THE CULT OF THE DEAD IN CENTRAL GREECE DURING THE MYCENAEAN PERIOD

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Volume I: Text

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For my father and my mother

Για τους γονείς μου,

Κωνσταντίνο και Αλεξάνδρα,

με απέραντη αγάπη και σεβασμό

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Abbreviations and Technical Terms

List of Abbreviations

(Bibliographical abbreviations are cited in the *Bibliography* section)

EBA	Early Bronze Age
EH	Early Helladic
EMyc	Early Mycenaean
GCA	Grave Circle A
GCB	Grave Circle B
LBA	Late Bronze Age
LH	Late Helladic
LM	Late Minoan
MBA	Middle Bronze Age
MH	Middle Helladic
MM	Middle Minoan
ShGr(s)	Shaft Grave(s)

Glossary

agrimi	wild goat
αἱματοκουρία	blood-sacrifice performed in honour of the dead
anthemion	flower
askos	a vase in the shape of a sack, skin, ring or animal
bothros	a pit or hole dug in the ground, a trench
chamber tomb	tomb hewn into the soft rock of a sloping surface (hill-side) forming an artificial cave. They consist of a *dromos*, a *stomion* and a burial chamber (circular or rectangular in shape). One or more side-chambers occasionally lead off the main one. Multiple Burials were set either on the floor, in pit or cist graves, or on a bench. Often disarticulated bones are found in these tombs.
choai	drink offerings to the dead
cist grave	small underground built graves of oblong shape, roofed with slabs. The floor was occasionally strewn with pebbles. Used for single burials.
***dromos* (pl. *dromoi*)**	the passageway to a tholos or chamber tomb
eidolon	the image (the *likeness*) of the deceased
enagismata	food provisions for the dead
epichosis (e.g. of the dromos)	the filling of the *dromos*, etc

observances. The first part deals with the significance of libation and sacrifice in honour of the dead. The second part explores the religious significance of secondary burial treatment and suggests that the custom signaled the starting point in Mycenaean ancestor worship. The existence of places especially designed for the performance of a cult of the dead is investigated with emphasis placed on the 'Cenotaph' at Dendra. The objective of Chapter VI, which presents the conclusions of the thesis, is to place the evidence for the performance of a Mycenaean cult of the dead into a 'historical' narrative and to investigate the reasons behind the establishment and practice of this cult.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the evidence for the performance of a cult of the dead in LH III Greece with emphasis placed mainly on the material evidence from the typical Mycenaean tombs in the central areas of the Mycenaean dominion, viz. the Argolid, Korinthia, Attica, Boeotia and Euboea during the acme of Mycenaean civilization, that is the LH IIIA-B period.

Chapter I presents the rationale and the aim of the thesis as well as the regional and chronological boundaries. Chapter II covers the theoretical background of the thesis by investigating general questions on ritual recognition in the archaeological record and on definitions of ancestor worship. A detailed presentation of the previous arguments on the Mycenaean cult of the dead is given and the 'artificial landscapes' of LH IIIB Mycenae are discussed with focus on Grave Circle A. New approaches and perspectives are proposed, namely a new definition of the term 'cult of the dead' and a series of indicators of cultic activity to be applied in the study of the Mycenaean ancestor worship. Chapter III deals with funerary art and the artistic expression of Mycenaean eschatological beliefs. The Mycenaean belief in the survival of the soul and the journey of the dead to the Underworld, and the multiple function of terracotta figurines in LH III funerary agenda are assessed with this framework. The possibility of new perspectives and approaches via detailed contextual exploration of Mycenaean symbolic systems is discussed in the final part of this chapter. Chapter IV combines three broad issues, namely the location of cemeteries, tomb design and eschatological symbolism. Special reference is made to the connection between cemeteries and the religious significance of water and the rites of passage. The metaphysical symbolism of the tripartite plan of the typical Mycenaean tombs is also examined. Chapter V investigates the ritual act of attributing sacred honours and offerings to the ancestors by drawing parallels from contemporary religious

observances. The first part deals with the significance of libation and sacrifice in honour of the dead. The second part explores the religious significance of secondary burial treatment and suggests that the custom signaled the starting point in Mycenaean ancestor worship. The existence of places especially designed for the performance of a cult of the dead is investigated with emphasis placed on the 'Cenotaph' at Dendra. The objective of Chapter VI, which presents the conclusions of the thesis, is to place the evidence for the performance of a Mycenaean cult of the dead into a 'historical' narrative and to investigate the reasons behind the establishment and practice of this cult.

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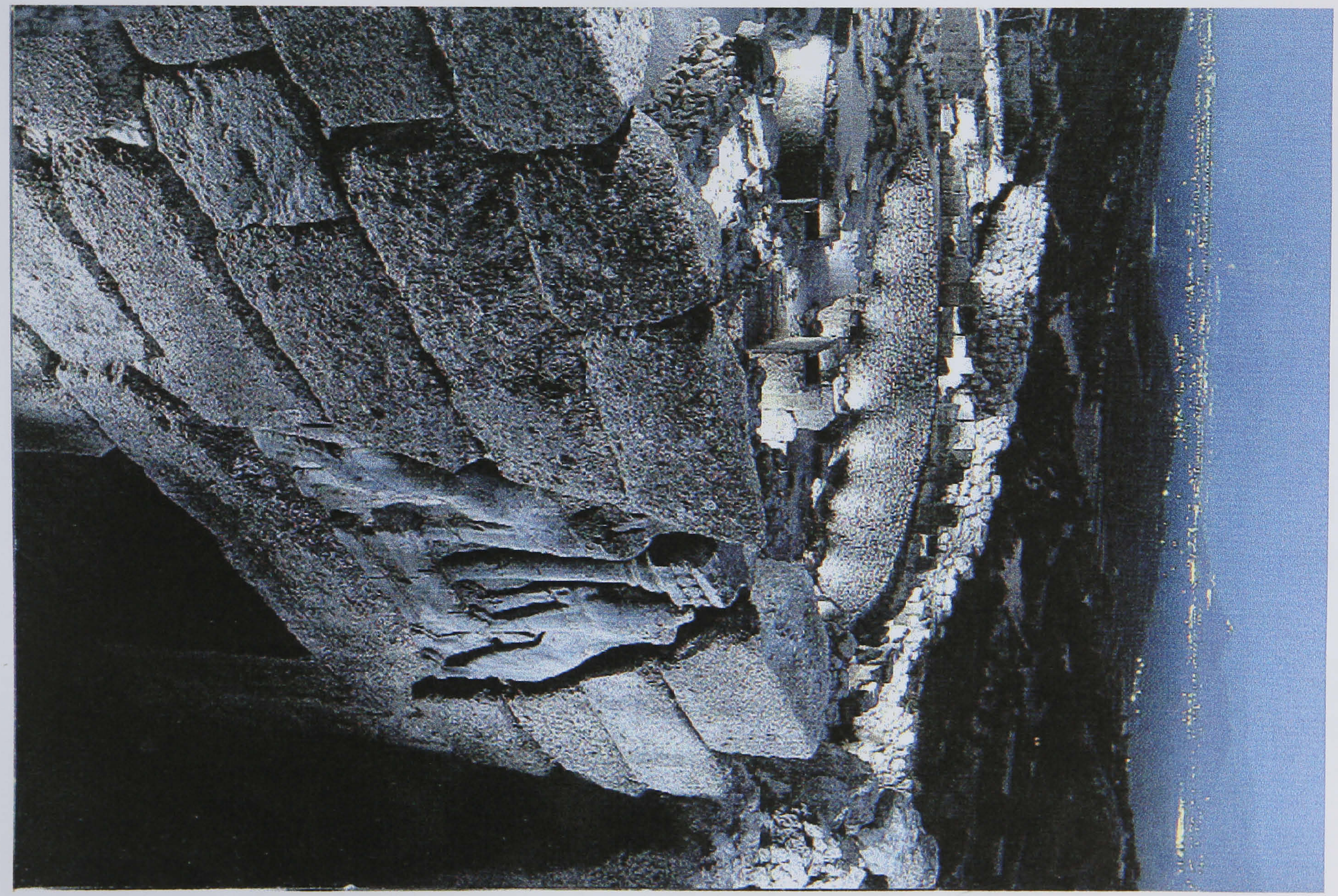
As a small token of love, gratitude and respect I proudly dedicate this thesis to my parents Konstantino and Alexandra.



CHAPTER I

Introduction:

Aim, Outline and Setting of the Thesis

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR THE THESIS

Humans have invested an astonishing amount of intellectual energy and artistic accomplishment on speculations about the nature of death and a possible afterlife[1]. The awareness of the finality of life and the attempts of prehistoric peoples to grasp the meaning of death via belief systems and religious enquiries are mirrored in the conscious choice and construction of landscapes for the dead, the use of symbolism serving claims of regeneration, transcendence, immortality and afterlife, and the remains of past ceremonies involving acts of propitiation towards the ancestors.

The establishment and performance of a cult in honour of the dead in Mycenaean Greece has been considered to-date a taboo subject by the majority of excavators and scholars. The stimulus was provided by Schliemann's excavations in Grave Circle A at Mycenae and the discovery of the 'altar' above Shaft Grave IV. Since then, scholars have invested an incredible amount of work on the matter, with fundamental papers presented by Wiesner, Andronikos, Nilsson and others.

[1] Whaley 1981: 1.

The direction of research was shaped by G.E. Mylonas who was concerned with the matter for more than 25 years (1948-1975) and reached the conclusion that the Mycenaeans showed no respect to their dead after the decomposition of the flesh and, subsequently, no cult of the dead was practised in Helladic times. Such was the impact of his scholarly work that the rejection of funerary cult in Mycenaean Greece still predominates in modern bibliography. However, since 1951, when Mylonas' fundamental paper on the *Cult of the Dead in Helladic Times* appeared, research has been restricted to brief mentions or insufficient studies, failing, though, to interpret specific issues of the Mycenaean mortuary attitude and beliefs.

On the other hand, the new data and approaches on the recognition of ritual activity in the archaeological record as well as the artistic codification of Mycenaean funerary practices and beliefs in the repertoire of the Tanagra sarcophagi indicate that the general denial of the practice of funerary cult in Late Helladic times should not be taken at face value and a re-assessment of the previous arguments and re-examination of the mortuary record seems necessary.

SCOPE AND SETTING OF THESIS

The scope of the thesis

The **aim** of this thesis is to examine the evidence for the performance of ancestor veneration in LH III Greece with emphasis placed mainly on the data from the typical Mycenaean tomb types, i.e. tholos and chamber tombs, excavated in the central areas of the Mycenaean dominion, viz. the

Argolid, Korinthia, Attica, Boeotia and Euboea, during the acme of Mycenaean civilisation, i.e. the LH IIIA-B period (ca.1425/1390-1190/1180 BC) **(map 1)**.

Through a thorough examination of the available archaeological material, namely the products of controlled archaeological excavation (architecture, pottery and ritual remains), the iconographical evidence and Linear B documents, this thesis aims to assess and challenge assumptions, which, as it shall be argued, amount to prejudices relegating the cult of the dead as a disreputable and taboo subject. It will be argued that for the Mycenaeans the ancestors were not simply motionless and decomposing livid bodies, but spiritual entities considered to dwell in a sphere between the human and the sacred, invoked to provide benefits and placated with sacred rituals and offerings to ensure the well-being of the living community.

Issues regarding eschatological symbolism –as reflected in funerary art and architecture and in notions of afterlife and the post mortem survival of the soul-, the respect for the dead, the 'invention' of cultural identity and tradition and the question of homogeneity in Mycenaean funerary practices and attitudes will be assessed within the scope of this thesis. Furthermore, this study will contribute towards the codification of Mycenaean eschatological beliefs and, subsequently, the framing of a hermeneutic model with reference to the archaeological recognition and study of Mycenaean post-funerary ritual.

Thus, the crux of this project is not only to illuminate 'obscure' aspects of Mycenaean religious and eschatological beliefs, but also to document the

diversity of repeated diagnostic indicators of symbolic value appropriate for the recognition and study of rites performed in honour of the venerated ancestors in LH III times.

The setting of the thesis

Given the mass of archaeological evidence from Mycenaean funerary contexts, it was decided to restrict this thesis in chronological and spatial terms. Chronologically, this thesis focuses on LH IIIA-B times, thus representing the period from 1425/1390-1190/1180 BC[2]

	High	Low	Modified
LH I	ca. 1680-1600/1580	1600-1510/1500	
LH IIA	1600/1580-1520/1480	1510/1500-1440	
LHIIB	1520/1480-1425/1390	1440-1390+	
LH IIIA1	1425/1390-1390/1370	1390+-1370/1360	1390+ -ca. 1370
LH IIIA2	1390/1370-1340/1330	1370/1360-1340/1330	1370-1310/1300
LH IIIB	1340/1330-1190/1180	1340/1330-1185/1180	1310/1300-1190/1180
LH IIIC	1190/1180-1065/1060	1185/1180-1065	1190/1180-1065

Late Bronze Age Chronologies (Source: Shelmerdine 2001: 332, Table 1).

[2] The traditional Aegean Late Bronze Age absolute chronology has been discussed by P. Warren and V. Hankey (1989), although radically challenged by Betancourt and Manning (1995, 1999) after the re-dating of the Thera eruption to ca. 1628 BC. According to Warren and Hankey (1989: 169) the LH IIIA-B period covers the period ca. 1390-1185/80 BC.

Following the deep political changes of LH I-II times, Late Helladic IIIA-B witnessed the emergence and consolidation of a highly hierarchical and centralised political system. Given the construction and decoration of the rulers' dwellings, the fortification of the citadels with Cyclopean walls and the evidence from the Linear B administrative texts a process of political unification under local rule is indicated with, indisputably, regional variations. Within the study area, excavations have revealed major palatial centres at Mycenae, Tiryns, Athens, Thebes and Orchomenos and evidence suggests that other territories in their vicinity were under their palatial administration, e.g. Euboean sites are mentioned in the Linear B texts from the Arsenal at Thebes[3]. A process of religious consciousness is also apparent in the establishment of official cult places within the Mycenaean citadels and the regular offerings to gods and sanctuaries documented in the Linear B tablets.

Relative uniformity is attested in the establishment of formal cemeteries during the period under discussion[4]. Pit and cist graves continue in use with slight variability observed in their distributional patterning as contrasted to the preceding period. Their simple architectural form, the custom of single inhumation and the large sample represented in the areas under consideration allow generalisations, and therefore only in exceptional cases will the evidence from a number of simple graves be discussed in this thesis. The disparate cultural traditions reflected in the restricted presence

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[3] Viz. Amarynthos (*a-ma-ra-tu-de* and *a-ma-ru-to*) and Karystos (*ka-ru-to*) (Aravantinos 1987: 35-38; Schachter 1996: 894).

[4] Cavanagh and Mee's book *A Private Place: Death in Prehistoric Greece* (1998) covers in the most remarkable way the theme of death and mortuary practices in prehistoric Greece.

of poorly preserved tumuli from the study area, present complications for the analysis of the data and their incorporation into the wider context of this study. Similarly, earlier local traditions are mirrored in the construction of twelve graves of the Gamma type in the West Cemetery at Eleusis.

On the other hand, the typical Mycenaean tomb types, viz. the tholos and the chamber tombs **(figs. 1, 2)**, reached a high level of standardisation and consolidation and an increase in the number and size of chamber tomb cemeteries occurred during this time span. Uniformity is observed in the architectural plan and mode of disposal, whereas, as shall be argued in this thesis, the remains of ritual activity and the post interment treatment of the dead are suggestive of regional variants deriving from an attempt at conscious differentiation and invention of local cultural identity and tradition.

Nevertheless, the choice of the central areas of the Mycenaean dominion and the chamber and tholos tomb types as the focal point of this thesis is a conscious one dictated by the quality of the information conveyed by the three categories of archaeological material. These areas and tomb types present evidence for similar settlement and burial patterns respectively, and, more importantly, they have attracted the interest of excavators resulting in ample bibliographical references and archaeological publications. Unfortunately, archaeologists dealing with the funerary material from the areas covered in this study face four problems: a. the plundering of almost all tholoi and of several chamber tomb cemeteries, b. the fact that earlier archaeologists were mostly attracted by and practised

'treasure archaeology' paying less attention to the 'unimportant' pottery finds[5], c. in most cases the life span of chamber tombs covers a long period (LH II-III), rendering the dating and study of specific architectural and ritual elements, e.g. grooves, benches, animal bones, difficult if not impossible, and d. although certain cemeteries, e.g. Mycenae, Tiryns, Dendra, Asine or Prosymna, have attracted scholarly interest, there seems to be a bias against the smaller or poorer sites.

Outline of thesis

Chapter I. Introduction: Aim, Outline and Setting of Thesis

The rationale and the aim of the thesis are presented and the regional and chronological boundaries are set. Moreover the reasons behind the choice of this specific period and tomb types are discussed. A catalogue of the cemeteries under investigation complements the analysis of the regional setting of the thesis.

Chapter II. The Cult of the Dead in Mycenaean Greece: Theoretical Discussion and Framework

This chapter covers the theoretical background of the thesis. The first part, which is entitled '*Understanding and defining sacred ritual in the archaeological context*', comprises the definition and functions of ritual

[5] As 'treasure archaeology' I define the interest on behalf of earlier archaeologists in the precious finds (metal objects, precious stones, sophisticated finds and objects) of any tomb or other excavated site.

activity, the archaeological recognition of cult and a general discussion of ancestor worship (definitions, general characteristics and functions).

The following section, under the title '*Ritual action and the cult of the dead in Mycenaean period*', presents a detailed history of previous research on the subject of ancestor worship in Mycenaean Greece. A thorough examination of Grave Circle A, specifically the 'historical' development of the monument, its role in modern debate on prehistoric ancestor cults and its socio-political and religious importance during LH IIIB, provides the prelude to and serves as the background for our understanding of the establishment and performance of ancestor veneration in LH IIIA-B Greece. Special reference is made to the fact that 'artificial landscapes' were created in LH IIIB Mycenae, linked to the divine and ancestral sphere, and to the examination of the reasons behind the symbolical manipulation, on a political and religious level, of these specific locales. In the third part of this chapter new approaches and perspectives are proposed, namely a definition of the term 'cult of the dead' and a series of indicators of cultic activity to be applied in the study of the Mycenaean cult of the dead.

Chapter III. Mycenaean Afterlife and Symbolism

Preliterate peoples have expressed their eschatological beliefs through actual acts associated with the denial of death, e.g. by covering the corpse with ochre so as to give the impression of a living person or by depositing supplies with the dead for their journey to the underworld, or through artistic representations, realistic or abstract, depicting their belief in the

post mortem survival of the soul and the existence of a land of the dead. Undoubtedly, such a belief would have been made easier the establishment of a set of sacred rites in honour of the ancestors.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to an introductory consideration of symbolic art and death in Mycenaean Greece. The following section deals with the issue of the soul, its survival and its allegories in Late Helladic art. In the third part the belief in the journey of the soul to the Mycenaean underworld and visions of the afterworld are discussed under the general title '*Mycenaean Deathscape and Symbolism*'. The fourth section covers the subject of figurines, their deposition with the dead and their multiple functions. Chapter III concludes with final thoughts on Mycenaean afterlife and symbolism and the possibility of new approaches and perspectives via detailed contextual explorations of Mycenaean symbolic systems.

Chapter IV. Mycenaean Funerary Landscapes, Tomb Design and Symbolism

The act of placing the dead is instrumental in the negotiations between life and death. The positioning of cemeteries *vis-à-vis* habitation areas and the location of tombs within cemeteries have been employed by scholars as indicators of socio-political and economic claims and differentiation. This chapter combines three broad issues, namely cemetery alignment, tomb design and eschatological symbolism.

The first part deals with the question whether eschatological tenets and ritual practices dictated the spatial positioning of Mycenaean cemeteries in

relation to the settlements. Special reference is made to the connection between cemeteries and water, as well as to the religious significance of water and its association with the rites in honour of the dead. The second part examines the metaphysical symbolism of the tripartite plan of the typical Mycenaean tombs and its association with the rites of passage related with death.

Chapter V. Ritual action and the Mycenaean cult of the dead

The objective of this chapter, which is subdivided into three parts, is to investigate the ritual act of 'giving' honours and offerings to the Mycenaean dead by drawing parallels from contemporary religious observances. The first section deals with the performance of libation, sacrifice (animal and human) and feasting in honour of the sacred dead. Possible Linear B recordings of names, festivals and offerings for the dead are also placed in perspective.

The second part explores the religious significance of secondary treatment of the dead and suggests that the custom signalled the starting point in Mycenaean ancestor cult. The third section investigates the existence of places especially designed as cult places for the ancestors with focus placed on the so-called *Cenotaph* at Dendra. Answers to the aforementioned matters are sought through the investigation of the archaeological material, LH III funerary art and the Linear B documents.

Chapter VI. An Epilogue on the Mycenaean cult of the dead

Having managed to pinpoint religious action-moments in LH funerary locales and to gain access in the identification and understanding of the Mycenaean desire to provide the dead with divine status and honours as well as post-funerary ceremonies and offerings, as suggested in Chapters II, III, IV and V, the objective of this last chapter is to place the evidence for the performance of a Mycenaean cult of the dead into a 'historical' framework and to investigate the reasons behind the establishment and practice of this cult. Regional and chronological developments, ideas of ancestorhood, the invention of tradition and cultural differentiation, the interaction between centre and periphery as well as between upper and lower social strata will be assessed within this 'historical' narrative.

