destruction of Level IIC and the erection of the Level IIIA buildings ³⁸. This should be especially true with regard to the LC III burials in the earlier chambers : it is in my opinion very difficult to imagine a foreign people voluntarily burying their dead among the bones of the enemy. The essence of this is also true for the burials above dromoi of chamber tombs mentioned earlier.

At Hala Sultan Tekke the interment in T. 23, the only shaft grave at that site, took place shortly after the collapse of some buildings ³⁹. As it is the latest burial discovered so far at the site, one can easily imagine how the man was buried before the last inhabitants left the place, leaving only heavy and easily replaceable items behind.

Other plausible interpretations include epidemics and siege ⁴⁰. The former explanation may be supported by the three possibly contemporary burials in Swedish T. 14 at Enkomi ⁴¹.

To conclude, and thus leaving further theories aside for the moment, we have, in spite of the heterogeneity shown in the LC III shaft graves, seen the uniformity, and that the people followed certain rules in their careful treatment of their dead.

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(37) In this connection it may be appropriate to mention that one or possibly two of these graves contained skeletons found with at least one arm missing : Enkomi Swedish T. 7A and 15, *SCE I*, p. 499, 538.

(38) DIKAIOS, *Enkomi*, e.g. p. 434.

(39) K. NIKLASSON, in ÅSTRÖM, *HST*, e.g. p. 169, 185.

(40) Suggested for "Kaminia", see MAIER, WARTBURG, *op. cit.*, p. 149, n. 16, for references to Mitford and Iliffe.

(41) See n. 15 for reference.