CATALOGUE OF LATE HELLADIC IIIA-B GRAVES IN THE CENTRAL AREAS OF MYCENAEAN GREECE

(viz. Argolid, Korinthia, Attica, Boeotia and Euboea)*

ARGOLID AND KORINTHIA (map 2)

Pits, Cists, Built Graves and Unfinished Dromoi (used for interments)		
Aidonia	2 (1 unfinished *dromos*)	Krystalli-Votsi 1998.
Argos	30+	*ArchDelt*. 28 (1973) *Chr*. 122-123; *ArchDelt*. 29 (1973-4) *Chr*. 227; *ArchDelt*. 19 (1964) *Chr*. 123; Deshayes 1966; Protonotariou-Deilaki 1966: 239-247; *BCH* 79 (1955) *Chr*. 244; *ArchDelt*. 28 (1973) *Chr*. 98-99; Kaza-Papageorgiou 1985: 1-21; *ArchDelt*. 47 (1992) *Chr*. 89; Lewartowski 2000: 64-66; Papadimitriou 2001: 17-20.
Aria	1	*BCH* 79 (1955) *Chr*. 244; Lewartowski 2000: 66.
Asine	1	Lewartowski 2000: 67.
Kato Almyri	1 undr	*ArchDelt*. 35 (1980) *Chr*. 102-104.
Kokla	7	*ArchDelt*. 37 (1982) *Chr*. 83-85.
Lerna	1	Caskey 1954: 8-9; Wiencke 1998.
Methana	1	*ArchDelt*. 46 (1991) *Chr*. 73; Lewartowski 2000: 68.
Mycenae	5+	Charitonides 1952: 19-24; Taylour 1955: 214; Mylonas 1972: 116; *ArchDelt*. 40 (1985) *Chr*. 93.

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* Following Cavanagh and Mee (1998), in the case of tholos tombs and tumuli the date of use is given, whereas for the other tomb types the number of tombs in each cemetery is cited. Since Hope Simpson and O.T.P.K. Dickinson's *Gazetteer of Aegean Civilisation in the Bronze Age* has been included in the site catalogue of Cavanagh and Mee (1998: 137-145), it was decided not to include it in this catalogue.

Nauplion	5+	Charitonides 1953; Dragona-Latsoudi 1977: 86.
Prosymna	1	Blegen 1937: 223-224.
Tiryns	>50	Müller 1930: 101ff.; *ArchDelt*. 19 (1964) *Chr*. 117-118; Grossman and Schäfer 1971: 64, 75; Rudolph 1973: 29-32; Gercke *et al*. 1975: 11-12; Avila *et al*. 1980: 7-8; Kilian 1978; *idem* 1980: 176-177; *idem* 1981a: 171-173; *idem* 1982: 395; *idem* 1983: 289.
Zygouries	1	Blegen 1928: 65.

Tholos Tombs		
Berbati	LH IIA-IIIA1	Frizell 1984: 25-44; Pelon 1976: **3***; 1998: 96-100.
Dendra	LH IIB-IIIA1	Persson 1931: 8-67; Pelon 1976: **4**.
Galatas, Magoula: Tombs 1 & 2	LH II-IIIA2/B1	Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001a: 33-34; *eadem* 2001b: 218-219.
Kokla	LH IIB-IIIA1	*ArchDelt*. 36 (1981) *Chr*. 94-97; Demakopoulou 1990a: 113-123; *eadem* 1993; *eadem* 1997; Pelon 1998: 121-123.
Mycenae: Genii Tholos, Clytemnestra Tholos, Atreus Treasury	LH II-IIIA1/B1	Kavvadias 1909: 274-281; Wace 1921-23b; Pelon 1976: **1G-J**.
Prosymna	LH II-IIIA	Stamatakis 1878; Kavvadias 1909: 289-290; Wace 1921-23b: 330-338; Pelon 1976: **2**.

* In all tholos tombs' entries of the present catalogue, the bold number refers to Pelon's catalogue of tholos tombs (Pelon 1976).

Tiryns: Tholoi 1&2	LH IIIA1/B(?)	Drangendorff 1913: 347-354; Brommer 1939: 251-252; Müller 1975: 1-6; Pelon 1976: **5**; *idem* 1998: 100-103.

Chamber tombs		
Aidonia	13	Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 21-31; Cherry and Davis 2001.
Apatheia, Galatas	7	Hamilakis 1996a: 153-155; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001a: 137; *eadem* 2001b: 217-218.
Argos	27	Vollgraff 1904: 364-399; Kavvadias 1909: 291-292; Arvanitopoulos 1916: 73-74; Deshayes 1953: 59-89; 1956: 361-365; 1966; 1969: 574-616; *ArchDelt*. 26 (1971) *Chr*. 76-78; Schachermeyr 1976: 133; Touchais and Divari-Valakou 1998: 12; Darcque 1998: 105.
Aria	2	Arvanitopoulos 1916: 83; *BCH* 79 (1955) *Chr*. 243-244.
Asine	9+	Frödin and Persson 1938; *ArchDelt.* 50 (1995) *Chr*. 103-104; Gillis 1996; *BCH* 124 (2000) *Chr*. 805.
Berbati	8	Säflund 1965; Holmberg 1983.
Dendra	12	Persson 1942a; Åström 1977.
Kato Almyri	20	*ArchDelt*. 35 (1980) *Chr*. 102-105; *ArchDelt*. 46 (1991) *Chr*. 106-107.
Kiveri	7	*ArchDelt*. 22 (1967) *Chr*. 179-180; *AR* 1968-1969: 14; Schachermeyr 1976: 135.
Kokla	8	*ArchDelt*. 37 (1982) *Chr*. 83-85; *ArchDelt*. 47 (1992) *Chr*. 92; Demakopoulou 1993; *eadem* 1997.

Krines	1	*ArchDelt*. 21 (1966) *Chr*. 123ff; *ArchDelt*. 22 (1967) *Chr*. 163-164; Schachermeyr 1976: 99.
Lygourio	2	*ArchDelt*. 27 (1972) *Chr*. 215.
Mazi	2	*ArchDelt*. 49 (1994) *Chr*. 151-152; *ArchDelt*. 50 (1995) *Chr*. 101; *AR* 1999-00: 37.
Moulki		Hope-Simpson and Dickinson 1979: 69.
Mycenae	31+	Tsountas 1888; *idem* 1890: 36; *idem* 1891: 2-11; *idem* 1893; *idem*1896; *idem* 1899: 102-103; Kavvadias 1909: 281-288; Philadelpheus 1919: 34-35; Wace 1932; *PAE* 1952: 469; Mylonas 1972: 114-116; Verdelis 1962: 67-81; *ArchDelt*. 19 (1964) *Chr*. 118-121; Schachermeyr 1976: 115; *ArchDelt*. 35 (1980) *Chr*. 110; *ArchDelt*. 36 (1981) *Chr*. 99; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985; Shelton 1993; *eadem* 2000; Palaiologou 1995: 195; *BCH* 124 (2000) *Chr*. 798; Daniilidou 2000.
Nauplion		Kondakis and Kastorchis 1878: 183-201; Kastorchis and Kondakis 1879: 515-526; Lolling 1880a: 143-163; Stais 1892: 52-54; *idem* 1895: 261; Kavvadias 1909: 290-291; Arvanitopoulos 1916: 82; Charitonides 1953: 195-204; *ArchDelt*. 28 (1973) *Chr*. 90-94; *ArchDelt*. 29 (1973-74) *Chr*. 202-203; Schachermeyr 1976: 131; Dragona-Latsoudi 1977: 86-98.
Nea Epidauros	1	Hope Simpson and Dickinson 1979: 53.
Nea Korinthos		Vanderpool 1954: 232.
Nisi		Mountjoy 1999: 65.
Palaia Epidauros	21+	Stais 1888: 155-158; *idem* 1893b: 21; Kavvadias 1909: 291; Aravantinos 1974: 70-84; *ArchDelt*. 36 (1981) *Chr*. 99-100; *ArchDelt*. 37 (1982) *Chr*. 90; *ArchDelt*. 46 (1994) *Chr*. 156; *AR* 1999-00: 37.
Perachora: Skaloma	14+	*ArchDelt*. 35 (1980) *Chr*. 109-110; *ArchDelt*. 50 (1995) *Chr*. 107-108.
Phychtia	1	*ArchDelt*. 19 (1964) *Chr*. 118-121.

Priphtiani-Monasteraki	6	Arvanitopoulos 1916: 90; Philadelpheus 1919: 35-38; Charitonides 1952: 19-30.
Prosymna	35	Blegen 1937; Protonotariou-Deilaki 1960: 123-135; Verdelis 1956: 10-11; Schachermeyr 1976: 116.
Rethi		Mountjoy 1999: 65
Schoinochori	5	Renaudin 1923: 190-240.
Tiryns	13	Rudolph 1973: 23-126; Schachermeyr 1976:131.
Vraserka	3	Arvanitopoulos 1916: 91; Demakopoulou 1987; *ArchDelt*. 36 (1981) *Chr*. 97-99.
Zygouries	2	Blegen 1928.
Galataki	3	Verdelis 1956.

ATTICA AND SALAMIS (map 3)

Pits, Cists and Built Graves		
Athens: Dimitrakopoulou Str.	3	*ArchDelt*. 27 (1972) *Chr*. 52-53; Pantelidou 1975: 77-79; Onasoglou 1979: 33, 37-38; *ArchDelt*. 35 (1980) *Chr*. 28-31; Mountjoy 1995: 40.
Athens: A. Theklas 11 Str.	1	*ArchDelt*. 34 (1979) *Chr*. 27-28.
Athens: Aeropagus	1	Dörpfeld 1892: 445.
Athens: Agora	12	Immerwahr 1971.
Athens: Makriyianni 23-27 & Porinou Str.	3	*ArchDelt*. 23 (1968) *Chr*. 73-75; Pantelidou 1975: 66-71; Schachermeyr 1976: 92; Mountjoy 1995: 32-33.
Athens: Promachou 2	1	Pantelidou 1975: 61-66; Schachermeyr 1976: 92; Mountjoy 1995: 14-15.

Athens: Veikou 123-125 & Aglauron Str.	2	Pantelidou 1971: 433-438; *eadem* 1975: 95-106; Schachermeyr 1976: 92; Mountjoy 1995: 33.
Brauron (Lapoutsi)	2	*ArchDelt*. 21(1966) *Chr*. 98; *ArchDelt*. 39 (1984) *Chr*. 45.
Eleusis	13+	Skias 1898: 52; Mylonas 1975b.
Pallene: Glyka Nera	31	Masouridi 2001.
Marathon	2	*ArchDelt*. 34 (1979) *Chr*. 90.
Markopoulo: Kopreza	1	Stais 1893b: 21; *idem* 1895: 216-217.
Salamis: Haghia Kyriaki	1	*ArchDelt*. 20 (1965) *Chr*. 125-126.
Thorikos	1	Stais 1895: 221.
Vari-Varkiza: Kamini	3	Theocharis 1960: 266-269; Varvitsas 1968: 110-111; Benzi 1975: 193-197.
Voula-Alyki	4	Papadimitriou 1955: 99; *idem* 1957: 29-34.

Tumuli		
Marathon III	LH IIIB	Marinatos 1970a-c: 63-68, 155-163, 351-357; Pelon 1976: 84-85; Schachermeyr 1976: 96.
Marathon IV	LH IIIA	Marinatos 1970c: 63-68, 155-163, 351-357; Pelon 1976: 84-85; Schachermeyr 1976:96.

Tholos Tombs		
Marathon	LH IIB-IIIA1	Soteriades 1932; Marinatos 1970b; *idem* 1970c; Pelon 1976: **31**; Schachermeyr 1976: 96; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 82.

Menidi	LH IIIB	Lolling 1880b; Lolling 1887: 139; Wolters 1889; *idem* 1899: 103; Kavvadias 1909: 305-306; Stubbings 1947: 2, 18, 70; Hope Simpson 1958-59: 292-294; Pelon 1976: **32.**
Thorikos: Tholos B (Circular)	LH IIA-IIIB	Stais 1893a: 12-15; *idem* 1895: 222-225; Kavvadias 1909: 306-307; Gasche and Servais 1968: 17-102; Pelon 1976: **30.**

Chamber tombs		
Athens: Acropolis	1	*ArchDelt*. 20 (1965) *Chr*. 30; *ArchDelt*. 20 (1965) *Chr*. 30.
Athens: Agora	31	Immerwahr 1971; Schachermeyr 1976: 93-94; *AR* 1998-99: 4-6; *AR* 1999-00: 6-7; *BCH* 124 (2000) *Chr*. 763.
Athens: Dimitrakopoulou Str., Koukaki.	3+	*ArchDelt*. 21 (1966) *Chr*. 85; Nikopoulou 1970: 171-179; Schachermeyr 1976: 92; Pantelidou 1975: 71-77, 80-95; Onasoglou 1979.
Athens: Erechteiou Str.	3+	*ArchDelt*. 40 (1985) *Chr*. 13-14.
Athens: Garibaldi Str.	1	*ArchDelt*. 21 (1966) *Chr*. 90; Schachermeyr 1976: 92; Pantelidou 1975: 54-57.
Athens: Makriyianni	1	*ArchDelt*. 39 (1984) *Chr*. 8-10.
Athens: Parthenonos Str.	1	*ArchDelt*. 22 (1967) *Chr*. 112; Schachermeyr 1976: 92.
Brauron (Lapoutsi)	10	Stais 1895: 196; Nicole 1911: 80; Stubbings 1947: 6; Papadimitriou 1956: 81-87; *ArchDelt*. 21 (1966) *Chr*. 98-100; *ArchDelt*. 22 (1967) *Chr*. 131; Benzi 1975; Schachermeyr 1976:98.
Eleusis	4	Mylonas 1975b; Schachermeyr 1976:94-95.
Pallene: Glyka Nera	23	*BCH* 124 (2000) *Chr*. 770; Masouridi 2001.

Kalamaki		Mountjoy 1999: 489.
Koropi	35	*PAE* 1950: 166.
Markopoulo: Kopreza	22	Stais 1893b: 21; *idem* 1895: 213; Kavvadias 1909: 307; Stubbings 1947: 6; Benzi 1975.
Markopoulo: Lygori	10	Stais 1895: 193; Kavvadias 1909: 307.
Markopoulo: Porto Rafti		Kyparissis 1927-28: 59-60; Stubbings 1947: 7; Benzi 1975.
Mt Hymettos		Stubbings 1947: 57; Crouwel 1973; Schachermeyr 1976: 97.
Palaion Phaleron		*AA* 1943: 303; Stubbings 1947: 8
Pikermi		Kyparissis 1927-28: 60-64; Stubbings 1947: 7; Benzi 1975.
Salamis: Haghia Kyriaki	7	*ArchDelt*. 20 (1965) *Chr*. 125-126.
Salamis: Boukoromiza		Petropoulakou and Pentazos 1973: 123.
Salamis: Chalioti/ Selenia (Limniones)		Phourikis 1916: 8; Pallas 1916: 114; Robinson 1950: 1-9; Traulos 1961-62: 39; *ArchDelt*. 23 (1968) Chr. 113; Schachermeyr 1976: 98; Anastasiou-Alexiou 1991; Tzavella- Evjen 1992.
Salamis: Paloukia		Petropoulakou and Pentazos 1973: 127.
Spata	2	Milchhöfer 1877a-b; Haussoulier 1878: 185; Furtwängler and Löschke 1886: 35; Kavvadias 1909: 303-304; Nicole 1911: 9, 73; Benzi 1975; Grammenou 1996: 140-141 (also her unpublished PhD thesis).
Vari-Varkiza	8	*BCH* 78 (1954) *Chr*. 110; Theocharis 1960: 266; Vavritsas 1968: 110; Themelis 1974: 423-427; Benzi 1975; Schachermeyr 1976: 94; Sgouritsa-Polychronakou 1988a.
Vari-Vourvatsi	7+	Kyparissis 1927-28: 65-66; Stubbings 1947: 7; Benzi 1975.

Velanideza	5+	Kyparissis 1927-28: 64-65; Stubbings 1947: 7.
Voula-Alyki	13+	Papadimitriou 1953; 1955; 1957. Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1988a; *eadem* 1988b (non vidi); *BCH* 124 (2000) *Chr.* 769.

BOEOTIA (map 4)

Pits		
Tanagra	7	Spyropoulos 1973a: 16; *idem* 1977a: 25-26; *idem* 1979b: 21-22; *idem* 1980a: 55.

Tumulus		
Orchomenos	LH III	Soteriades 1905; Kavvadias 1909: 318; Pelon 1976: 85.

Tholos tomb		
Orchomenos, Minyas Treasury	LH IIIB	Schliemann 1881a: 17-39; *idem* 1881b: 135-151; Kavvadias 1909: 312-315; Pelon: **33**.

Chamber Tombs		
Chaironeia	2	*ArchDelt*. 24 (1969) *Chr*. 179.
Davlosis		*AM* 63-64 (1938-390) 177.
Kallithea: Pyrgari	15	*ArchDelt*. 19 (1964) *Chr*. 199; 20 (1965) Chr. 242; *ArchDelt*. 26 (1971) Chr. 213; Spyropoulos 1970d; Schachermeyr 1976:163; *ArchDelt*. 38 (1983) 134; *ArchDelt*. 23 (1968) 224.
Kleidhi		*ArchDelt*. 19 (1964) *Chr*. 199.

Mikro Vathy		*PAE* 1956: 94; *PAE* 1960: 39.
Mouriki	6	*ArchDelt*. 21 (1966) *Chr*. 200.
Pharos Avlidos		*ArchDelt*. 26 (1971) *Chr*. 217; Schachermeyr 1976: 160.
Tanagra: *Dendron/Grava* and *Gephyra/Ledeza*	300+	See the reports by Spyropoulos in *PAE* 1969-1979, 1980-1083 and *Ergon* 1969-1984; Schachermeyr 1976: 160-163.
Thebes	240+	Keramopoullos 1910a; *idem* 1910b; *idem* 1917; Kavvadias 1909: 319; Papadakis 1919: 33; *ArchDelt*. 22 (1967) *Chr*. 227, 229; *ArchDelt*. 23 (1968) *Chr*. 213-214, 218; *ArchDelt*. 24 (1969) *Chr*. 173, 177; *ArchDelt*. 25 (1970) *Chr*. 218; *ArchDelt*. 27 (1972) *Chr*. 307; *ArchDelt*. 28 (1973) *Chr*. 252; Schachermeyr 1976: 170ff.; Symeonoglou 1985; Pharaklas 1996; Tzavella-Evjen 1997.
Thisbe-Palaiokastro	3	Evans 1925: 1; Heurtley 1923-1925: 41, 44.
Vouliagma	1	*ArchDelt*. 22 (1967) *Chr*. 242.
Tachi (ancient Potniai)	2	*BCH* 123 (1999) *Chr*. 737-738; *BCH* 124 (2000) *Chr*. 863.

EUBOEA (map 5)

Pits		
Androniani	1 shaft	Hankey 1952: 60.

Tholos Tombs		
Katakalou: Haghia Paraskevi	LH IIIA	Kavvadias 1909: 377; Papavasileiou 1910: 39; *ArchDelt*. 39 (1984) *Chr*. 127; Pelon 1976: **36**.

Oxylithos: Evrima	LH IIIA2-B	Kavvadias 1909: 377; Papavasileiou 1910: 24; *PAE* 1912: 112; Sackett *et al.* 1966: 73; Pelon 1976: **37**.
Bellousia	LH III	Kavvadias 1909: 377; Papavasileiou 1910: 42; Sackett *et al.* 1966: 49; Pelon 1976: **35**.

Chamber Tombs		
Aliveri: Livadhi	1	Sackett *et al.* 1966: 69.
Androniani		Hankey 1952: 60; Sackett *et al.* 1966: 75.
Avlonari		Theocharis 1959: 313; Sackett *et al.* 1966: 71; *ArchDelt.* 38 (1983) *Chr.* 154.
Chalkis: Panayitsa	1	*ArchDelt.* 25 (1970) *Chr.* 248; Choremis 1972: 45-68; Schachermeyr 1976:159; Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1997[2]: 22.
Chalkis: Trypa/Vromousa	20	Kavvadias 1909: 376-377; Papavasileiou 1910a 21; *idem* 1911: 236ff.; Hankey 1952: 49; Theocharis 1959: 312; Sackett *et al.* 1966: 57; Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1997[2]: 22.
Eretria		Sackett *et al.* 1966: 64.
Kyme	2	*ArchDelt.* 39 (1984) *Chr.* 124-125.
Limni-Panaghia	1	*ArchDelt.* 33 (1978) *Chr.* 130; Sackett *et al.* 1966: 108-109.
Manika	1	*ArchDelt.* 25 (1970) *Chr.* 248.
Mistros	6	Tsirivakos 1969: 30-31; Schachermeyr 1976: 159.
Oxylithos: Moni Mantzari	1	Hankey 1952: 60; Sackett *et al.* 1966: 74.
Psachna	3	*ArchDelt.* 19 (1964) *Chr.* 213; Sackett *et al.* 1966: 33.
Rovies		Sackett *et al.* 1966: 48.

CHAPTER II

The Cult of the Dead in Mycenaean Greece: Theoretical Discussion and Framework

Sunt aliquid manes
Letum non omnia finit[1]

The study of past ways of thought as deduced from material remains presents so many challenges that it seems, by any reckoning, an uncertain venture. Similarly, the identification and elucidation of early cult practices from the archaeological record is a challenging task, and the analysis of the belief systems which sustain them an even more difficult problem[2]. However, the formulation of a series of indicators could reasonably contribute to the archaeological recognition of ritual activity and experience in prehistoric societies.

The possibility of the performance of ceremonies connected with a cult of the dead in Mycenaean Greece has been under discussion since the discovery of a rather curious circular construction, possibly an altar or *bothros*, in the area of Grave Circle A at Mycenae. The *communis opinio* on the matter, with the exception of a few scholars, is that no cult of the

[1] Propertius, IV, 7,1.
[2] Renfrew 1994a: 51.

dead was practised in Mycenaean Greece, and any attempt to prove the opposite has been rejected or avoided. Moreover, the discussion of this important issue has been restricted to brief and/or insufficient studies. Nonetheless, in the light of new data and approaches, the need for a re-examination and re-evaluation of the archaeological data seems not only requisite but inevitable.

The objective of this chapter is not only to explain the background against which this thesis is written, but also to suggest that there are criteria in the definition and study of Mycenaean ancestor cult that have been too lightly dismissed or overlooked. These arise from the archaeologist's ability to recognise and interpret post-funerary cult activity in the Mycenaean archaeological record: the definition of the term *cult of the dead*, characteristics, function, purpose and means of performance.

The assessment of previous scholarly work suggests that Grave Circle A (or GCA) at Mycenae offered the stimulus for the investigation of the extremely controversial subject of the cult of the dead in Late Helladic times. Thus, in the second part of this chapter, it will be demonstrated how and why GCA became a distinct, if not unique, locus for ancestral rituals in association with the formation of sacred and ancestral landscapes within the citadel of Mycenae in LH IIIB times. The evidence from the Circle will provide the prelude to and will serve as the background for our better understanding of the establishment and performance of ancestor veneration in LH IIIA-B Greece.

UNDERSTANDING AND DEFINING SACRED RITUAL IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Definition and functions of ritual activity

'In search of interpreting past societies' attempts to transform ritual into material form or to provide artificial and constrained landscapes of ritual action, archaeologists have frequently disagreed on the terminology of the word 'ritual' and on the value of a comprehensive definition applicable to a multi-dimensional series of meanings and functions'[3]. Unfortunately, the archaeological category 'ritual' is often defined principally by the absence of a good alternative explanation, in the way that if a feature cannot plausibly be explained in rational 'functional' terms, then it may be ascribed a 'ritual' function[4].

The word *ritual* is a cliché and at the same time ambitious, obscure and also revealing[5]. In the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology and sociology, ritual has been taken 'to be purposeful, preordained human activity, engaged in at a particular time and place with the explicit purpose of changing the social or emotional state of either the individual or group'[6], 'the organised performance of behaviours intended to influence spiritual powers'[7] or 'δρώμενα things done, λεγόμενα things said or sung, δεικνύμενα things displayed or... things envisioned in epiphany'[8].

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[3] Parker Pearson 1999: 194.
[4] Renfrew 1994b: 52; *idem* 1996: 390-2.
[5] Due to the vast bibliography on religion and ritual performance it is impossible to refer to all definitions given by scholars from different disciplines. A thorough examination of the subject has recently been undertaken by C. Bell (1992). See also J.N. Bremmer (1998) and F. Bowie's *Anthropology of Religion* (2000), especially chapters 1 and 6.
[6] Arens 1988: 224.
[7] Peoples and Bailey 2000: 220.
[8] Warren 1988: 12-13.

Rappaport defined ritual -both human and animal, religious and secular- 'as conventional acts of display through which one or many participants transmit information concerning their physiological, psychological or sociological states either to themselves or to one or more of their participants'[9].

Ritual actions, Matz's *rituelle Bewirkung,* are meaningful and purposeful, viz. for the human to communicate with and induce the divinity to affect the human or the material world[10], characterised by formalisation, periodicity and purposive character[11]. Ritual behaviour demonstrates visual, verbal, spatial and temporal dimensions, occurring at times and in places of religious or symbolic significance, involving the display and manipulation of representative objects and employing definite patterns of speech, movement and behaviour[12].

Often, archaeologists and scholars of related disciplines are called to comment on and draw conclusions from the aspects and functions of sacred ritual. According to Parker Pearson's synopsis, 'ritual performance often reveals other worlds of spirits, deities or ancestors to the participants, serving up declared truths about the meaning of life and death, speaking of worlds beyond the boundaries of the here and now, and seeking to establish seemingly autonomous social categories and distinctions such as between

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[9] Rappaport 1971: 25.
[10] Warren 1988: 13.
[11] Renfrew 1985: 14; *idem* 1994b: 49; Parker Pearson 1999: 194. It should be noted, though, that the term 'ritual' apart from its religious application, could also bear a secular character (Renfrew 1985: 14).
[12] Leach 1976: 81; Peoples and Bailey 2000: 220.

living and the dead, ritual and mundane, or sacred and profane'[13]. Sacred ritual entails worship, acts of propitiation towards supernatural powers and the acknowledgment of the power of the transcendent.

The archaeological recognition of cultic activity

Undoubtedly, any entry into the religious cosmos of past societies is inordinately difficult. Investigating the universals of past religious thought there is always the danger that scholars may carry to the inquiry their own culturally encapsulated, and perhaps stereotyped, view of the essence of religion[14]. Starting from the fact that the term 'religion' entails certain correlates which are certainly general if not universal and by which the investigation can be advanced, Renfrew established four criteria/indicators of cultic activity and presented a series of interpretative indicators[15].

The basic and most important point to have stressed was that 'in practice the recognition may be on the basis of *context*: single indications are rarely sufficient in themselves. Any single find of supposedly cult significance, could, for instance, be dismissed in the absence of other evidence either as a toy or as a secular prestige object'[16].

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[13] Parker Pearson 1999: 194.
[14] Renfrew 1994b: 47. Also Merrifield 1987: 1-21.
[15] Renfrew 1985: 14ff.; *idem* 1994a: 51-53; *idem* 1996: 390-392. He (*ibid.*) also urged that 'to list common features is not, therefore, to advocate a mechanical, 'check-list' approach', 'nor is any particular 'score' to be regarded as conclusive. But any archaeological recognition of ritual and hence religion, is likely to be based upon such indications, as well as upon information from representational schemes of painting or other depictions, and or information from such texts as may survive'.
[16] Renfrew 1985: 15.

Considering the essence of religious ritual as being the performance of expressive actions of worship and propitiation by the human celebrant towards the transcendent being, Renfrew suggested that cult observances employ a range of attention focusing devices; on the occasion of its performance, sacred ritual is situated at the boundary between this and the supernatural worlds, transferring the celebrant within this liminal zone and securing the attention of the transcendental forces. Furthermore, the active participation of the celebrants in a range of ritually determined actions is required[17]. Briefly, Renfrew's archaeological indicators of ritual require a. *focusing of attention*, b. *a boundary zone between this world and the next*, c. *the presence of the deity* and, d. *participation and offering*[18].

On the other hand, Wright has stated that Renfrew has merely succeeded in creating a method for identifying places of worship but not criteria for the study of religion, e.g. definition and structure of belief systems, practice and symbolism, the structure of religion and its role in society[19]. In his study of the archaeological correlates of religion, he has suggested that archaeologists could make considerable progress in the reconstruction of past religions by recognising that religious behaviour, i.e. the expression of commonly held societal beliefs and values, is almost always symbolised in physical form, e.g. in objects and spaces of worship and in the configuration of other social spaces[20].

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[17] Renfrew 1985: 18ff.; *idem* 1994b: 51.
[18] Renfrew 1985: 18ff.; *idem* 1994b: 51.
[19] Wright 1995a: 341. It should be noted, though, that in a later study Renfrew discussed the belief system underlying cult 'in the context of the analysis of the iconography of depictions in which aspects of the world are figuratively represented' (Renfrew 1994b: 51).
[20] Wright 1995a: 341ff.

Ancestor cults: definition, general characteristics and functions

Many contributors to the sociology of religion and the archaeology of death and ritual have seen in the institutions that centre upon death the core of their studies[21]. The emphasis put on the body-soul dichotomy and the beliefs associated with this perception has resulted in and attracted the enduring interest of scholars in many areas of the study of religion and ancestor cult[22].

The association between death and divinity was first stressed by the Sicilian writer *Euhemerus* (ca. 315 BC), who maintained that the worship of the gods in antiquity originated from the worship of the dead[23]. This theory, known as *Euhemerism*, taught that the spirits venerated as divine had once animated the bodies of mortals with extraordinary powers. After their death these fearsome men were distinguished and received more honours than the ordinary dead. Consequently, they were attributed divine qualities and were raised to the sphere of the immortals. Their true biographies passed out of memory or were rather transformed by legend into a myth, which at some point covered completely their original nature[24].

In 1913, Frazer argued that the worship of the dead has indeed perhaps been the most influential and commonest form of natural religion[25].

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[21]Goody (1962: 13ff.) has given a detailed account of the background and trends concerning ancestor cult and funerary ceremonies in the field of sociology. The study of Death in Prehistoric Greece has been recently undertaken by Cavanagh and Mee (1998), who discuss in detail the burial rituals.

[22] Tylor 1929; Goody 1962: 14.

[23] Frazer 1913: 24; Nilsson 1950^2: 584ff.; Bowie 2000: 14.

[24] Frazer 1913: 24.

[25] Frazer 1913: 23-24.

According to his judgement, the deification of the dead presupposes the belief in the immortality of the soul or rather its survival for some time after the burial and its ability to 'exercise great power for good or evil over the destinies of the living, who are therefore compelled to propitiate the shades of the dead out of a regard for their own safety and well-being'[26].

However, the nineteenth century belief that 'ancestor worship, associated as it is with the universal fact of death became the archetypal form of primitive religion'[27] and formed 'the root of every religion'[28] has long since passed from view. Subsequent studies on the theme have provided a stimulating point of access to related problems of religion, society and culture, so that an association between eschatology and theology seems inescapable[29].

Scholars have urged for a distinction between funerary rites and the worship of the dead. Hardacre has argued that the rites of death, including funerary and mortuary rituals, are regarded as falling within the purview of ancestor cult only when memorial rites beyond the period of death and the disposal of the corpse are carried out as a regular function of a kinship group; when ancestors are collectively and regularly accorded cult status by their descendants, acting as members of a kinship group, such practices are considered as ancestor cult[30]. According to Barrett, ancestor rituals establish the presence of ancestors in rites concerned with the living and

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[26] Frazer 1913: 24-25.
[27] Goody 1962: 14.
[28] Spencer 1885: 411.
[29] Hardacre 1989: 62; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 113.
[30] Hardacre 1989: 63.

could also play a part in the rites of burial, whereas funerary rituals are specifically concerned with human burial[31]. For Peoples and Bailey ancestral cults or ancestor worship are beliefs and rituals surrounding the interactions between the living and their departed relatives[32].

Durkheim denied that funeral rites and rites of mourning constitute a cult of the dead, as cult in general 'is not a simple group of ritual precautions which a man is held to take in certain circumstances; it is a system of diverse rites, festivals and ceremonies which *all have this characteristic, that they reappear periodically*'[33]. It should be noted, though, that the institution of ancestor worship is properly regarded as a religious practice, not as religion itself[34]. In several ancient and modern ancestor-worshipping societies, several classes of dead, mainly children, unmarried daughters, persons who failed to produce descendants, strangers and social outcasts were excluded from the sphere of the sacred dead[35].

In *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* Parker Pearson argues that the formalisation of what could be called ancestor cults requires 'the awareness of -and expression given to- the permanence of death which can be contrasted with the transitory nature of life', and the existence of 'a set of beliefs relating to the supernatural presence and powers of the ancestors'[36]. In many societies, ancestors are believed to be immortal beings, whose

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[31] Barrett 1998: 31.
[32] Peoples and Bailey 2000: 233.
[33] Durkheim 1968[6]: 63.
[34] Hardacre 1989: 63. Formal ancestor cults are a feature of modern societies in eastern Asia, Africa and Oceania.
[35] Wolf 1974: 146ff, 154ff.; Johnston 1999: 71ff.
[36] Parker Pearson 1999: 158.

ontological position lies between humans and the sphere of the sacred[37]. They may be regarded as possessing power equivalent to a deity and hence may be accorded cult status and considered able to influence society to a similar extent[38].

Certainly, the reverence of ancestors is closely linked to cosmological perceptions, to ideas of the soul and the afterlife, and to a society's regulation of inheritance and succession[39]. Through time and social processes, ancestor cult has embodied a variety of forms and attitudinal characteristics and comprises part of broader religious and social systems.

It is a basic human characteristic to search for logical explanations regarding death. Indeed, the construction of ancestorhood and the establishment of ancestor cults enhance the memory of the dead, and, therefore, provide the participants with an assurance that the material world is insignificant. The remembrance of the dead contributes to the denial of the finality of death, via the participation in post-burial rites and/or by inculcating beliefs about the existence of an afterlife, in which the spirits of the departed continue in existence. The event of death holds a key place in human social geographies. Ancestor rites provide additional insights into ways in which the dead were incorporated into cosmologies and social practices. In the universal event of death, social ties and orders may be legitimised, appropriated or even challenged, identities of power and rank

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[37] Parker Pearson 1999: 165.
[38] Hardacre 1989: 63.
[39] Hardacre1989: 63; Goody 1962; Wolf 1974; Fortes 1976: 7; Soles 2001: 229.

may be (re)defined, and/or proclaimed. In view of that, ancestor cults may serve intellectual (or cognitive), psychological and social functions.

THE CULT OF THE DEAD IN THE MYCENAEAN WORLD: THE PROBLEM

Trying to understand and interpret the cosmological and metaphysical perceptions of the Mycenaeans may seem an enterprise whose conclusions, *prima facie*, could be nothing more than speculation or well-defined guesses[40]. To proceed with any past notions on ritual and eschatology means to be forced to employ a minimum of material traces. The starting point of the present investigation regarding the veneration of ancestors in Mycenaean Greece is the almost universal belief that *letum non omnia finit*[41]; death does not end all. The meaning of death and its memory will forever form part of humanity's metaphorical transformations of life and death. Grainger has suggested that there is definitely a connection and interaction between death and religion because of death's 'urgent demand for answers to ontological and teleological questions, questions about the origin and the purpose of the living'[42].

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[40] Ucko (1969) and Hawkes (1954) warned against the scholar's ability to perceive the sort of religious institutions and spiritual life prehistoric peoples might have had and adopted a rather gloomy view on the subject.
[41] Propertius, IV, 7,1
[42] Grainger 1998: 54.

History of Research[43]

Unquestionably, research on the cult of the dead in Mycenaean Greece was pioneered by the discovery and the finds of GCA at Mycenae. The existence of a cultic device, namely an altar, in its burial ground raised in the 19th century the question whether the inhabitants of mainland Greece practised a cult of the dead in Late Helladic times[44].

In 1909 Kavvadias attributed the practice of ancestor veneration in Minoan-Mycenaean times to the human need to placate the dead in return for favourable treatment[45]. He thought that the dead were not worshipped only at the graves but also in the houses, a fact proved by the presence of altars in the courts of Mycenaean *megara*, which he thought were altars of Zeus Herkeios originating from ancestor cults[46].

Concerned with Greek ideas of immortality, Farnell urged for a distinction between ancestor cult, hero cult and the general religious 'tendance' or *θεραπεία* of the dead; a distinction on the basis of the root-idea affecting their geographical distribution and the sentiment attaching to them[47]. He introduced the term *ancestral religious tendance* arguing that the term *worship* is often misleading[48].

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[43] Due to the limitations and restrictions imposed on the length of this thesis, it has been determined to include only the studies that have covered in detail and are in direct relevance to the issue of the Mycenaean ancestor cult. Mere statements regarding the rejection of ancestor cult in Mycenaean Greece appear frequently in excavation reports without, however, any further discussion on the matter.

[44] The evidence from GCA at Mycenae and the related previous arguments will be discussed below.

[45] Kavvadias 1909: 748.

[46] Kavvadias 1909: 748.

[47] Farnell 1921: 2, 342ff. However, he pointed to the fact that all three categories 'are liable to blend, the one to the other' (*ibid.*).

[48] Farnell 1921: 344.

In order to find an answer to the question whether the Greeks worshipped their dead or at least some of them, Farnell focused on certain parameters regarding the location of the (pre-)Mycenaean tombs near the settlements, the elaborate provision for the tendance of the departed in the Shaft Graves, the iconographical programme of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, the Homeric poems and the Hesiodic poetry[49].

On the topic of Mycenaean monuments, he concluded that the evidence is suggestive of mere tendance prompted by family affection rather than actual worship of the spirits of the departed. He excluded, however, certain tombs, which were tended for many generations, arguing that 'tendance long maintained is likely to engender actual worship', as well as the representation on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, although, according to his argument, it would be difficult to tell whether the spirit of the departed was being revered as hero or ancestor[50]. After having discussed the literary sources, Farnell concluded that great personages probably received actual worship after their death and that occasional sacrifices to ghosts were not unknown in the Homeric times[51].

In his study on Minoan-Mycenaean religion, Nilsson defined the cult of ancestors as '*the service of the dead moulded into regular and fixed forms and repeated at fixed intervals, performed by the members of the family and prolonged for generations; when such a regular cult of the dead is*

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[49] Farnell 1921: 3-18.
[50] Farnell 1921: 5.
[51] Farnell 1921: 5-18, where he accepted that clear evidence for the worship of the dead is given in the Homeric Νέκυια.

severed from the family and becomes a concern of the public in general, a hero cult arises'[52]. He made a sharp distinction between *funerary customs*, which are performed only on the occasion of a burial, and Farnell's *ancestral religious tendance*, the bringing of offerings and sacrifices to the dead and their tombs on certain days or on certain occasions[53].

Considering the indications for cult from the Mycenaean monuments, Nilsson attributed ceremonial character to the small niches found occasionally empty in the *dromos*, the sacrificial pits, the traces of fire and the remains of banquets held in the tomb[54]. Special reference was made to chamber tomb 2 at Dendra, which he regarded as 'an outstanding testimony to the cult of the dead in the Mycenaean Age'[55]. He underlined the importance of ancestor cult in GCA at Mycenae in association with the funerary *stelai* and Schliemann's 'altar'[56].

Mylonas pioneered research on the matter starting in 1948. He suggested that the Mycenaeans were honouring by a special cult the spirits of a few chosen departed individuals, destined and allowed to interfere with the world of the living and exercise influence in it[57]. In 1951, though, he denied the existence of conclusive evidence to prove or even to indicate the practice of a general cult of the dead in Helladic times on the Greek

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[52] Nilsson 1950^2: 586. Nilsson's definition has become the core of all studies concerned with the Mycenaean cult of the dead.
[53] Nilsson 1950^2: 585-586.
[54] Nilsson 1950^2: 587ff. It is appropriate to discuss in detail the evidence he quoted for each specific element, as well as the data from GCA and tomb 2 at Dendra, in the relevant sections of this thesis.
[55] Nilsson 1950^2: 600.
[56] Nilsson 1950^2:.606ff.
[57] Mylonas 1948: 134-147; *idem* 1949: 62-63.

mainland. He stated that the real evidence for the veneration of ancestors in those times comes exclusively from the Royal Cemetery of Mycenae. He agreed with the earlier scholars that the altar unearthed by Schliemann was put in place during the re-arrangement of GCA in LH III times, and, to him, this element served as proof that at least in those times a cult in honour of the princes buried in the Shaft Graves was held at Mycenae[58].

That the cult was practised even before the late Mycenaean era seemed to him to be indicated by the fact that the area of the graves was enclosed within the city walls, and also by the discovery of a hollow by Keramopoullos. The repeated use of the area was certainly proved by the stratified ashes. He was also of the same opinion as Keramopoullos that this hollow was used for the veneration of the dead and that it was filled when the Grave Circle was re-arranged and that it was replaced by the round altar placed over Shaft Grave IV[59].

However, after the excavation of Grave Circle B, the further investigation of GCA and the study of the writings of Schliemann, Wace and Tsountas, Mylonas stated that no substantial evidence was found in the fill of GCA to indicate that it was used for a cult or other religious rites after its reconstruction. In examining the evidence from Circle B, he concluded that the Mycenaeans did not respect its area despite its circular wall[60]. The builders of the Clytemnestra Tholos cut into Grave Circle B and violated its integrity; the stonecutters, who prepared the blocks used in the

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[58] Mylonas 1951a: 105.
[59] Mylonas 1951a: 105.
[60] Mylonas 1961-62: 291-355; *idem* 1966; 1973.

construction of its vault or mound, worked the stone in the area of the GCA and its adjacent section. The mound over the tholos of the same tomb extended over the Circle perhaps covering more than half of its area. He also stated that the area of GCA was respected as the burial place of the ruling clan who laid the foundations of Mycenae and its glory, serving as an historical landmark[61].

In 1968 Andronikos discussed thoroughly the issue of the cult of the dead in his *Totenkult* and adopted a sceptical attitude towards the view that classified the Mycenaean ancestor cult as non-existent[62]. He admitted that the traces of such cult practice disappear easily from the archaeological record and adopted Nilsson's methodological approach[63]. After having cited the previous studies on the issue, his argument centred upon the evidence for ritual activity in Asine tomb 5, Mycenae tomb 523, Dendra tomb 10, the Grave of the Hyperborean Virgins and the altar from Grave Circle A[64].

Several years later, the general denial of the existence of ancestor cult in Mycenaean Greece was reversed by the excavations of Th. Spyropoulos in the Mycenaean cemetery of Tanagra and the discovery of the celebrated *larnakes*. For the first time their rich iconographical repertoire elucidated

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[61] Mylonas 1961-2: 291-355; *idem* 1966; 1973.
[62] Andronikos 1968: W127ff.
[63] Andronikos 1968: W127.
[64] Andronikos 1968: W128-129.

and gave substance to the burial practices and the metaphysical beliefs not only of the Tanagran community but also of the entire Mycenaean world[65].

In 1974 Spyropoulos summarised the data from the excavations and discussed in detail issues regarding funerary practices, metaphysical beliefs and symbolism reflected in the iconography of the larnakes[66]. Following the analysis of the iconographical repertoire, he argued that there was no doubt that the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus depicted religious ceremonies in honour of the dead and that the Homeric Poems reflected the cult of the dead and the funerary contests of the Mycenaean period[67]. His study centred on and emphasised the importance of funerary games associated with the practice of tomb cult, with special reference to the larnax with the chariots from Tomb 22 and the permanent installation of what seem to be a stadium and an *exedra* associated with the frescoed Royal Tomb at Megalo Kastelli, Thebes[68].

With respect to the Royal Tomb at Megalo Kastelli, he expressed the view that it was visible and known in antiquity, and that hero cult was definitely

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[65] The tombs and their finds are still unpublished. However, valuable information can be obtained from interim reports in the *Archaiologikon Deltion*, the *Athens Annals of Archaeology*, and the *Proceedings* and the *Ergon of the Greek Archaeological Society at Athens* during 1969-1984.

[66] Spyropoulos 1974: 9-33.

[67] Spyropoulos 1974: 22-23, where he refers to the Homeric 'ἆθλα ἐπί Πατρόκλῳ', 'ὅς ποτε Θήβασθε ἦλθεν δεδουπότος Οἰδιπόδαο / ἐς τάφον, ἔνθα δέ πάντας ἐνίκα Καδμεΐωνας' (Ψ 679-680), and the iconographical depiction of Sophilos' *dinos* (Kakridis 1987: fig. 91; Carpenter 1991: fig. 315).

[68] Spyropoulos 1970b: 192, fig. 17 (for the larnax with the chariots); *idem* 1973b: 256ff. (for the *peridromos* and the *exedra* of the Royal Tomb at Thebes); *idem* 1974: 22-24 (for a thorough discussion of the evidence). With reference to the above, it is worth stressing S. Morris' suggestion that the chariot races on an amphoroid *krater* from Tiryns 'may allude to funerary games, which would make the seated figure with cup an enthroned deity of the dead presiding at the games, if not an image of the dead' (Morris 1992: 209).

practised there as indicated by the later finds[69]. His conclusion that a sharp distinction between burial customs and the cult of the dead is observed on the larnakes is constantly validated by the archaeological data and the comparisons with other media of the Mycenaean funerary art.

Hooker challenged Mylonas' statement that Mycenaean funerary monuments were mere 'temporary shelters for the trip to the lower world' by pointing to the increasing size and elaboration of several tombs[70]. He went further discussing the practice of sweeping aside the remains of earlier interments and argued that 'disrespect for the physical remains does not exclude veneration for an impalpable part of the human personality'[71].

Some years later, Iakovidis denied the existence of a cult of the dead before Geometric times, suggesting that a tomb cult, in the sense that gifts and sacrifices continued to be brought to the dead on certain days and on certain occasions, was never practised in Late Helladic times, and that this tendance was later extended to the ancestors in general and not only to the deceased members of the family[72].

In 1980 Tsagarakis urged the need for a new approach to the subject and proposed to return to the Homeric Epics[73]. He concentrated on the evidence from the *bothroi* located near some (pre)Mycenaean graves and argued in

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[69] Spyropoulos 1973a: 255ff, where he cites the archaeological evidence and stresses the echo of the important elements of the tomb on the later literary tradition, namely Sophocles' *Antigone*.
[70] Hooker 1976: 196; Mylonas 1957: 85.
[71] Hooker 1976: 196.
[72] Iakovidis 1977b: 120-126.
[73] Tsagarakis 1980: 229-240.

favour of the worship of the dead in Mycenaean Greece[74]. He stated that there must have been a need or desire to honour, placate and communicate with the dead or some of them by presenting them with gifts at the burial or afterwards periodically[75]. Other explanations put forward were foreign influence and demonstration of wealth[76]. He also rejected the fear of the dead as a possible cause for the cult and supported the idea of the divinity of the Mycenaean king, which was expanded after his death at his tomb[77].

He assumed that Homeric ritual reflects genuine religious practices and drew two conclusions: a. that the ruling class practised some kind of a cult of the dead, and b. that the cult served the individual and his family or class[78]. According to his argument, the Mycenaean cult of the dead was intended to politically exploit and impress the populace, whatever notions there were about the dead in the remote past of their history. Undoubtedly, the idea of a powerful figure that influences the living and claims earthly honours and possessions, and the preservation, by means of an impressive ritual, of the memory of this leading figure, are a valid reason for organising and maintaining a cult[79].

Dickinson argued that there is evidence for rites associated with the funeral, although none is as well documented as one would like[80]. He

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[74] Tsagarakis (1980: 112-240) examined the evidence for altars and bothroi from GCA at Mycenae, Drachmani, Archanes and other Mycenaean sites, as well as the iconographical evidence (the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus and other larnakes) and the literary sources (Homeric *Nekyia*).
[75] Tsagarakis 1980: 235, 238.
[76] Tsagarakis 1980: 238 and note 71, where he cites Nilsson 1974[3] (I): 377.
[77] Tsagarakis 1980: 239.
[78] Tsagarakis 1980: 240.
[79] Tsagarakis 1980: 240.
[80] Dickinson 1977: 47; *idem* 1994: 229-230.

mentioned briefly the occurrence of libation vessels in association with the tombs as well as the evidence for ritual lamenting on the Tanagra larnakes. However, he denied the existence of any traces of any general cult of the dead, and argued that even in special cases like GCA the proof remains unclear. As far as the altar in GCA is concerned, the same scholar suggested that it certainly seems from the stratigraphical data to be a feature of the original use of the Circle in the 16th century, but not a constant site of cult activity through into later Mycenaean times. No mention, however, was made of the grotto in the same site published by Keramopoullos.

Research to prove the performance of post-funerary rites in honour of the dead in prehistoric Greece has recently been undertaken by Protonotariou-Deilaki[81]. In her thesis on the *Tumuli of Argos* she drew a line between funerary customs and the cult of the dead or hero-cult[82]. The funerary customs were subdivided into two categories; the 'ταφικά ἔθιμα', which consist of rites necessary during the burial, and the 'νεκρικά ἔθιμα', ceremonies and offerings intended for the dead after the burial. From the latter category evolved the 'λατρευτικά νεκρικά ἔθιμα' or 'ἡρωολατρεία', ceremonies for the reverence of distinguished ancestors or heroes[83].

She commented on the discovery of bothroi and bolster-shaped structures in Middle Helladic and Mycenaean burial contexts and associated them

[81] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 126ff; *eadem* 1990a: 82-83.
[82] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 139ff.
[83] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 139ff.

with the pouring of libations for the dead and the Homeric tradition[84]. In her view, the placement of a grave marker over the tomb offers justifiable grounds for the belief that the relatives visited the burial place for post-burial libations and rites at fixed times, in a kind of memorial service. The occasional discovery of holes in the covering slabs could support the above statement for the pouring of libations[85]. The burnt strata in the tumuli mixed with animal bones were interpreted as the remains of immolatory sacrifices during and after the burial[86]. Summing up, she proposed that the cult of the dead in prehistoric Greece is suggested by the mentions in the ancient sources (Homeric and Hesiodic poems), the archaeological data (ritual devices and installations, remains of sacrificial and pouring ceremonies) and the survival of the custom from the Geometric to the Christian era (hero cult, martial games, memorial services)[87].

Contra the above statements, Sourvinou-Inwood wrote that the traditional view that no cult of the dead was practised in Mycenaean Greece is periodically but not convincingly challenged, 'especially since some of these challenges are based on culturally determined 'logical' judgements'[88]. According to her argument, the modality of the spatial articulation of the burial space expresses radical separation and total absence of contact,

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[84] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 142-145.
[85] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990a: 82. In her discussion on the cult of the dead in Mycenaean Greece, Sourvinou-Inwood (1995: 92) has argued that Protonotariou-Deilaki's view on the *semata* 'involves a serious misunderstanding of the complex function and significance of the grave marker'.
[86] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 145; *eadem* 1990a: 82.
[87] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 126 and note 7, 146.
[88] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 92.

although one should not exclude the possibility of other forms of contact with the ancestors far from the grave[89].

On the basis that it is not open to proof whether the dead were considered to have been finally incorporated into the realm of ancestors until their remains had been reduced to disarticulated bones, she rejected the idea that any ceremony of secondary burial, addressed either to the dead or the chthonic deities, can be considered 'relevant to the behaviour towards, or to the eschatology pertaining to the nature of, the shades after they were fully integrated into Hades'[90]. She concluded that cult of the dead and heroic cult was practised undeniably only in eighth-century Greece[91].

Wright confined the emphasis placed upon the respect or worship of the ancestors to the symbolic use of monumental architecture of all types and the establishment of monumental ancestor settings in LH IIIB times, and in particular, to the maintenance and (re)use of chamber tomb cemeteries over a long span of time and to the monumental burials in the tholoi[92].

In an exhaustive survey of archaeological evidence for early Greek ancestor veneration and hero cult, Antonaccio has argued that occasionally 'the Mycenaeans singled out particular tombs for special treatment, but usual offerings and rituals performed at burials in chambers and tholos tombs are not worship of the dead'[93]. She concluded that general

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[89] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 91 and note 228.
[90] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 93.
[91] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 94.
[92] Dabney and Wright 1990: 52. Wright's ideas on patterns of allegiance to lineal ancestors will be discussed below.
[93] Antonaccio 1995: 245.

veneration was not practised in the Bronze Age apart from a few special instances, such as the LH IIIB renovation of GCA at Mycenae and the depositions along the Great Poros Wall in the Prehistoric Cemetery, which however were not indicative of ongoing cult, but rather of a tendance by the later generations. This interest in the dead in Late Helladic times extends occasionally to re-used or re-entered burial sites and may be reflected in the mention of *ti-ri-se-ro-e* in the Linear B tablets[94].

In conclusion, in the light of the previous argumentation, it is clear that the majority of previous studies on the cult of the dead in Mycenaean Greece have denied its existence and that the idea has long since been considered outdated. Moreover, it is evident that the issue has been to-date the subject of intense speculation, but not of systematic investigation. Broader questions *vis-à-vis* chronological developments, regional variations, the issue of homogeneity or heterogeneity of Mycenaean religious and funerary expression and beliefs, plus the setting of post-burial rites in the broader Mycenaean religious context still remain unanswered.

Before proceeding with any further suggestions or approaches to the subject, it is necessary to outline the evidence from GCA, a monument of great significance to the investigation of ancestor reverence in LH III Greece.

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[94] Antonaccio 1995: 245. The role and character of the *ti-ri-se-ro-e* are discussed in detail in *Chapter V*.

A sacred place of the dead: Architectural arrangement and ritual experience in Grave Circle A at Mycenae

The distinct architectural arrangement and the remains of ritualistic nature in GCA offered the prelude and the stimulus for the investigation and study of ancestor worship in Mycenaean Greece. Such was its influence that scholarly work has focused either on a search for similar evidence in the tholos and chamber tombs- in order to verify the existence of ancestor veneration-, or on the rejection of the idea for lack of exact parallels. Moreover, archaeologists have attempted to trace remains of religious ceremonies in the original LH I phase of the monument, whereas the significance of the LH IIIB renovation of the GCA and the contemporaneous major building scheme apparently executed at Mycenae have been to a certain degree underestimated.

After a brief narrative of the Circle's 'historical' course, the analysis of its ritualistic devices -with special reference to Schliemann's altar- and the presentation of the previous argumentation on the matter, the objective of the following section is to demonstrate that the re-arrangement of GCA was a conscious, non-arbitrary activity aimed at a) the creation of a respected ancestral ground and the construction of ancestral lineage and b) the advertisement of power on behalf of the ruling group of LH IIIB Mycenae. The extent to which this ancestral locale was incorporated into and influenced the sacred and secular landscapes of Mycenae will be assessed in these terms.

A brief narrative of Grave Circle A's 'historical' development

The original appearance of the monument

Entering the citadel of Mycenae, just to the south of the Lion Gate, extends the area of GCA **(fig. 3a)**. Its six royal Shaft Graves formed part of the Prehistoric Cemetery area and judging by the pottery sequence and the other exquisite finds the Circle flourished during the LH I period. Its original appearance is lost forever leaving questions of interpretation still unanswered. Moreover, the scarcity of stratigraphical details in Schliemann's final account of the excavations and the presentation of Stamatakis' excavation of Grave VI only in interim reports render the understanding of the history of GCA difficult and abstruse[95]. Fortunately, Schliemann's *Tagebuch,* his correspondence with *The Times* and with Max Müller, complement to a significant degree the final publication[96].

Besides, the later discovery and excavation of Grave Circle B outside the Cyclopean walls elucidate to a significant degree the rather obscure original phase of GCA[97]. The accidental location of Grave Circle B on a small knoll outside the fortification walls was followed by its excavation in three main campaigns[98]. Circle B enclosed several graves, most of them intact. Of the 26 sepulchres unearthed, 14 were typical Shaft Graves and 6 were cist graves cut in the natural rock. Just like GCA, it formed part of the Prehistoric Cemetery, which covered the area of the slope west of the

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[95] Schliemann 1880; Stamatakis 1877: 25-26; Schuchhardt 1891: 270-273.
[96] Dickinson 1976: 159-168; *idem* 1977: 46, 114, Ch. III (3) note 1; Åkeström 1978: 42-43.
[97] Mylonas 1973; Dickinson 1977: 40-46; Antonaccio 1995: 49 with further bibliography on discussion following the final publication.
[98] Mylonas undertook the final publication of the results in 1973.

Citadel, and remained in use from late MH to LH IIB, when it was last used to receive the rather peculiar grave Rho. So, it is slightly earlier than GCA, though their period of use overlaps briefly[99].

The Shaft Graves of Mycenae form the prototype for the definition of the grave type **(fig. 4)**. In functional terms they are deep quadrangular shafts, quite large, their size defined by the multiple character of the burials[100]. The inner faces of the shaft were either lined with low rubble walls or rock-cut ledges on which rested the ends of transverse wooden beams. These closely spaced beams, covered by thin stone slabs or straw (*τύφη*)[101] and, in turn, sealed with impermeable clay, *πλέσια*[102], supported the ceiling of the burial chamber. The shaft was filled with earth forming a small mound marked by a small heap or a circle of stones and, occasionally, crowned by a decorated or plain *stela*[103].

The dead were placed on a layer of pebbles with their funeral furnishings arranged around them. The remains of at least nineteen persons were uncovered[104]. There are few indications regarding the position of the skeletons. It has been argued that they were buried in a contracted mode of

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[99] Much has been written on the chronology of the Circles and I refer, in brief, to Mylonas 1973, Dickinson 1977, Gates 1985: 263-274, Graziadio 1988: 343-372 and 1991: 403-440, Laffineur 1987: 117-125 and 1990: 201-205, Kilian 1986: 159-198 and Xenaki-Sakellariou 1989: 177-182.

[100] Mylonas 1973: 243-245; Dickinson 1983: 56; Iakovidis 1983: 38; Treuil *et al.* 1989: 335; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 28-29.

[101] In the bibliography the Greek '*τύφη*' (*Typha*) stands for *straw/reed* (Marinatos 1953: 59). Mylonas (1966: 91) described it as 'a simple thatch of twigs and dried leaves'. See also Rackham 1983: 329.

[102] After the name of the village of the material's extraction (Vasilikou 1995: 28).

[103] Heurtley 1921-23:126-146; Mylonas 1973: 245 for general remarks; Younger 1997: 229-238.

[104] Three burials were found in Shaft Grave I, one in II, five in III (three women and two children), five in IV, three in V and two in VI (Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 94; Wace 1949: 59-60).

inhumation[105]. At least in the case of Grave VI, secondary treatment of skeletal remains is attested[106], whereas Schliemann argued that in grave V a body was preserved by embalming[107]. The orientation of the bodies does not seem to have played an important role[108]. Furthermore, libations and sacrifices followed by feasting are attested[109].

The orthodox answer to the question whether the Shaft Graves of GCA were surrounded by a wall at the time of or just after their completion is 'yes', although doubts have been expressed recently by Gates and Laffineur[110]. In 1891 Tsountas pointed to the remains of a perpendicular section of a curving wall at the foot of the western retaining wall of the Circle[111]. According to his observations, it was 'vertical to the height of five feet, and thence slopes inward', a remnant of the older foundation wall, on which the LH IIIB one was afterwards constructed[112]. Subsequent studies on the matter, the striking similarities with Circle B and the pottery recovered from among its stones proved that this wall belonged to the close of the MH era[113].

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[105] Wace 1949: 60; Graziadio 1991: 410, notes 57-59.
[106] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 96; Mylonas 1983: 31-32; Dickinson (1977: 48) has stated that 'since all of the graves which contain more than one burial, except Grave VI, are large enough to allow the insertion of later burials with a minimum amount of disturbance, it seems unlikely that there were originally more burials that had been pushed aside and had decayed so far as to be undetectable'.
[107] Schliemann 1880: 296-298; Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 95-96; Mylonas 1969: 125-142; Dickinson 1977: 49.
[108] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 95.
[109] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 96-97, 150.
[110] Gates 1985: 265-268; Laffineur 1987; *idem* 1990: 201.
[111] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 110-111.
[112] Tsountas 1893: 107; Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 111.
[113] Mylonas 1961: 150-160; *idem* 1962: 111ff; *idem* 1966: 95; Iakovidis 1977a: 112; *idem* 1996: 1042.

An altar discovered, according to Schliemann's descriptions, above Grave IV has been considered to be the proof for post-funerary ritual activity in the burial ground. Likewise, a hollow, excavated by Keramopoullos between Shaft Graves I and IV, must have also received the appropriate rites in honour of the dead not only during the period of their use but also later after the practice of burials in the Circle had ceased[114].

The LH IIIB modification

What happened during the interval LH IIA-LH IIIB remains a mystery[115]. During the LH IIIB period, though, it was resolved to enclose and preserve this ancestral ground as a kind of *temenos*[116]. An elaborate double ring of vertical slabs roofed with massive covering slabs of the same shelly sandstone material enclosed the Shaft Graves and part of the Prehistoric Cemetery. Access to the burial ground was gained by a well-constructed entrance in the north section of the Circle. When the construction of the ring wall and its imposing entrance was completed, the sculptured grave *stelai* that had stood over the graves at the original LH I level were re-erected over the graves in random order at the new level[117].

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[114] However, as will be shown below, the positions of the altar and the hollow have been widely disputed.

[115] The pottery found in the Circle is dated from LH IA to LH IIA (only in Grave I) (Dietz 1991: 247-250 and fig. 78). The bulk of pottery dates to the LH IB period (*idem* 1991: 250, fig. 78).

[116] The author of this thesis accepts the conventional belief that the Shaft Graves stood within a peribolos and did not form part of a tumulus, a theory pursued primarily by Tsountas [1885: 35ff.; Tsountas and Manatt (1897: 106-114)] and more recently by Gates (1985: 268-269) and Protonotariou-Deilaki (1990b: 85-89).

[117] Note, however, Laffineur's dissenting opinion (1995: 86ff).

The date of the parapet is given by the LH IIIB sherds found in the fill of the Circle's parapet and in its supporting wall[118]. More analytically, several trial pits performed at several levels and places of the supporting wall produced pottery classified first by Wace as simply LH III, and later as early LH IIIB[119]. Additionally, Laffineur recognised in the former publication sherds in 'panel style' of LH IIIB2 date, similar to the material uncovered by Mylonas in the adjoining west Cyclopean wall[120].

The cultic character of GCA seems to have been preserved until the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces; however, scholars have argued that a hero cult might have been established here in later periods judging by the presence of a sherd bearing a dedicatory inscription to a 'hero'. Jeffery dated it to about 475 BC[121] and 'the sherd is of course not certain proof that a hero was venerated even in the Greek age on the place where the old Mycenaean kings were buried but there is a definite probability that this was so'[122]. Laffineur has suggested that part of this heroic cult should be the ashes and animal bones discovered at the foot of the stelai[123].

The Grave Circle was maintained as a cult centre until the downfall of Mycenae[124]. It does not seem to have suffered any destruction or alteration

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[118] Wace 1921-23a: 110; Papadimitriou 1957: 106.
[119] Wace 1921-23a: 108-109; Wace and Stubbings 1954: 246.
[120] Laffineur 1990: 203 and especially notes 26 and 27; Mylonas 1961: 159; *idem* 1966: 24-33, 73ff, fig. 23b (illustration of LH IIIB sherds from the west Cyclopean wall). Gates (1985: 263-274) has suggested that the remodelling of GCA should be attributed to two phases in LH IIIB (and also in LH IIIC for the second phase of the re-arrangement), whereas Laffineur (1990: 201-205) proposed a development in four phases during the LH IIIB period.
[121] Jeffery 1961: 173-174 no 6.
[122] Nilsson 1950[2]: 610.
[123] Schliemann 1880: 92-93 ('grey ashes of burnt animal matter'); Laffineur 1995: 90.
[124] Wace 1921-23a: 125.

either in Classical or Hellenistic times. Probably 'the tradition of sanctity clung to the spot and made it respected; and its echo still lingered when Pausanias visited Greece'[125].

The controversial theory that the rulers of early Mycenae were commemorated and offered divine honours is principally the consequence of Schliemann's original interpretations. The discovery of the so-called altar, the enshrining of the six royal Shaft Graves within the circular parapet and the special arrangements made in order to include this burial ground within the defence walls have been considered the best evidence for the divine character of those reposed therein. However, objections and doubts have been expressed on the authenticity of the altar and even as regards the reliability of Schliemann's descriptions of the finds, arguments strengthened by the actual lack of the structure and detailed archaeological data.

Schliemann's altar: a matter of controversy since 1876 **(fig. 5)**

On December 6th, 1876, Schliemann announced the discovery of an elliptical structure of Cyclopean masonry in the form of a well, which marked precisely the centre of Shaft Grave IV in GCA at Mycenae[126]. This monument is now lost but according to the description and the drawings published, this hollow-like structure was built of 4-5 courses of presumably

[125] Wace 1954: 21-23; Pausanias II, 16, 6-7.
[126] Schliemann 1880: 212-213.

un-worked stones arranged in a double ring, measuring 1.22m in height by 2.13m x 1.60m in length and in width respectively[127].

The excavator recognised in this peculiar structure 'a primitive altar for funeral rites' performed in honour of those buried in the Circle, and based his belief on the discovery of two rectangular slabs in the form of tombstones, ca. 0.85m long and 0.45m broad, and a short column, which lay in an horizontal position below the altar, and which must have once served to mark the site of a sepulchre[128].

A continued cultic function of the area was confirmed by Keramopoulllos' explorations in the area[129]. In winter 1913, the soft rock between Shaft Graves I and IV, almost in the centre of the Circle, collapsed and 'revealed a hollow in the rock, which had a small opening towards Shaft Grave I blocked by sun-dried bricks and a larger one towards Shaft Grave IV'[130]. This partly artificial hollow was filled with earth, stones and stratified burnt layers[131]. Among other finds, the *epichosis* contained pottery covering a long sequence beginning with Minyan-type pottery and ending with Mycenaean sherds[132].

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[127] Schliemann 1880: 212-213, plan F (ground plan and section, plan and section of altar and Grave IV). Measurements after Pelon (1976: 146).
[128] Schliemann 1880: 212-213.
[129] Keramopoullos 1918: 52-57.
[130] Nilsson 1950^2: 608-609.
[131] Keramopoullos 1918: 52.
[132] Keramopoullos (1918: 52) mentioned a fragmentary stone axe, obsidian fragments, a lead sheet and a section of an antler in the unstratified layers (0-2m below modern surface).

At a depth of about 2 metres, the south-eastern part of the hollow was covered with a layer of ashes, extending 0.50m. A Mycenaean figurine was found in the earth filling of Shaft Grave IV. No more than 0.40m beneath the aforementioned hearth, another layer of ashes (0.01m deep) with hardened earth followed extending towards the interior of the hollow almost 1m from its northern wall. At the centre of the cavity, 0.15m below, another pyre was found. The bottom of the hollow was entirely covered with a layer of carbonised matter, which was thicker towards the north-eastern edge.

To the question whether this hollow was artificial, Keramopoullos argued that such was the case, since, to the best of his knowledge, the natural rock in the vicinity of Mycenae does not form such cavities. Moreover, the discovery of the long sequence of pre- and Mycenaean sherds provides additional proof regarding its deliberate construction and repeated use[133].

The finds and the location of the bothros led Keramopoullos to propose that Schliemann's altar was not placed above Shaft Grave IV; instead, it must have formed the stomion of the hollow he excavated. Therefore, the altar stood just at the centre of the royal burial ground and was intended to receive the liquid offerings in honour of the dead exactly like the sacrificial pit at Tiryns and the bothroi on Aigina[134]. The end of the Mycenaean era signalled the end of the use of this ritualistic unit; the bothros was filled with earth, stones and pottery from the neighbouring buildings, the ceilings

[133] Keramopoullos 1918: 53.
[134] Keramopoullos 1918: 56-58; *idem* 1910a: 180-182.

of the Shaft Graves subsided and the performance of the cult of the dead in the area ceased until, probably, the Archaic period[135].

The altar and the subsequent discovery of the hollow are admittedly puzzling and the disappearance of the actual monuments and of proper publication–especially of Schliemann's and Stamatakes excavations- has caused equally interest and confusion among scholars.

In 1891, Schuchhardt discussed in detail Schliemann's discovery and went further associating it with the small stone structure in the court of the palace at Tiryns[136]. He calculated the exact position of the altar above the grave and concluded that 'above the graves in Grave Circle A a cultus of the dead had already been established; and that this cultus was not merely temporary is proven by the *stelai*, which were set up as lasting memorials to the dead'[137]. Similarly, Tsountas and Manatt suggested that offerings to the dead were attested by this raised sacrificial pit, intended to receive the blood of the victims slaughtered over it along with the customary libations[138]. The altar at Mycenae was 'the proper medium for oblations to the dead, the drink and blood offerings supposed to find their way through it to the departed in the underworld'[139].

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[135] Keramopoullos 1918: 56-58. Regarding the archaic inscribed sherd from the area, he stated that it could signify the performance of hero cult in the Circle, although he did not exclude the possibility that it might have been displaced from the buildings above (1918: 58, note 1).
[136] Schuchhardt 1891: 156-57; Schliemann 1885: 206-7, 337-340, figs. 137 and 138.
[137] Schuchhardt 1891: 157.
[138] Tsountas 1893: 107; Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 97, 150, 335.
[139] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 310.

Considering the sacred character of the Shaft Graves, Wace reached the conclusion that although burial ceased in LH I, offerings were constantly brought to the dead as shown by Keramopoullos' hollow[140]. He agreed with the argumentation of earlier scholars on the semi-divine character of the personages and argued that the dead of GCA were regarded as the temporary human manifestations of divinities and, thus, propitiated with proper rites. The cult should have flourished throughout the Mycenaean period and in LH IIIB 'it was resolved to enclose and preserve as a kind of *temenos* the sacred area where the kings still lay in state'[141]. In his '*Mycenae: An Archaeological History and Guide*' he repeated his belief that the Circle was set apart for the worship of the royal ancestors[142].

Some years later, Rohde traced the prolongation of the cult paid to the dead beyond the time of the funeral in Pre-Homeric Mycenae[143]. He argued in favour of the altar above Shaft Grave IV and characterised it as 'a sort of funnel' intended to receive blood and various drink offerings for the dead. He compared this structure with the description of the hearths upon which offerings were made in a later age to heroes, and suggested that this Mycenaean structure corresponded closely with the description of devices employed for the permanent and repeated veneration of the dead. He went on to consider the evidence for the tholos tombs with side chambers and concluded that the outer chambers were evidently intended to allow sacrifices to be made inside them- and not only once.

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[140] Wace 1921-23a: 121-22.
[141] Wace 1921-23a: 122.
[142] Wace 1949: 62.
[143] Rohde 1925: 23-24.

Nilsson suggested that Schliemann's altar was a typical altar of the cult of the dead and that Keramopoullos' discovery could be related to it[144]. He argued that the traces of fire uncovered in this hollow were not accidental and that the hearths seem to prove that fire was used not only in the funerary rites but also in the cult of the dead. The repetition and the continuation of the cult in the later periods was confirmed, according to his argument, by the occurrence of a 6th century BC sherd bearing the engraved inscription *τō hέροος εμ-*[145]. Similarly, Herrmann and Hampe recognised in this altar 'a monumentalisation of a sacrificial pit or bothros and thus a stabilisation of the cult'[146], a view also shared by Andronikos[147]. Additionally, Yavis suggested that this altar and its counterpart from Tiryns could have been sacrificial pits in which offerings and sacrifices were made to the royal hero-worshipped ancestors[148].

On the contrary, Mylonas, Iakovidis and Gates argued that this structure served only the burial rites connected with Shaft Grave IV[149]. In *The Cult of the Dead in Helladic times* Mylonas stated that the altar was placed over Shaft Grave IV in LH III times and it definitely served 'a cult in honour of the princes buried in the Shaft Graves'[150]. According to his argument, proof for the practice and the repetition of such a cult was given by the special

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[144] Nilsson 1950[2]: 608-609.
[145] Schliemann 1880: 115; Jeffery 1961: 173-174 no 6.
[146] Strøm 1983: 142 and note 11, where she also cites Herrmann and Hampe.
[147] Andronikos 1968: W127-128.
[148] Yavis 1949: 34-35. However, he expressed his reservations regarding the primary character of the Tiryns pit.
[149] Marinatos 1958: 65, note 7; Mylonas 1966: 94; Iakovidis 1977a: 115; *idem* 1983: 38; Gates 1985: 265.
[150] Mylonas 1951a: 96.

care taken for the protection and enclosure of the grave area within the Cyclopean walls and also by Keramopoullos' discovery[151].

After the excavation of Circle B, the further investigation of GCA and the review of the earlier argumentation, though, he stated that there was no substantial evidence from the fill of the Circle to indicate that it was used for any religious rites after its construction, but rather that the area was respected merely as the burial place of the ruling clan and was preserved as an 'historical landmark'[152]. By the formation of the *epichosis* he assumed this altar was connected only with the burial rites performed in Shaft Grave IV and accepted Marinatos' reference to a libation ritual performed after the sealing of the royal tombs of Ur[153]. He concluded that both the altar and the hollow were buried under the Circle's floor level when it was modified in LH IIIB times[154], an assumption also supported by Hooker[155].

However, as Pelon has pointed out, Mylonas failed to explain how such a massive structure would have been raised over a tomb, which had received five successive burials[156]. His counter-argument complements Matz's justifiable query, i.e. *if it was to serve only the burial rites, why, then, was it not removed after the burial*?[157]. To him, Keramopoullos' suggestions on the position and function of the altar seem plausible and the hypothesis of

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[151] Mylonas 1951a: 96.
[152] Mylonas 1961-62: 308-311.
[153] Mylonas 1966: 94, note 32; Marinatos 1958: 65 note 1. Also Iakovidis 1983: 38-39.
[154] Mylonas 1966: 96, 178-179.
[155] Hooker 1976: 195.
[156] Pelon 1976: 147.
[157] Matz 1958: 327.

an altar in the centre of the Circle corresponds to the spirit of its LH IIIB remodelling[158].

In 1983 Strøm discussed in full detail Schliemann's and Keramopoullos' discoveries and went further presenting similar, though later, material from the Athenian Agora[159]. Contra Mylonas, she found in the stratified layers and the Ψ- figurines of Keramopoullos' hollow adequate proof of a cultic function[160]. Pointing to the early date of the excavations in GCA and to the lack of conclusive observations, she argued that the dark earth, the obsidian knives and the fragmentary pottery reported by Schliemann may be suggestive of sacrifices and votive offerings, and indicative of cult practice in the area[161]. The similarities she traced with a monument of the early 5th century BC from the Athenian Agora, led her to propose that the altar, just like the later Athenian counterpart, was erected in LH IIIB period 'for the purpose of a sacrificial closing of the cult of the dead, which was disturbed because of the need of a monumental rearrangement of the reigning family's burial ground fit for the new palace and its extended fortification'[162].

Recently, van Leuven challenged the traditional views with a hypothesis connecting the Temple Complex, GCA and the practice of a cult of the

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[158] Pelon 1976: 147.
[159] Strøm 1983: 141-146.
[160] Mylonas 1966: 96; Strøm 1983: note 8.
[161] Strøm 1983:146.
[162]Strøm 1983: 146. The Athenian monument shared similar characteristics with Schliemann's altar -circular structure, poros blocks, re-used column capital- and contained a deposit of votive offerings dating from the middle of the 7th century BC into the early 5th century BC.

dead[163]. The connections exhibited take account of *a.* the contemporary establishment of the Temple and the re-modelling of GCA as well as the close proximity of the two monuments, *b.* the correspondence in sex and number of the monochrome figures from the Temple to the dead of the Circle, *c.* the six small platforms and the large central one, for ritual display and *prothesis* ceremonies respectively, and *d.* the comparable material evidence from both monuments, such as Egyptian objects, amber beads and representations of snakes, as well as the occurrence of Linear B inscriptions in the vicinity of the Temple naming *ka-ra-u-ko* (*Γλαῦκος*)[164], which could refer to a dead person as in the later Greek mythology, and thus support a funerary role of the Temple[165].

Additionally, the grotesque appearance of the monochrome figures from the Temple has been taken to support his proposed cultic purpose of the building. Like the associated snake models, these unique religious icons have often been interpreted as a reference to the underworld, compatible with the representation of the dead in other artistic media[166]. Van Leuven put forward the assumption that 'the Shaft Grave dead represented divinities in their own religion' and that 'the statuettes could also have portrayed the dead in some other state than the 'afterlife', especially if used

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[163] Van Leuven 1989: 191-201. He acknowledges, however, that the Temple was undoubtedly used for further kinds of worship.
[164] MY Z 713. The name is also recorded on PY Cn 285 and PY Jn 706 (Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 96, 551). The name *Γλαῦκος* is included in the list of men named by Homer as Trojans or as Trojan allies (Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 104-105; *Il.* B. 876ff.).
[165] Van Leuven 1989: 199-200.
[166] Van Leuven 1989: 200

in funerary rites for contemporary people who had not yet journeyed to the afterlife'[167].

In an illuminating study on aspects of rulership at Mycenae in the Shaft Grave period, Laffineur proposed that the cult within the Circle must have begun during the Early Mycenaean period and continued uninterruptedly as is indicated by the pottery sequence from Keramopoullos' hollow[168]. The same scholar connected Schliemann's altar with the earlier phases of this cultic activity, mainly due to its position at a low level, immediately above the opening of Shaft Grave IV, and concluded that 'cultic practices of a heroic nature, essentially collective and non-permanent in character, were performed over a long period of time in the area of the acropolis shaft graves, not that specific individuals, kings or not, were honoured by a monumental refurbishing of their burial area at a late stage of the Mycenaean period'[169].

More than a century after the exploration of GCA, the statements regarding its sacred character and the uniqueness of its architectural and ritualistic devices, are not as conclusive as they are supposed to be. Influenced by Schliemann's ostentatious descriptions and declarations, most scholars have been to a certain degree disoriented choosing to place emphasis on individual elements of the Circle overlooking important issues such as *why* the renovation took place at that particular moment, its incorporation into the wider building scheme undertaken by the ruling group of Mycenae and

[167] Van Leuven 1989: 200.
[168] Laffineur 1995: 90.
[169] Laffineur 1995: 90-91.

its importance in the formation of the sacred and ancestral landscapes of LH IIIB Mycenae.

Summing up, the argument in this section will develop in two directions: a. the placement of the renovated GCA, its contemporary tholos tombs (the Atreus Treasury and the Tholos of Clytemnestra) and the newly established Cult Centre within the lived landscape of Mycenae during the 13th century BC, and b. the effect the properties of these locales had on human action as regards ideas of authoritative claims, ancestor worship and divine protection.

The Power of Ancestors: Death, Religion and Politics at LH IIIB Mycenae[170]

The way prehistoric peoples perceived and exploited natural landscape is reflected not only in the conscious choice of locales for the living and their dead, but also in the formation of mythologies for the creation of mankind and their passage to the other world. At the same time, the conceptualisation of political ideas and philosophical enquiries are made concrete in terms of *experiential* or *relational* landscapes[171]. The present section considers landscape *as a network of related places through which people perform, act and interact, acquire social authority and political*

[170] A paper on the subject has been presented by the author of this thesis in the *Landscapes and Seascapes Conference*, organised by the Prehistoric Society and the University of Sheffield Archaeology Society on 8-9 February 2002, and will be published in the proceedings of the Conference.
[171] Term borrowed from Thomas 2001: 174.

access, create identities and tradition, and develop links with the sacred and the ancestral.

Following a process of emergence and consolidation of a hierarchical and centralised political system, the symbolic use and manipulation of monumental palatial, mortuary, sacred and military architecture, and the establishment of ancestor cult settings during the period 1340/30-1190/80 BC indicate the increasing focus on the power of the individual and signal the convergence of ideology and political centralisation[172]. The possible changes in the political stage of LH IIIB Mycenae are mirrored in the conspicuous advertisement of the power, wealth and legitimacy of the ruling élites, who undertook the planning and re-facing of the Lion Gate in conglomerate masonry, the re-building and decoration of the Mycenaean *megaron*, the renovation of the earlier (LH I) GCA, the construction and decoration of the tholoi of Atreus and Clytemnestra, and the establishment of the Cult Centre[173].

Wright has already discussed the careful placement of large monumental constructions as markers within the immediate outlying area of the LH IIIB citadel[174] and has accurately pointed to the creation of a symbolic whole through a generalized juxtaposition of monumental forms; first, through a specialised masonry style, then in terms of similar spatial forms -tholos tomb with dromos and façade; gateway with dromos and façade-, and

[172] Dabney and Wright 1990: 52.
[173] Wright 1987: 171-184; Rehak 1992: 40-41 (with further bibliography).
[174] Wright 1987: 180.

finally through the 'recycling' of a traditional form, GCA[175]. This extended visual complex would have promoted a link between the monuments of the living and the dead inspiring a sense of awe and respect to anyone moving from outside the citadel through the Lion Gate and up the grand ramp way towards the palace at the top of the acropolis[176].

Undoubtedly, the connection of GCA, the tholos tombs and the Cult Centre with notions of sanctity, ancestry and the past would have rendered them appropriate forces for socio-political stability and the maintenance of tradition, components that were accommodated within the socio-political circumstances and the élites' legitimating expressions of authority. On the other hand, LH IIIB period was not merely one of socio-political alignment but also of consolidation of religious and ancestral consciousness manifested at Mycenae with the establishment of the Cult Centre, the refurbishment and enclosure of GCA within the Cyclopean walls, and the construction and elaborate decoration of the Atreus Treasury and the Tholos of Clytemnestra.

The Atreus Treasury and the Tholos of Clytemnestra **(figs. 6,7)**

At the time when all tholos tombs in the Argolid, outside Mycenae, were abandoned (with possibly the exception of Tiryns) and a sharp decline in tomb construction and burial furnishings is observed, interesting is the pattern followed in the incorporation and display of elaborate mortuary

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[175] Wright 1987: 181-182.
[176] Wright 1987: 181-182.

monuments at Mycenae, where the first use of the Atreus Treasury is given a *terminus post quem* of LH IIIA1 or early LH IIIA2 –its life span only to be interrupted by the Tholos of Clytemnestra (LH IIIA2-IIIB1)- and then re-used in LH IIIB2, if the material uncovered by Wace under the threshold was the result of the re-use of the tholos[177].

With his *Tombs for the Living* Andrew Fleming provided archaeologists with the stimulus to explore the various ways in which funerary mechanisms maintain, reinforce and relate to the structure and hierarchy of contemporary social organisation among the living[178]. Subsequently, through phenomenological approaches, recent studies and trends have sought to understand the morphology of tombs not in terms of functional expediency but rather as locales comprising a signalling system of components (subjects, movements, tasks, memories and activities) through which societies articulate their relationship to ancestors, natural landscape and the living community[179].

The skilful construction of the two Mycenae tholoi in conglomerate masonry, a style that became a hallmark of the architecture at Mycenae in LH IIIB times, has been considered as a symbolic act intended for the expression of the power and authority of the ruler/ruling group of Mycenae and its/their dynastic relation to preceding ancestors[180]. This act was further

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[177] The dating of the Atreus Treasury has raised intense debate. For further discussion, see Wace 1921-23b: 348-349; Pelon 1976: 175; Cavanagh and Mee 1984: 53; Wright 1987: 179, 183; Kopcke 1995: 88 and note 5)

[178] Fleming 1973.

[179] Parker Pearson 1999: 139-141.

[180] Wright 1987: 177. The preference for conglomerate reached its peak expression in the third group of the Mycenae tholoi, namely the Tomb of Genii, the Atreus Treasury and the Tholos of Clytemnestra (*ibid.*)

reinforced by the fact that the Lion Gate, the main entrance to the citadel was also constructed in conglomerate masonry in LH IIIB, and that all three monuments were contemporarily visible[181]. Moreover, the additional effort invested in the unparalleled decoration of the two tholoi, which could only be compared to the decoration of the Minyas Treasury at Orchomenos would have proclaimed the additional effort and expenditure invested in the construction and decoration of these impressive structures prompted by a desire to claim or enhance status.

The outward expression of territorial dominance and the desire for display of the élites' socio-political and economic status would have been reinforced by the strategic placement of the two tholoi within the lived landscape of LH IIIB Mycenae, in prominent proximity to the citadel. Indirect evidence and the excavation of surviving parts of the extended road network suggest that moving on the road from Prosymna to the Mycenae citadel, one would have encountered the prominent Atreus Treasury and the cluster of houses (House of Sphinxes, House of the Oil Merchant and House of the Shields) to the northeast of the tholos, before continuing north from the House of the Shields in full view of the Clytemnestra Tholos, veering then to the northwest to skirt the western side of the tomb before turning around its back to cut along the crest of the ridge towards the Lion Gate **(fig. 3b)**[182].

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[181] Wright 1987: 180.
[182] Mylonas 1962: 104-106; *idem* 1966: 87; Wace 1954b: 230ff., fig.1; Verdelis 1962: 87-88; Wright 1987: 180, notes 37-40; Lavery 1995: 264, map 1.

Thus, the validation of the status of existing political and social order in LH IIIB Mycenae would have been obtained via the function of the two tholoi as attention-focusing devices (considering their elaborate construction and unparalleled decoration), their role as territorial markers (as this is dictated by their position on the main routeway to the citadel) and through claims of power and rank founded on lineal descent from the dead enshrined in them.

Unfortunately, the looting of the tholoi under study has deprived scholars of remains of religious acts at these tholoi to commemorate the dead *in memoriam*. However, the overall architectural arrangement of Mycenaean tombs, as shall be demonstrated in *Chapter IV*, is specifically designed as a space within which a number of people (mourners and/or celebrants) could act. Public participation in the ceremonies would have been possible, given the care taken for the white-stuccoed floor of the tholoi and the presence of an open area before them. The decorated façade would have formed the boundary zone between the world of the living and the sphere of the ancestors and would have provided the locus for the performance of post-liminal rites.

The Cult Centre at Mycenae **(fig. 8)**

It has been suggested above that the establishment of official places of worship within the Mycenaean citadels highlight the motivation of the ruling élites to accumulate control not only over socio-political and economic resources but also over religious institutions.

The relatively uncomplicated and uniform stratigraphy and its pottery sequence date the Cult Centre's incorporation into the citadel to LH IIIB1 times and its abandonment, after a short period of time, in the LH IIIB2 period[183]. According to the methodological approach advocated by Renfrew, several architectural elements, certain activities and the material evidence are suggestive of its function as a 'specialised and purpose built structure set aside for cult practice'[184].

The small size of the rooms of the complex points to a modest scale of activities and participation[185]. This restriction was most probably imposed by the controlled and rather complicated access to the Cult Centre itself. Moreover, the relatively small size of the courtyards would not allow large gatherings and the mass participation of celebrants in ritual activities may have been restricted[186]. Moore and Taylour have suggested that the rooms of the Temple must have had a capacity of around twenty people[187]. They also implied that the small courtyard with the round altar to the S of the Temple could be highly significant for public or semi-public display, assuming that 'an element of 'Public Display/Hidden Mystery' may have been involved'[188]. Thus, it seems plausible to suggest that the whole area of the Cult Centre could entertain approximately 100 people.

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[183] Mylonas 1981: 307-320; French 1981a: 43-44, 47-48; Moore and Taylour 1999: 1-3; Whittaker 1997: 165-172.
[184] Rutkowski 1986: 175-182; Moore and Taylour 1999: 77ff, 114. The published account of the structures and the finds have been carefully summarised and discussed by Albers (1994: 13-52). Whittaker (1997: 165-172) and Rehak (1995: 41-42) also provide a brief but sufficient description of the Cult Centre.
[185] For the dimensions of the individual rooms of the Centre, see Whittaker 1997: 166, 168, 170.
[186] Whittaker 1997: 145.
[187] Moore and Taylour 1999: 114-115.
[188] Moore and Taylour 1999: 79, 115.

The approach to the sacred structures seems to have been a circuitous and rather complicated one and each sanctuary must have formed an independent unit. Primary role in the circulation in and out was played by Mylonas' Processional Way, which ran above the Centre to the east[189]. This processional ramp was also accessible from higher points on the slope and the megaron via paths and stairs[190]. It was probably closed off by double doors at either end so that access would be controlled and restricted[191]. An alternative route led from the Lion Gate and GCA along the West Cyclopean Wall, past the South House and through the courtyard with the round altar to the south of the Temple and the Room with the Fresco Complex[192]. This imposing corridor was comparatively narrow, about 1m wide, broadening in several places, for instance before the entrance to the Room of the Fresco and just beyond the south-eastern part of the Shrine[193].

The religious function of the Cult Centre is reflected in the coherent arrangement and use of its static and movable cultic devices and paraphernalia. Experience inducing devices were employed for the performance of sacrifices, drinking and pouring ceremonies and the consumption of food and drink[194]. The presence of braziers may indicate the burning of incense or a similar activity[195], which thereby stimulated the

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[189] Mylonas 1981: 315-316, 309-310; Moore and Taylour (1999: 9-10, fig. 1) provide a detailed description and a schematic plan of the Cult Centre indicating the main building units and possible routes of access.
[190] Mylonas 1981: 309ff.; Moore and Taylour 1999: 79, 115.
[191] Mylonas 1977: 73; *idem* 1981: 318; Whittaker 1997: 166.
[192] Mylonas 1975a: 153-155; Rutkowski 1986: 175.
[193] Rutkowsi 1986: 180-181.
[194] Mylonas 1981; Whittaker 1997: 146-156; Moore and Taylour 1999: 32ff, 78ff.
[195] Moore and Taylour 1999: 79, 85-86.

sense of smell. It has been suggested that the presence of braziers and lamps may reflect the manipulation of light in ritual and possibly, the performance of nocturnal ceremonies[196].

Thus, the material remains[197], the specially arranged installations[198] and the implements of sacrifice[199] are the visible expression of the past sacrificial rituals. Of relation to these ceremonies may be the poses of several terracotta figures holding aloft axe-hammers **(fig. 9)**[200]. Vegetable or organic offerings were possibly placed on the clay and plaster tripod tables of offerings[201]. Ritual activities in the Cult Centre, as in every cult place, employed attention-focusing devices, mainly specific architectural elements (platforms, dais and benches)[202], structures with special ritualistic features (altars, hearths and vats)[203] and the necessary paraphernalia (offering tables, incense burners, lamps, figurines and ritual vessels)[204].

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[196] Moore and Taylour 1999: 115. The role of light in Archaic and Classical Greek cult has been recently discussed by Parisinou (2000).

[197] Animal bones, ashes and sherds were found in a shallow pit near the round altar in the courtyard to the south of the Temple Complex (Mylonas 1981: 316). Mylonas also reported that the bones did not disclose signs of thorough burning or traces of breaking or cutting. Whittaker (1997: 148), though, assumes that the slaughtered animal was ritually consumed in some way.

[198] Namely the round altar of the court connected with the Temple (Mylonas 1981: 316) and the installations in Room Gamma 1 of Tsountas' House Shrine (*idem op.cit.* 313).

[199]The sacrificial function of the model of an axe-hammer from the Temple Complex has been suggested by Moore and Taylour (1999: 79, 101-102). Rhyta, which may have been employed for the pouring of blood libations, have been found in late and unspecified contexts and have been attributed to the area of the Cult Centre (Evely and Runnels 1992: 5; Moore and Taylour 1999: plate 10). The bolster-shaped altar in Room Gamma 1 of Tsountas' House implies a connection between sacrifices and blood libations (Mylonas 1981: 313).

[200] Moore and Taylour 1999: 79.

[201] Moore and Taylour 1999: 115.

[202] Mylonas 1972: 120; *idem* 1981: 310; Taylour 1981: 49, 52; Moore and Taylour 1999: 79.

[203] Whittaker 1997: 147.

[204] Moore and Taylour 1999: 79; Whittaker 1997: 167ff.

Following Wright's suggestion that, in general Mycenaean cult centres vary in degrees of complexity and that several of them exhibit evidence of a constellation of cults, the diversity observed in the ritual function of the Cult Centre at Mycenae is intriguing[205]. Scholars have already commented on the association between the location of the cult centres and the defence walls and have attributed protective and war-like qualities to the deities venerated therein[206]. The worship of a warrior-goddess at Mycenae has been proposed by Rehak on the basis of iconographical evidence, namely Tsountas' plaque and the Fresco in Room 31 **(figs. 10, 11)**[207].

Undoubtedly, the placement of the Cult Centre in immediate proximity to the Cyclopean walls and the GCA as well as its connection with the palace on the highest point of the acropolis would have served the need of the populace for divine protection in times of danger and, more importantly, the desire of the élites not only to centralise, control and exploit the religious landscapes of their rule, but also to strengthen the emphasis and concern placed by them on patterns of allegiance to lineal ancestors resting in the refurbished GCA.

Given the proximity between the Cult Centre and GCA, and the existence of certain features with possible chthonic components from the Temple and the Room with the Fresco, specifically the monochrome figures **(fig. 9)**, the clay snake models **(fig. 12b)** and the rock from the Temple Complex as well as the frescoed decoration of Room 31 **(fig. 11)**, it is tempting to

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[205] Wright 1994: 61.
[206] Rutkowski 1986: 185; Warren 1986: 156; Albers 1994: 120; Whittaker 1997: 155.
[207] Rehak 1984.

suggest that, at least, in these two units, in addition to the rites intended for the gods, ancestral ceremonies of chthonic character were performed.

More analytically, the rock outcrop in Alcove 18 has been associated with the tradition from later Greek sanctuaries, where natural rock formations were thought to facilitate contact with the Underworld[208]. On the other hand, Dietrich connected this element with Minoan religious traditions and suggested that the rock's prominent position in the whole complex, which features tomb-like effects, underlines its undoubted cultic significance[209]; since the rock itself was screened from view by a wall, it could have served as a kind of inner sanctum[210].

Apotropaic and chthonic qualities have been attributed to the nineteen monochrome figures with the rather grotesque and forbidding expression from the area of the Temple and Room 32 of the Room with the Fresco[211] as well as to the unique terracotta snake figures from the Temple Complex[212]. The sacred role of snakes in Mycenaean religion is emphasised, according to Aravantinos and Godart, in the recording of *e-pe-to-i* (ἑρπετοῖς) as recipients of offerings of wine in the sanctuary or the site of **63-te-ra-de* recorded on TH Gp 196[213]

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[208] Whittaker 1997: 153 (with further references).
[209] Dietrich 1982: 8. He also compared the Temple's tomb-like effect with the two contemporary subterranean cult buildings at Thebes, excavated by Spyropoulos.
[210] Dietrich 1982: 8.
[211] Whittaker 1997: 149-152; French 1981b: 173-178; *eadem* 2001: 275-275; Moore and Taylour 1999: 46-62, pls. 11-22; Mylonas 1983: 145. Van Leuven's approach (1989) has already been discussed above.
[212] Moore and Taylour 1999: 63-69, fig. 21, plates 23-25. It should be noted, though, that a terracotta snake model has been reported by G. Walberg from Midea (in Demakopoulou *et al.* 1996-97: 90).
[213] Aravantinos 1999: 68; Godart 2001: 465.

[1]*63-te-ra-de [

[2] **e-pe-to-i** V 1 [

Moreover, the funerary character of snakes is strengthened by the occurrence of LH IIIC vessels from the funerary contexts of Perati, Naxos, Ialysos and Kos decorated with painted or plastic snakes **(fig. 13)**[214].

Using the snake figures and the rock in Alcove 18 as comparative material, Taylour ascribed chthonic character to the monochrome figures[215]. Iakovidis suggested that the models of coiled snakes 'point rather to an underworld cult, combined perhaps with the prophylactic properties usually attributed to the snake as the guardian of the household'[216]. He concluded that the monochrome figures possibly recalled the chthonic character of the mythic *Ερινύες*[217]. With reference to the new tablets from Thebes, Rousioti has argued that if the Mycenae figures are interpreted as divinities, then the snake figures could be considered as their attributes, since there is no evidence to support that the snakes themselves were actually cult statues[218].

Moore has interpreted the monochrome figures as representations of cult celebrants or cult staff performing certain of the activities of the cult in perpetuity based on the posture of the figures and the discovery of one of them embedded in the plaster before a table of offerings in the north-east

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[214] Jacopi 1930-31: 321, fig. 68; Morricone 1965-66: 183-186; Mee 1982: 39-40; Benzi 1992: 392, pl. 108, 109; Whittaker 1997: 152-153; Vlachopoulos 1999: 307. At this point, it is worth citing the fragment of a large clay figure from Amyklai consisting of a hand holding a cup from which a snake is about to drink (Demakopoulou 1982: 55-56).
[215] Taylour 1970: 274, 278; *idem* 1983: 53-55. Mylonas denied the rock any ritual function pointing to the lack of emphasis given to the rock by the design of the Temple (Mylonas 1966: 93).
[216] Iakovidis 1977: 128.
[217] Iakovidis 1977: 127.
[218] Rousioti 2001: 309.

corner of Room 18[219]. French has suggested that a draped monochrome sexless figure may be the recipient of the offerings on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus[220].

Recently, S. Morris argued that they were votive offerings of funerary character and meaning, i.e. 'either images of mourners dedicated to ancestors, if not representations of ancestors themselves as protecting *daimones*, fundamental to how Greeks imagined the power of the dead[221]. Her argument is based mainly on the correlation between the Cult Centre and the earlier Shaft Graves, and on vase representations, e.g. the Warrior Vase[222].

A fresco, which was included in the decorative program of Room 31, has puzzled scholars with its rather unusual theme **(fig. 11)**[223]. On the upper register two female figures are depicted holding a sword and a staff or spear respectively, facing each other in an architectural setting. Were the figures depicted alone, an interpretation in military terms would have been plausible. However, there is one element that obscures the reading of the depiction, namely a pair of diminutive 'floating' figures, one drawn in red and the other in black.

Although several scholars have suggested an eschatological approach to the depiction, its readings have been confined mostly to speculation rather than

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[219] Moore 1988: 219-225.
[220] French 1981b: 174.
[221] Morris 1992: 209.
[222] Morris 1992: 210.
[223] Taylour 1969: 94.

to systematic examination. Given the proximity between the Cult Centre and GCA as well as the existence of similar 'flying' figures in Late Helladic III funerary art, this scene could contribute significantly to our understanding of the Mycenaean eschatological beliefs and attribute chthonic character to the depiction. Thus, this important artistic production is included and fully discussed in *Chapter III.*

Nevertheless, the subsidiary nature of the Cult Centre among the sacred and ancestral locales of LH IIIB Mycenae is verified by the contrast between the pretentious display and strategic location of the refurbished GCA and the less elaborate and less centrally located Cult Centre[224].

Grave Circle A: a special locus for congregations? **(fig. 14)**

The preservation and renovation of a traditional resource, GCA, within the citadel wall was definitely instrumental in the maintenance of authority and tradition. The definition of and constraint on an official *locus* for congregations would have enhanced the ruling group's claims to authority, power and lineage descent. The conspicuous placement of a communal resource and already established part of tradition, GCA, within the lived landscape of LH IIIB Mycenae, is indeed indicative of the motivation by desire of the ruling élites to make ostentatious statements regarding their ancestral ties with the past.

[224] Dabney and Wright 1990: 52; Wright 1994: 62.

The importance of GCA as an area specially reserved for public assembly was first emphasised by Schliemann, who proposed that the parapet fulfilled two functions; the enclosure of the graves and the formation of a meeting place within the citadel[225]. He was deeply influenced by the Homeric and other descriptions of prehistoric meeting places of circular plan, occasionally lined with stones, and of the Agoras of later Hellenic cities where the living interacted in the presence of the tombs of heroes[226]. Gates re-assessed Schliemann's hypothesis and reached the conclusion that the Circle could be identified as 'a large space within the citadel suitable for larger numbers of people, convenient for clement weather'[227].

Recently, Cavanagh discussed in detail the issue of open spaces -courts and squares- in Mycenaean towns and established eight indicators for their methodological approach: a. *access,* the degree to which it is easy or difficult to enter the place, b. *size*, the capacity of the place and its monumentality, c. *orientation* and *focus*, the shape and sense given to the space, d. *visibility* and *perspective*, the fact/state of being visible by and being able to observe/see someone or something respectively, e. *appointment*, the decoration and furnishing arrangements, and f. *frontage,* the buildings that look into the specific space[228].

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[225] Schliemann 1880: 125-129, 338-339.
[226] Schliemann (1880: 125) ascribed the supposition that the Circle served as a Homeric Agora to Paley, with reference to the Shield of Achilles (*Il.* Σ. 497-508). His enthusiasm is reflected in his illustration of the wall ring serving as a bench (Schliemann *op.cit.* fig. 210a; Gates 1985: 271, notes 57-60).
[227] Gates 1985: 270-272.
[228] Cavanagh 2001: 120-121.

According to his discussion, the roughly 500m^2 area of the GCA was definitely designed for congregations of a large number of celebrants and not of political character[229]. Access to its ground was more direct than in other Mycenaean open spaces, controlled through the Lion Gate. Its roughly 500m^2 area allowed the congregation of a fairly large number of people, whereas ceremonial performed inside would be visible from the walls, the roof of the Granary, the Ramp and buildings beyond, although not in such a formal manner as in the Great Court of the megaron[230].

Although there is no clear indication of the original height of the west Cyclopean wall, the view would be spectacular from within the Circle. The cultic usage of the area is confirmed by the Φ- and Ψ-figurines discovered by Schliemann[231]. Doubts on the fulfilment of the criteria of *focus* and *orientation* are expressed based on the (re)position of the grave stelai in the LH IIIB phase and the circular plan of the parapet[232]. Cavanagh's approach accurately clarifies the public character of LH IIIB GCA and opens new perspectives for the further approaches.

Nevertheless, the burial ground of the Circle was accessible through its elaborate entrance in clear view of the Lion Gate. Gates and Laffineur, though, suggested that the Circle in the first phase of the LH IIIB renovation lacked an entrance, which was a later addition[233]. Soon after its

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[229] Cavanagh 2001: 129-130.
[230] Cavanagh 2001: 129-130. One could calculate the capacity of the GCA alone to ca. 120-140 people, excluding the worshippers attending the ceremonies from the areas outside the parapet.
[231] Cavanagh 2001: 130; See also Schliemann 1880: 129, c.f. 71-74 and 88; Wace 1921-23a: 104-105.
[232] Cavanagh 2001: 130.
[233] Gates 1985: 270-271; Laffineur 1990: 202-203.

construction, the entryway was obscured by the newly constructed Granary and its north-eastern extensions[234]. Still, the erection of the Granary and its corridors following chronologically the Lion Gate and the renovation of the Circle would not have obstructed for some time the view to the LH IIIB Grave Circle[235].

Moreover, as Wright has already suggested, the interpretations put forward regarding the construction and renovation phases of the Circle do not 'affect fundamentally the interpretation (here) except to suggest that the reconstruction of the circle in the 13th century B.C. marked a re-discovery of the Shaft Graves and the creation of a cult venerating them out of respect for the unknown predecessors of the present rulers'[236]. Even when the later construction of the Granary and its corridors rendered the access to the circle difficult, still, if needed, it could have been reached either through the Granary and/or the buildings of the Cult Centre.

Surprisingly, little attention has been paid to the discovery of a row of pavement slabs laid on the ground along the inner side of the south-east sector of the Circle[237]. Wace's restored drawing illustrates the row of pavement slabs covering the inside perimeter of the Circle[238]. Although it is unfortunate that little is known of the original level, the small sections of the paving that have survived up to the present may allow us to suggest

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[234] Gates 1985: 270-271; Laffineur 1990: 202-203.
[235] Wright 1987: 181.
[236] Wright 1987: note 41 *contra* Gates 1985.
[237] Wace 1921-3a: 110-111, 124; Gates 1985: 270. The pavement slabs are made of the same materials as the double ring and the grave stelai and 'project inwards from the inner face of the ring of vertical slabs almost exactly as far as the antae of the entrance project inwards' (Wace 1921-23a: 111).
[238] Wace 1921-23a: pl. XVIII.

that the eastern semicircle of GCA was paved with slabs, thus creating an proper space for those attending the ceremonies, in harmony with the carefully constructed entryway and its elaborate threshold.

If we accept the view that ritual reinforces the consolidation of a congregational group, then the circular design of any sacred structure exhibits the double function of enclosing and, thus defining, the group in question, and creating a focal point or points for the activities of the *exarchoi*, the conductors of the rites[239]. The overall appearance of GCA points definitely to a deliberate arrangement of its individual features. In effect, once inside the area of the Grave Circle, the visitor is in a way 'disorientated' and given the impression of infinity, a symbolic expression of the circular shape with no beginning and no end. Moreover, being the single circular monument within the citadel makes it distinct and noticeable.

Additionally, Fleming has pointed to the fact that in the interior of a simple circle all points are neutral and equal, except for the centre[240]. However, by creating off-centre focal points, this 'flaw' could be easily eliminated. Thus, for anyone standing within the Circle the stelai and the altar/hollow complex would act as focus-of-attention devices towards which the rites would be addressed, whereas for those entering the citadel, the circular monument with the imposing entrance would have called for their attention.

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[239] The function of circular design in ceremonial monuments has been discussed by Fleming 1972: 57ff.
[240] Fleming 1972: 59.

The ceremonial processions to the LH IIIB Circle would have been elaborate with priests and/or priestesses carrying figures and offerings to the revered ancestors, most probably from the aforementioned areas of the Cult Centre; the performance of communal ritual activities -pouring ceremonies and ancestral feasting- addressed to the revered ancestors of the ruling élites is confirmed by the presence of ritualistic devices, traces of fire and animal bones at the base of the stelai and the *epichosis*, as well as the stratified ashes and pottery sequence from Keramopoullos' hollow, which was, in all probability, connected with Schliemann's much debated altar[241].

'He who has nothing old has nothing new': further concluding thoughts on the symbolic manipulation of the sacred and ancestral geographies of LH IIIB Mycenae

With reference to the scheme of LH IIIB Mycenae, interesting is a corresponding example observed in Messenia, albeit earlier in date. The excavated remains on the Mycenaean acropolis at Ano Englianos, Messenia, indicate that during the late MH/early LH period, a circuit wall was built around the highest point of the settlement defining the area later to be occupied by the palatial structures of the 'Palace of Nestor'[242]. What is significant is the alignment of the elaborate LH I-II Northeastern

[241] The existence of Schliemann's altar in LH IIIB times has been widely disputed, as shown above. However, it seems inappropriate for the Mycenaeans to have created such an elaborate funerary monument reserved for cult without including the monumental altar, whose method of construction seems rather closer to the LH III period than to the LH I.
[242] Bennet 1999: 12; Bennet and Shelmerdine 2001: 136.

Gateway towards Tholos IV, implying a relationship between the structures enclosed by the circuit wall and the tholos[243].

The presence of remains of a roadway heading from the entrance directly towards Tholos IV do not seem to be mere coincidence[244] and could have served ritual purposes connected with funerary and post-burial practices. Bennet and Shelmerdine have suggested that perhaps the open space between the circuit wall and the tomb may have functioned as 'a plaza of sorts, associated with funerary display when the tomb was in use'[245].

After the end of LH IIIA, when the palatial structures on top of the ridge were constructed, burials in the tholos had most probably ceased and the ruins of the circuit wall and the Northeastern Gateway were no longer visible, it is probable that the funerary monument stood prominently dominating the broad open area to the northeast of the palace citadel for at least two and a half centuries[246]. Thus, this monumental tholos would have served as territorial marker in immediate proximity to the citadel itself and as landmark of the 'history' and ancestry of the ruling élite as dictated by the presence of pottery dating as late as LH IIIB[247].

Similarly, by LH IIA the construction of a new sepulchre, Tholos III, at a distance of ca. 900m from the palace might have been prompted either by

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[243] Blegen *et al.* 1973: 4-18; Bennet 1995: 597; Bennet and Shelmerdine 2001: 136. It should be noted that the tholos lies ca. 145m to the northeast of the Palace of Nestor and ca. 70m from the edge of the hill (Blegen *et al.* 1973: 95, figs. 4, 301).
[244] Blegen *et al.* (1973: 4) appeared reluctant as regards the purpose of this roadway.
[245] Bennet and Shelmerdine 2001: 136.
[246] Blegen *et al.* 1973: 108; Bennet 1999: 13. The absence of any architectural remains in the broad plaza between the palace area and Tholos IV may be suggestive of the fact that the area was left open, free for other structures (Blegen *et al.* 1973: 64-68).
[247] Blegen *et al.* 1973: 107ff.

the expansion of the settlement or the emergence of a new ruling élite[248]. Its life span of about three hundred years, i.e. LH IIA-IIIB, might have served the same purposes as Tholos IV, both serving the symbiosis of burial architecture and public ritual activity[249]. Thus, it seems that the ruling élites of Late Helladic Pylos had already in early Mycenaean times conceived not only the importance of ancestral lineage and the manipulation of their ancestral geographies but also the religious significance of these ancestral locales.

Turning to LH IIIB Mycenae, the question whether its rulers attained and/or legitimised their control either by means of actual descent from the dead of the GCA and the tholoi, or through an established tradition, is difficult to answer. What is obvious, though, is the careful formation of a series of monumental locales embodying sacred and ancestral qualities. The placement of these locales within the powerful but at the same time, fragile socio-political landscape of LH IIIB Mycenae would have ensured access over political power, administrative authority and divine ancestry.

The exploitation of the natural landscape by means of placement of monumental tombs as territorial markers, the juxtaposition of funerary, sacred and secular geographies and the manipulation of religion via the symbiosis of ritual, architecture and tradition would have provided a continuous reminder of the relationship between the living élites, ancestors and the divine, and consequently of lines of descent and lineage.

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[248] Blegen *et al.* 1973: 73ff.; Bennet 1999: 12.

[249] The performance of public ritual associated with burial practices and funerary processions has been suggested by Bennet (1999: 13).

THE MYCENAEAN CULT OF THE DEAD AS RITUAL ACTION: A NEW APPROACH TO THE OPERATION OF BELIEF[250]

If the past is a foreign country, where people do things differently[251], how can archaeologists who study only the partially recoverable remains of past societies ever hope to enter the cosmos of past metaphysical and eschatological beliefs?

In their discussion on the sanctity of prehistoric funerary ritual, Cavanagh and Mee have argued that the pair of mortal/immortal almost places death in the sphere of religion[252]. 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 and memory*[253]. 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.

However, for lack of a proper definition and a coherent methodological approach to the issue of post-liminal activity in Aegean tombs, the Mycenaean relationship between the living and the dead concerned with the *post mortem* survival of the soul and the elevation of ancestors to a

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[250] I should point out that the title is adopted after Warren 1988: 35 (caption of fig. 19).
[251] Hartley 1953.
[252] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 106.
[253] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 106-107.

status comparable to a certain degree with the divine sphere is an issue notoriously difficult to deal with.

Considering the function and consequences of religion in general, Renfrew established four correlates for the recognition of religious activity in the archaeological record, namely *focusing of attention, special aspects of the liminal zone, presence of the transcendent and its symbolic focus* and *participation and offering*[254]. An important element he emphasised is that in practice the recognition of ritual activity may be on the basis of *context* and not on single indications of supposedly cultic significance[255].

According to Renfrew's analysis, every burial constitutes a highly symbolic event in which a remarkable investment of effort and the use of well-defined symbolism are witnessed[256]. Additionally, the existence of any set of eschatological beliefs practically affects the details of the practice of burial[257]. The relationship between burial form, religious belief and the relationship of society and its ancestors is by no means meaningless and purposeless; its religious importance can be investigated through detailed analysis and contextual investigation.

Taking into account the aforementioned parameters and approaches, the scope of this section -and subsequently of the present thesis- is to propose a

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[254] Renfrew 1985: 18-19; 1994b: 50-53. See also pp. 4-6 of this chapter. Curiously, Renfrew's methodology has been used relatively little in the study of Aegean religion, although the principles of contextuality could serve as an interpretative methodology (Peatfield 2000: 144. He (*ibid.*) employed this methodology as framework for the preliminary report of the Atsiphades peak sanctuary excavation).
[255] Renfrew 1985: 15.
[256] Renfrew 1994b: 52-53.
[257] Renfrew 1994b: 52-53.

model for the recognition of religious activity in Mycenaean tombs. Given the spatial and temporal diversity observed in the adoption and expression of metaphysical and cosmological beliefs as well as the desire for cultural and traditional differentiation at an individualistic or communal level, this study does not focus on the establishment of a 'mechanical check list' for cult recognition in Mycenaean tombs[258]; the crux is rather to provide a model/guide of shared elements and features of ritualistic nature recognisable in the archaeological record. By no means should the absence of any pre-determined features or the occurrence of additional elements be considered in terms of a score certifying the identification of cult.

Modern anthropologists dealing with religion and cult possess four classes of data available at their disposal, i.e. verbal testimony, direct observation of cult practices, study of non-verbal records and the material remains of ritual activity[259]. On the other hand, the lack of verbal testimony, Warren's *λεγόμενα*, and direct observation of past *δρώμενα* imposes a serious constraint on scholars undertaking the task to elucidate the belief systems of past preliterate societies. Consequently, they are forced to employ and study only two classes of data, viz. non-verbal records (signs, symbols and artistic representations) and the actual material remains of cult (relics of ceremonial activity, architectural remains, symbolic items and materials).

Mortuary evidence in general constitutes an extremely valuable archaeological resource, since it represents the direct and *purposeful*

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[258] Renfrew (1994b: 50) has warned against mechanical checklists and scores.
[259] Renfrew 1985: 12.

culmination of conscious behaviour, rather than its incidental detritus[260]. The present investigation of post funerary ritual in Mycenaean tombs, as in the case of Mycenaean religious practices, will be based on three classes of material: *archaeological data* (architectural remains and artefactual evidence), *iconographical references* (symbolic systems and items represented in art or existing *in corpore*) and *epigraphical sources* (Linear B tablets).

As cult observances employ a range of *attention focusing* devices, it is essential to examine whether Mycenaean tombs were organised in order to provide a place set apart for sacred functions and to facilitate performance of ancestor-addressed ceremonial acts. The requirement of attention focusing devices in the structure and equipment used in the rites may be reflected in the primary architectural plan of the burial facility, its individual features (e.g. altars, benches, hearths, sacrificial pits, side chambers) and in the movable equipment (figurines, tables of offerings and sacrificial slabs, lamps, incense burners, pouring and drinking vessels, figurines and other paraphernalia).

The *boundary zone* between the mortal celebrant and the world of ancestors may reflect special aspects of the liminal zone. An element of 'Public Display/Hidden Mystery'[261] may be implied by the architectural organisation of the funerary monument, e.g. the tripartite system of

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[260] O'Shea 1981: 39 (my emphasis). Also Pader 1982: 110; Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 24; Wells 1990: 125.
[261] Moore and Taylour 1999: 79, 115.

chamber and tholos tombs or the presence of open spaces in the proximity of the tombs. Concepts of cleanliness and pollution may be reflected in practices (fumigation, purification, removal), facilities (incense burners, scoops, basins of water), maintenance of the area or the location of the cemetery or the tombs in connection to the settlements.

The *presence and participation* of the ancestral spirits in the ceremonial acts may be reflected in the use of an actual cult image (abstract or realistic), allegories or ritualistic symbols depicted in two- or three-dimensional funerary art. Finally, ancestor cult, as all cultic activities, requires participation and *offering* on behalf of the living celebrant. Although we lack Warren's *λεγόμενα*[262], representations of musicians, gesturing mourners and choral lament *in corpore* or in funerary representations provide valuable, albeit indirect, evidence for prayer, sound, gesture and performative acts. Post-funerary ritual may employ various devices for stimulating the senses, e.g. burning incense, or for inducing religious experience, e.g. dance or games (bull leaping, chariot races). Libation, sacrifice and feasting invoke the presence of the transcendent being and facilitate communication with it. The act of offering may entail breakage, hiding or discard connected with symbolic connotations, e.g. shattered kylikes. Great investment of wealth and display may be reflected in the construction of the sepulchre, the planning of its individual elements (carefully cut dromoi, decorated façades, side-chambers, benches, repository and sacrificial pits, cultic installations, etc.), in the equipment used and the offerings made.

Nilsson's definition of the Mycenaean cult of the dead as *the service of the dead moulded into regular and fixed intervals, performed by the members of the family and prolonged for generations*[263], has shaped the core of modern research on the matter. Unfortunately, although this definition might have been appropriate in Nilsson's times, when the study of Mycenaean religion was still in its infancy, in the light of the new data and approaches a re-assessment of the definition seems requisite.

In general the formalisation of ancestor cults presupposes the belief in the immortality of the soul and its ability to possess power to a certain degree equivalent to a deity, and to influence society to a similar extent. More importantly, ancestor rituals establish the presence and participation of ancestors in the ceremonies. Although Nilsson's definition stresses the elements of formalisation and periodicity, it fails to emphasise the presence of the spiritual entity towards which the rites are addressed.

Furthermore, Nilsson suggested that the service of the dead was clearly a family matter. However, even if the cult of the dead was the foundation and expression of family identity in classical times[264], the study of the funerary artistic repertoire and the actual remains of ritual activity in tombs, suggest -as it shall be demonstrated below- that at least in Late Helladic III times celebrating and honouring the dead was a communal affair expressed, *inter alia*, via the establishment of official loci of ancestor cult, the performance

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[262] Warren 1988: 13.
[263] Nilsson 1950[2]: 586.
[264] Burkert 1985: 194.

of male or female processions and the practice of sacred rites, ritual indicators corresponding to Mycenaean religious practices and beliefs.

Consequently, in this thesis I consider the term *cult of the dead* as *any regular and fixed religious or cultic activity that intends to invoke the presence of the dead among the living and gain communication with the ancestors with the aim of communion, mediation and benevolence for the living community, all purposes being achieved by means of offering, participation and fixed sacral or performative acts of propitiation and respect.*

CHAPTER III

Mycenaean Afterlife and Symbolism

Image is the medium to avoid absence,
to make the invisible visible[1].

SYMBOLIC ART AND DEATH IN MYCENAEAN GREECE: AN INTRODUCTORY FRAMEWORK

Ernst Cassirer's statement that the human individual should be defined as an animal *symbolicum* emphasises human propensity to perceive signs from the environment and credit them with hidden meanings and, concurrently, the ability to construct, use and communicate through symbols[2]. Etymologically, the Greek root of the word *symbol* points to an element that stands for or represents 'a visible sign of an idea or quality or of some other object'[3]. A symbol can be defined in terms of the information it conveys, i.e. the *perceptual* aspect, conveyed exclusively by its form, and the *symbolic* or *metaphorical,* carried by the associate

[1] Schnapp 1994: 43.
[2] Cassirer 1944: 26; Goodison 1989: 191; Renfrew 1994a: 6; *idem* 2001: 129ff.; Dietrich 1996: 165. White (1949: 11) formulated the equation *human behaviour = symbolic behaviour* and concluded that 'the symbol is the universe of humanity'. For further discussion and bibliography on how and why symbols are formed, see Pader (1982: 5ff), Goodison (1989: 191-201), Renfrew (1994a: 5ff) and *Cognition and Material Culture* (individual papers).
[3] Renfrew 1994a: 5. The word symbol derives from the Greek word 'συμβάλλω', and 'the notion of juxtaposition (of X against Y), of the representation (of X by Y) and of metaphor (where X is equated with Y) are closely related (Renfrew 1994a: 5); Goodison 1998: 191.

pathways[4]. According to Ripinsky-Naxon, symbols could be categorised in three classes: the *archetypal*, the *analogical* and the *arbitrary*[5].

The iconic identification of symbols in relation to the supernatural is often apparent, although the explanation of their function is a much more complex undertaking[6]. The symbolic category of *representation* corresponds closely to the literal meaning of the term *symbol*, and although not all symbols are visible or material, there is no doubt as to the symbolic function and role of all representations[7]. Metaphors, however, do not always supply sufficient information, partly because the role of symbols in religious and funerary contexts is to reinforce an already known idea and perhaps to act as a mnemonic[8].

With reference to the mortuary sphere, humans have sought to transcend and annul life's meaningless nature through notions of regeneration and claims of an afterlife. Given the lack of written documentation and the evidence only of monuments and artefacts, the most coherent insights into the metaphysical beliefs of prehistoric peoples, and, in the present case, the inhabitants of Mycenaean Greece, can derive only from the detailed contextual explorations of their symbolic systems. The question *'how can archaeologists ever hope to gain even a partially accurate understanding of Mycenaean metaphysical perceptions from the material remains alone?'*

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[4] Ripinsky-Naxon 1995: 48-49.
[5] Ripinsky-Naxon 1995: 48.
[6] Renfrew 1994a: 8.
[7] Renfrew 1994a: 8.
[8] Renfrew 1994b: 53; Schnapp 1994: 43.

should be followed by and associated with '*what did the Mycenaeans think about death?*' and '*what did they do about it?*'[9].

Beyond any doubt, it is extremely difficult for an archaeologist who is left with the task of interpreting early representations, realistic or not, to make confident connections between tombs and thoughts[10]. The nature of Mycenaean multiple burials, the practice of secondary rites and the occasional cleaning of the tombs have deprived archaeologists of valuable information and material of ritualistic nature. Furthermore, the general denial of cult practice in Mycenaean tombs has to a significant degree discouraged any thorough and detailed studies of post-funerary rites and the symbolic applications they sustained.

Schliemann was the first to point to the symbolic character of specific elements and artefacts related to the burials of GCA at Mycenae. Since then much scholarly work has been devoted to several aspects of Mycenaean funerary symbolism without, however, reaching any definite conclusions. The discovery of the Tanagra sarcophagi has opened a new chapter in the study of funerary art and, up to the present, constitutes the most complete artistic codification of mortuary practices and beliefs of Mycenaean mainland. Spyropoulos's description and interpretation of the scenes, Vermeule's *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* and Immerwahr's paper on *Death and the Tanagra Larnakes* have offered an

[9] To adapt Parker Pearson's questions on past societies' response to death (1999: 21).
[10] Vermeule 1979: 42.

illuminating and inspirational view of Mycenaean allegories of death and afterlife[11].

In addition to the Tanagra larnakes, the rich repertoire of the Late Minoan III sarcophagi, the iconography of pictorial vases, the deposition of religious icons with the dead and the use of particular ornamental elements of regenerative/metaphysical symbolism have contributed significantly to the elucidation of the rather obscure Mycenaean eschatology[12].

The objective of the present examination of Mycenaean symbolic funerary art is to suggest the existence of and set the framework for codifying Mycenaean eschatological beliefs. In this respect, this chapter will focus on three broad issues: a. *psyche* and the hereafter, b. the Mycenaean *Deathscape,* and c. religious aspects related to the deposition of religious icons in the tombs. Before proceeding to the analysis of these issues, it is necessary to provide an approach to the process of examination followed in this chapter.

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[11] Spyropoulos has discussed and illustrated several of the tombs, larnakes and other finds in preliminary reports in the *Archaiologikon Deltion*, the *Athens Annals of Archaeology*, and the *Proceedings* and the *Ergon of the Greek Archaeological Society* of the years 1969-1984; Regarding the iconography and symbolism of a large number of larnakes, see Spyropoulos 1974: 20-28; Vermeule 1979: 63ff.; Immerwahr 1995.

[12] It should be noted that the use of *comparanda* from other regions may seem incompatible with the cover area of this thesis. However, the issue of symbolism is a wide one and it therefore seems inevitable to point briefly to the rich artistic repertoire from Mycenaean, Late Minoan III and Cypriot funerary contexts. However, the fact that in different regions the same elements could have been employed in a variety of contexts serving different beliefs and ideas, should render scholars cautious of comparisons, oversimplifications and generalisations.

An approach to the study of past symbolism

Mycenaean burial and its associated rites are well-organised events in which objects, acts and symbols serve a specific purpose connected with the afterlife needs of the dead and the metaphysical beliefs of the living. The treatment of the corpse, as in all cultures, aims at the creation of a carefully crafted artefact used to convey statements about death and the afterlife. The archaeological remains of body treatment, e.g. burial furnishings, decorative elements of the corpse or the burial facilities, comprise the culmination of rites of passage, which serve to separate the dead from the living and establish the ancestor spirits[13].

Turning to the objectives of the present thesis, Mycenaean archaeological evidence on eschatological beliefs resembles a 'picture book without text' and it is the archaeologist's task to furnish a text to these images[14]. Iconography, in general, acts as the codified documentation of a human group's cultural responses to the natural and supernatural world through an intermixture of associations and metaphors. Surprisingly, despite the fact that archaeologists studying prehistoric art are all dealing with similar data and whilst there is basic agreement on the description of the scenes and their elements, yet diversity is observed at the level of interpretation[15]. However, since visual symbols are characterised by their multi-referential nature and polysemantic character, their understanding and reading should always be context dependent and not *vice versa*.

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[13] Parker Pearson 1999: 71.

[14] To quote Nilsson's statement on Minoan-Mycenaean archaeological evidence on religion (Nilsson 1950^2: 7).

[15] I cite Morgan's observation on the analysis of the Theran miniature paintings (Morgan 1985: 5).

The present study proposes the following process for the identification and assessment of Mycenaean symbolic systems

description→identification→ classification→interpretation→ verification.

A thorough description of a given image, scene or symbol should be followed by identification. Scholars have already urged for a standardised and widely accepted terminology in the description and identification of scenes and artefacts[16]. According to Morgan, the meaning of an image or a symbol must depend on the relationship between the *signified*, equivalent to the object/idea of the image's meaning, and the *signifier*[17].

The correspondence between description and identification is validated through a. the consideration of each element as an individual component in the formation of the symbolic representation or meaning, b. its assessment as a feature within the wider cultural context, and c. its significance as a formative constituent of human behaviour[18]. The identification of any given symbol or symbolic system should be classified in terms of human action and behaviour at a religious and/or funerary level, with reference to the context of occurrence.

Given the problem of divergence in interpretation, a more reliable reading should be dictated by a morphological, syntactic and contextual analysis, and the awareness of the extent to which the interpreter's preconceptions on the matter are introduced to the examination of past symbolism. Contextual, morphological and syntactic analysis of the symbolic element

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[16] Pini 1992.
[17] De Saussure 1960: 97-100; Morgan 1985: 7 and note 6.
[18] A similar pattern has already been proposed by Morgan (1985).

or system followed by cross-examination, cross-referencing and criticism of the hermeneutic model will underwrite to a significant degree the reliability of the interpretation.

PSYCHE AND THE HEREAFTER

The conscious denial of the *post mortem* loss of the soul offers comfort and hope to the living facing the inevitable drama of death. Whenever humans think about death and afterlife, they tend to imagine a spiritual tunnel that connects the burial shelter of the body and the soul's eternal housing in a different dimension. In several cosmologies, ancestors are believed to dwell somewhere between the sphere of the sacred and the world of the mortals. The grave has always been the appropriate place and medium through which the appropriate acts and words reached the realm of the dead[19].

The issue of Mycenaean metaphysical beliefs and the fate of the soul after death is yet to be fixed, still remaining a taboo subject among scholarly circles. Several scholars, e.g. Rohde, Nilsson, Furley, Dietrich and Richardson, devoted part of their studies to early concepts of the soul based primarily on the Homeric sources[20]. However, as Vermeule has pointed out, 'Greeks who visited the underworld in a literary mood did not describe the landscape very precisely, being more interested in themselves and their

[19] Vermeule 1979: 42.
[20] Rohde 1925: 3-43; Nilsson 1950^2: 619ff.; Furley 1956: 1-18, esp. 2, 4, 7-10; Dietrich 1965; Richardson 1985: 50-55.

friends or enemies; so the relation between the underworld and the grave is misty'[21].

From the standpoint of funerary art, Mycenaean artists managed to create and crystallise a series of original scenes of ceremonial acts and eschatological beliefs, thus, offering modern archaeologists a unique glimpse to their notions on death, *psyche* and its survival in an afterlife. Moreover, they succeeded in 'capturing' and materialising the abstract image of the soul in the form of winged creatures or through metaphors of afterlife and regeneration.

Allegories of Psyche in Late Helladic Funerary Art: The Archaeological Evidence

Late Helladic examples of winged apparitions

During the mid-60s, Vermeule pointed to the existence of a winged figure on the end panel of the Kassel larnax, product of illicit excavations in the Mycenaean cemetery at Tanagra, Boeotia **(fig. 15)**[22]. This 'bizarre' pale-skinned female creature is depicted in a floating or flying motion, fluttering towards her right and looking back over the left shoulder. She is crowned with a flat cap decorated with three half-discs at the rim and a three-tailed plume rising in the air. She is dressed in a red and white robe, adorned with 'broad tails' or streamers attached at hip level[23]. Her 'arms', which curve

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[21] Vermeule 1979: 53.

[22] Vermeule 1965: 128, 146-147, pls. XXV(b) and XXVI(A); *eadem* 1979: 65, fig. 23; Immerwahr 1995: 116-117.

[23] Vermeule (1965:127-128) and Mylonas (1966: 177-178) have suggested that they had exclusively funerary use symbolising locks of hair offered to the dead. However, Long (1974: 38-39, 42 notes 53-55) considered the above interpretation unconvincing on the basis of depictions of streamers appearing in non-funerary contexts as well as in funerary

up forming a broad arc, are rendered as stiff excrescences giving the impression of small bat-like wings. Her bare disproportioned feet with the downward-angled movement contribute significantly to the artistic rendition of the floating or flying action.

Vermeule suggested three possible explanations regarding this apparition; the figure could be either a deity in epiphany responding to the lament of the mourners, or a winged spirit of death with the task of carrying the soul to the nether world, or, most probably, the *psyche* or the *eidolon* fluttering to the underworld[24]. She argued that the bat-like wings of this figure could appear as earlier imaginative models for the Homeric description of the suitors' souls passing to the underworld gibbering like bats[25].

Some years later, official excavations at Tanagra confirmed the existence of at least three more similar depictions in the artistic repertoire of the cemetery. In 1977 Spyropoulos illustrated one larnax whose front side depicted two winged figures in separate panels, whereas a single similar creature occupied the end panel[26]. Unfortunately, the poor state of preservation of the decoration and the quality of the illustrations render the reading of the images extremely difficult[27]. The spiral motif decorating the posts of the sarcophagus' front side, the band of beam-ends running along its upper margin and the wide vertical checkerboard pattern that divides it

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themes. Note that streamers are also attached to the robe of the deity depicted on larnax no 2 from tomb 24 at Armenoi, Crete (Tzedakis 1970: 221 fig. 9) and to the dress of two female mourners on the Kassel larnax (Vermeule 1965: 146, pl. XXVa).

[24] Vermeule 1965: 127-128. Dietrich (1997: 37-38) also agreed with Vermeule's suggestion.

[25] Vermeule 1965: 127-128; *Od.* ω. 5-10.

[26] Spyropoulos 1977a: 31, pl. 12b; *idem* 1977b: 18-19, figs. 9 and 10.

[27] The description of the decorative themes of this unpublished larnax is based mainly on personal communication with Dr Spyropoulos.

into two figurative fields imply a simplified architectural setting **(fig. 16a)**[28].

Each panel is decorated with one winged female figure, both presenting similarities with the creature on the Kassel larnax. Both apparitions are portrayed in a floating or flying pose, dressed in long straight robes and crowned with plumed caps. Their wings are of bat-like appearance in an upward motion. The right figure moves towards the right turning her head back over her left shoulder, whereas the left one turns to the opposite direction. The rest of the decorative fields is scattered with curve-stemmed spiral motifs[29].

Two pairs of horns of consecration above a band of beam-ends crown a rectangular structure, which defines the architectural setting of the scene of the end panel **(fig. 16b)**. The excavator has recognised the depiction as a holy place whose sanctity is emphasised by the horns of consecration[30]. Inside or just in front of this building a winged figure, similar to the ones described above, is portrayed, interpreted by Spyropoulos as a deity in epiphany, an interpretation he also put forward for the winged apparitions on the long side[31].

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[28] Immerwahr (1990: 125-126, 157) has already discussed the simplified architectural renderings on frescoes and on the larnakes.
[29] Similar motifs, for example, have been employed on the long side of the Kassel larnax (Vermeule 1965: 127, pls. XXVa, b),and on the larnax from tomb 32 (Spyropoulos 1970b: pl. 48b; *idem* 1970c: 20, fig. 18). It is difficult to establish whether these motifs bear any symbolic connotations or are the reflection of Mycenaean *horror vacui*. Vermeule (1965: 127) suggested their function as ornamental fillings.
[30] Spyropoulos 1977b: 19.
[31] Spyropoulos 1977b: 19.

Late Minoan III examples: a comparison

Turning to Late Minoan III examples, an interesting creature, apparently of the same iconographical tradition, is illustrated on one of the short sides of a sarcophagus from Milatos, Crete **(fig. 17a)**[32]. Although the sex is not indicated, Evans identified the figure as male[33]. The figure is depicted nude floating in the air above a single fish. The right arm is raised open-palmed, whereas a double curved object is suspended from its left hand. Evans identified the object as a figure-of-eight shield, whereas Alexiou as sea rocks[34]. The figure turns towards the right. From either side of his head stems a pair of ruffled lines, interpreted by Evans as the rayed emanation of the Knossian divinity as compared to the Babylonian Samas, and later as locks of hair[35]. He also attributed the upward curve of the excrescences to the descending motion of the figure[36].

Vermeule discussed the similarities between the Milatos figure and the Tanagra winged creature and concluded that Evans' interpretation of the Milatos scene 'much depends on its relation to the iconography of the mainland larnax[37]. Alexiou identified the figure as a female deity whose connection with the sea was attested by the presence of the fish and the rocks[38]. Kanta, in turn, stressed the divine nature of the representation

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[32] Evans 1901: 174-175; *idem* 1905: 489-491, fig. 107; Alexiou 1958: 217-218.
[33] Evans 1905: 489. However, as Alexiou (1958: 218) has commented the absence of garment does not signify a male figure. To this the evidence from the gold sheet ornaments of nude female deities from Grave Circle A could be added (Karo 1930-33: 48, pl. XXVII,27).
[34] Evans 1905: 489; Alexiou 1958: 218.
[35] Evans 1905: 489.
[36] Evans 1905: 489.
[37] Vermeule 1965: 127.
[38] Alexiou 1958: 218, where he also cited the Levi's suggestion that this is a cultic scene, and Hall's interpretation of the figure as Zeus-Poseidon or Velchanos.

suggesting iconographical links with the female figure with upraised arms from a sarcophagus from Armenoi[39]. Certainly, the Milatos figure is to a certain degree problematic but its occurrence on a funerary monument and its artistic association with the fish at the lower register is suggestive not only of its funerary nature but also of the link between death and the sea[40].

In 1966 Rutkowski argued that on the short end of a LM IIIA larnax from the Vatheianos Kampos tomb (Nirou Khani area) a god is represented 'taking care of the dead buried therein or even the deceased himself **(fig. 17b)**[41]. A single human figure is illustrated floating in the air dressed in a long robe with diagonal banding[42]. His arms are depicted upraised with the palms open. The movement of the feet is no longer preserved. The facial characteristics have faded and with them any indication of the figure's sex. However, the dress is reminiscent of the male figures on a number of sarcophagi of this period, namely the sarcophagi from Haghia Triadha and Tanagra[43].

Rutkowski's assumption that this figure may be the deceased himself seems unlikely. Alexiou, who adopted Matz's approach, suggested that this

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[39] Kanta 1980: 126, where she erroneously refers to a larnax from Pigi Rethymnou, citing Tzedakis's article in *AAA* 4 (1971). To the best of my knowledge no figures with upraised arms are depicted on any of the Pigi larnakes. A larnax with a prothesis scene from Pigi Rethymnou has been recently published by Baxevani (1995: 15-33). Kanta (1980: 126) also mentions that the figure has been identified as a chariot rider but no further reference is given.

[40] The symbolic use of marine elements in LM and LH funerary art is discussed below.

[41] Rutkowski 1966: 134.

[42] Alexiou 1958: 218-219; Long 1974: fig. 31; Kanta 1980: 44-45; Younger 1995a: 164 no 50, pl. LVc.

[43] Watrous (1991: pls. 83c), Spyropoulos (1969a: pls. 4b, 6a; *idem* 1971a: 17a-b, 18a) and Vermeule (1965: 132-133, larnax no 9) have illustrated male figures on a number of sarcophagi. With respect to figures in long robes, Kanta (1980: 44) mentions the male figures depicted on the larnakes from Episkopi Ierapetras, Armenoi and Maroulas. These figures, however, are dressed in knee-length garments (see illustrations provided in Watrous *op.cit.* pls. 89b, 92a, 93a and b).

might be a chthonic deity in epiphany[44]. The movement of the arms resembles mourning, ritual or farewell gestures[45]. Personages dressed in ankle-length garments, single or in processions, are depicted on a number of the Tanagra larnakes[46], therefore, it is plausible to identify the Vatheianos Kampos figure as a male mourner or a priest participating in the funerary ritual or the post-funerary acts.

***A fresco of chthonic nature from the Cult Centre at Mycenae* (fig. 11)**

Bizarre 'floating' figures are not confined only to the Mycenaean funerary art but are also to attested to contemporary fresco representations. Scholars have already pointed to a rather unusual element in the decorative programme from Room 31 at the Cult Centre at Mycenae. The fresco, which was found *in situ*, consists of two registers and is connected with a platform adjacent to the eastern wall of the room[47]. The platform functioned most probably as an altar and at its west end a ledge was found roughly shaped into three coalescing discs, in the form of miniature hearths, filled with ashes[48].

Of interest is the upper register of the fresco, which depicts two female figures facing each other in an architectural setting[49]. The left figure holds a sword, whereas the right one a spear or staff. Between these two standing

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[44] Alexiou 1958: 219.
[45] Cavanagh and Mee 1995: 46ff., 54 (male mourners), figs. 1-5, 7, 9-10; Schoinas 1999: 257 fig. 1.
[46] *Supra* note 42.
[47] Taylour 1969: 94-95.
[48] Taylour 1969: 94-95; Marinatos 1988: 245; Rehak 1984: 539.
[49] Taylour 1969: 96, fig. 2; *idem* 1970: 276-277; Marinatos 1988: 247-248; Immerwahr 1990: 120-121; Rehak 1992: 43-50.

figures, which have been interpreted as goddesses[50], hover two diminutive naked figures. These are sketchily painted, the upper figure rendered in black and the lower in red. Their arms, which end up in elongated branch-like fingers, are outstretched towards the left figure, whereas their feet are illustrated in a downward-angled movement[51].

Following an assessment of the possibility that these figures may represent figurines, human adorants or perhaps souls or spirits, Marinatos adopted the third explanation[52]. Immerwahr has interpreted them as symbolic *eidola*[53]. Suggesting their function as figurines, Rehak cites as a comparative element the depiction of a small figure carried by a mourner during a procession on a larnax from Tanagra[54]. Hägg wondered whether these enigmatic creatures are symbols of mortals or souls in the hands of the goddesses, but preferred, through lack of parallels, to leave the question open[55].

It has been argued in *Chapter II* that the close proximity of Grave Circle A and the Cult Centre as well as certain elements from the Cult Centre itself imply cultic activity in terms of ancestor worship. Nevertheless, for lack of

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[50] Rehak (1984: 539) has suggested that the left figure is a warrior-goddess. N. Marinatos (1988: 247) argues that both figures are goddesses.
[51] Marinatos 1988: 248.
[52] Marinatos 1988: 248. Regarding the first interpretation, the lack of any means of suspension and the pose of the right female figure render the interpretation invalid. The deliberate inversion and defiance in the conventions of drawing and colour code exclude the explanation of human worshippers (Marinatos 1988: 248)
[53] Immerwahr 1990: 121.
[54] Rehak 1992: note 103. He also recognises in the pose of the male figures Minoan and Mycenaean prototypes from processional representations and interprets them as worshippers, according to the iconographic tradition of the mainland and Crete (1992: 48-49).
[55] Hägg 1996: 605-606. Following Hägg's suggestions, Whittaker argued that the position of the figures does not indicate the acceptance of worship and that the import of the scene could have been narrative (Hägg 1985a: 209ff.; Whittaker 1997: 152).

comparanda from Mycenaean large-scale art, the interpretation of these vague human renditions is difficult and subject to various suggestions. It would be plausible, however, to stress two points: a. the 'flying' pose of the figures and b. the deliberate choice of red and black for their illustration.

Comparative material for these 'floating' figures is, undoubtedly, provided by the Tanagra winged creatures, with which they share the hovering motion and the downward-angled movement of the feet. The supernatural elongated fingers of the Mycenae examples balance the lack of wings. The conventions in the drawing and colour code of the flying figures on the fresco from Room 31 are not unparalleled. The sketching technique and the bichrome matt colouring of the Tanagra sarcophagi most probably imply their conscious choice for the illustration of the abstract Mycenaean metaphysical ideas. The deliberate alternation of female figures in red and black attested on a larnax from tomb 22 may be suggestive of a similar choice and could serve as comparison for the fresco **(fig. 18)**. Spyropoulos has attributed this change to the artist's attempt to differentiate between two semi-choruses of mourners[56].

Given the similarities, though, between the Tanagra winged apparitions and the 'floating' figures on the Mycenae fresco as well as the colour code employed in the aforementioned examples, it seems that the choice and use of bichromy was conscious and deliberate, and by no means due to the restricted Mycenaean palette. Wasilewska has demonstrated how colours

[56] Spyropoulos 1974: 24-25.

could be employed and manipulated in religious contexts as symbolic markers dividing sacred from profane and, even when dealing with preliterate societies, how their significance could be assessed through comparative data from other disciplines, e.g. the field of anthropology[57]. In a compelling study of colour and its interpretations, John Gage maintains that the meaning of colour depends on the particular historical context and contingencies in which it is experienced and interpreted[58].

In several human geographies, black signifies night and death[59], whereas the association of red with life-giving blood is reflected on the early practice of adorning the corpse with red ochre or of using ochre as part of the burial paraphernalia[60], the deposition of ochre in Helladic tombs[61], even on the occasional placement of one or more red sherds with cremations in Late Neolithic Greek mainland[62]. Turning to the Mycenaean period, 'the notion that the blood of the sacrificed animal 'feeds' or gives power to the dead person' is not incompatible with the archaeological record, not least the scene on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus[63]. Furthermore, this Late Helladic belief is powerfully evoked in the Homeric *Nekyia*, where the 'dark-clouding blood' of the sacrificed sheep runs into the pit Odysseus

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[57] Wasilewska 1991: 36-41.
[58] Gage 1999.
[59] Or even rebirth in the Egyptian cosmologies (Taylor 2001: 72). Even today Hades is believed to be dark and gloomy.
[60] Schmandt-Besserat 1980; Laffineur 1991b: 232; Parker Pearson 1999: 150 (e.g. the Upper Palaeolithic Dolní Vestonice triple burial).
[61] Sakellariou 1986: 15-18 (on ochre found in shaft grave Γ of Grave Circle B at Mycenae and a Middle Helladic cist grave at Argos).
[62] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 8-9 (e.g. the LN cremations at Plateia Magoula Zarkou). Gage (1999: 110) has pointed to the common root between the Sanskrit word *rudhirā* (=blood) and the terms 'red', 'rosso', 'rouge' or 'rot'.
[63] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 115.

dug and at the same time the hero promises on his return to Ithaka to sacrifice a barren cow to all the dead and an all-black ram to Teiresias[64].

The extent to which artists dealing with Mycenaean funerary art exploited the use of colour cannot be discussed with absolute certainty given the absence of adequate iconographical *comparanda*. However, applying the tenet that metaphors in artistic representations serve as reinforcing factors of already known ideas, memories or experiences, it would be plausible to argue that the sketching technique and the chromatic alternations on the Tanagra sarcophagi and the Room of the Fresco acted as mnemonic references for the participants in mortuary and post funerary acts. Whether these references denoted and/or emphasised the fundamental contrast between life and death/the world of the living and the realm of the dead, is difficult, if not impossible, to prove.

An additional element widely overlooked in previous studies and reconstructions of the fresco scene is that the Mycenaean artist had the intention to depict the left figure on the upper decorative register in an ascending motion. The left foot is illustrated in a lower level than the right one, while the weights and the fringe of her robe form a slightly oblique incline following the ascending movement of the feet. This feature is evocative of the dead person depicted on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus. In this case, the male figure stands before a building whose decorated façade is reminiscent of Mycenaean decorated tombs, just as the left figure on the fresco is standing in front of a decorated façade. His feet are hidden

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[64] *Od.* λ. 29-41.

below the groundline, whereas the patterns on his garments are similarly illustrated in an oblique manner.

Another element that should be pointed out is that the sword held by the so-called goddess is piercing the floor. Additionally, the importance of the left figure is strengthened by the fact that both the right figure and the small apparitions turn towards her and the fact that it seems as if a procession takes place directed towards the decorated building in front of which stands the left figure. Thus, it is tempting to suggest that the right figure is a deity or a priestess leading the souls in front of the left figure who could be identified as a chthonic divinity. The nude figures could and should be considered as souls, the lack of sex indication being the consequence of death, whose finality annuls and distorts human characteristics and existence.

In addition to the depicted winged figures, there is substantial evidence to suggest that other winged creatures from the natural world were also employed as metaphors for the soul. In the framework of introduction and incorporation of elements from the natural world to Mycenaean funerary symbolism, one should consider the evidence for the employment of bird and butterfly motifs as part of the funerary symbolism. Moreover, the afterlife symbolism of winged creatures in several civilisations originates in an ancient idea that the soul may appear in the guise of a flying animal, a bird or an insect[65].

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[65] Nilsson 1950[2]: 47.

Birds

The symbolic presence of the bird in the Mycenaean funerary art is attested as early as the Late Helladic I times. Gold sheet ornaments were unearthed in Grave Circle A decorated with doves associated either with nude female figures or with tripartite shrines **(figs. 19a,b)**[66]. Many interpretations have been put forward regarding their function and significance[67]; however, as this is a period of radical changes and ideas to a significant degree associated with the adaptation of foreign traditions to the Early Mycenaean cosmologies, the symbolic context of birds in this period could not be discussed with absolute certainty, unless as part of a broader thorough discussion.

Due to the limitations and restrictions imposed on the present thesis, the occurrence of birds in the LH I funerary context will be briefly discussed and only with the purpose of setting the background for the later depictions. Apart from the aforementioned examples, golden images of eagles have been unearthed in Shaft Graves III and V of Grave Circle A at Mycenae **(fig. 20a)**[68]. Gold leaf jewellery in the form of an owl has been reported from tombs of the Peloponnese, namely Tholos 3 at Peristeria, Tholos A at Kakovatos and Tholos IV at Ano Englianos **(fig. 20b)**[69].

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[66] Nilsson 1950[2]: 333ff., fig. 154; Mylonas 1966: 138-139; Carter 1995: 290; *100 Years from the Death of Schliemann*: 280-281, nos 220, 221.
[67] Mylonas 1966: 138-139.
[68] Schuchhardt 1891: 201, 262-263, fig. 264. It is strange, though, that the motif occurs only in two shaft graves, whilst, during the excavations on the citadel at Mycenae, a mould was found with the impression of an eagle intended for the manufacture of these gold ornaments (Schuchhardt 1891: 279); *100 years from the death of Schliemann*: 310 (no 262), 311. Note also the possible occurrence of an eagle pattern on a gold sheet from Pylos Tholos IV (Blegen *et al.* 1973: 117, figs. 191: 11, 192: 6).
[69] Blegen *et al.* 1973: 117, figs. 192: 1-4b; Laffineur: 1981-82; *idem* 1985: 250-252; *The Mycenaean World*: 107 (no 39 and plate).

In addition to the emblematic character dictated by the occurrence of pairs of birds, scholars have stressed the protective qualities of the motif of the eagle, associating it with the golden masks that covered the faces of the dead in several LH I graves[70]. The penetrating stare of the owl, its appearance and nocturnal nature renders it an appropriate symbol of death[71]. With reference to the owls from Peristeria, Marinatos assumed that they represented a bird-goddess of death corresponding to the oriental Lilith[72]. Laffineur attributed chthonic and magic value to it and considered its role as *psychopompos*, i.e. leader of souls[73]. As in the case of eagles, he associated the big eyes and the penetrating look of the owl with the funerary masks and concluded that they were apotropaic in character[74]. In conclusion, then, we note the fact that the motif of bird *does* occur in the earlier Mycenaean period and continues later in funerary context; consequently, it should definitely be attributed funerary qualities.

As to the species of birds employed in Mycenaean funerary art, scholars have managed to identify doves, 'perdix', eagles, black woodpeckers or cuckoos, with most emphasis being put on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus[75]. As demonstrated above, though, the only so far

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[70] Laffineur 1985: 252.
[71] Especially in the case of owls, their chthonic symbolism persisted from the Bronze Age onwards. Still in modern Greece the 'cry' of the owl is taken to signify a forthcoming death.
[72] Laffineur 1981-82: 5.
[73] Laffineur 1981-82: 13.
[74] Laffineur 1981-82: 14.
[75] Nilsson (1950^2: 336-340) cited the already proposed interpretations. Dr Spyropoulos has kindly informed me that during his University lectures at Athens, Sp. Marinatos had suggested that the birds on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus should be interpreted as κορώνα (=crows). Along the same line of argument, G.H. Watson III suggested that they could be seen as orioles, which are commonly seen in Greece, although they nest farther north (Long 1974: 41 note 13) or as ravens or similar birds, as proposed by Branigan (1970:119). Recently, Tsipopoulou and Vagnetti suggested that the birds with tall legs could be identified as cranes (1999: 131 citing Benson).

recognisable species in the funerary context of the mainland are the eagle and the owl unearthed in the Shaft Graves of GCA[76].

Birds on Late Helladic III sarcophagi

With reference to the iconography of Late Helladic sarcophagi, Vermeule argued that apart from the impressive rendition of the invisible in the image of a winged creature, the passing to the nether world seems to be rendered in the different icon of the soul-bird, equivalent to the Egyptian *ba*-soul[77]. Her conclusion derived from the analysis of a larnax from the Swiss market, on which a very interesting scene is illustrated[78].

In a framed scene, two male figures in short tunics move hastily to the right, followed by a gigantic bird **(fig. 21)**[79]. The ground line is indicated by a row of plant-like tendril spirals and the figures move among tall waving plants. The bird is depicted in a 'just launching into flight' motion, although his proportionately small open wings seem completely inappropriate for such an attempt. It bears a triple collar and its body is elaborately decorated with interior markings[80]. It has a scissor-shaped bill and large claws. Vermeule suggested that this bird could stand pictorially for the soul or *psyche* of the dead, similar to depictions of birds perching on

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[76] Laffineur 1985: 251-252.
[77] Vermeule 1979: 65, 75-76. She (1979: 75) defined the ba-soul as having 'a portrait face on a feathered body' and described it as being able to 'hover over a stiff corpse with the *ankh*-sign of life, or fly into the dead man'.
[78] Vermeule 1965: 130-131, pl. XXVIII.
[79] Vermeule 1965: 130-131. The hasty movement of the figures is indicated by the fluttered hair of the front figure and the position of the arms of both figures.
[80] The collar of the gigantic bird is not attested in any other representations on pictorial vases. It is reminiscent though of the collar worn by the Sphinx depicted on larnax no 3 from Tanagra chamber tomb 51 (Spyropoulos 1971a: pl. 18b).

biers in Geometric art[81]. On the other hand, the gigantic size of the bird led N. Marinatos to question the aforementioned argument and to simply suggest that the creature could indicate an otherworldly landscape[82].

On both the long sides of an unpublished sarcophagus from Tanagra a human figure is depicted flanked by a pair of oversized birds[83]. The scenes, though badly preserved, are artlessly drawn in red. The degree to which one could draw any conclusions from such a brief description, is doubtful. It is clear, however, that, as contrasted with Vermeule's larnax, the Tanagra scene is more peaceful, taking place in a rather idyllic landscape.

As regards the gigantic birds on Late Helladic funerary monuments, an examination of the aforementioned examples renders Vermeule's hypothesis, i.e. that they may be the pictorial equivalents of the soul, unconvincing. The fact that the bird is engaged in the chase of the human figures should be considered the first difficulty in her argument. In addition, the fact that the bird on the Swiss larnax bears a collar and the illustration of a pair of birds flanking a 'human' figure on the Tanagra example could classify the creatures as escorts or symbols of a chthonic deity[84].

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[81] Vermeule 1965: 131, 140-141.
[82] Marinatos 1997: 289.
[83] The larnax is now exhibited in the Archaeological Museum at Thebes. The excavator of the cemetery, Dr Th. Spyropoulos, has not included this larnax in his reports. However, Demakopoulou and Konsola [1981: 84 (no 11)] have given its dimensions and a brief description in the *Guide*. A reference to this larnax is also made by N. Marinatos (1997: 289 note 24).
[84] In Aegean art mythological creatures are frequently depicted held on leashes by human beings (members of the priesthood or deities), crowning shrines and/or bearing an emblematic character, e.g. flanking human figures, sacred pillars or the throne.

Consequently, it is tempting to suggest that the Swiss larnax illustrates a narrative episode, most probably associated with the *post mortem* fate of the dead. If one follows the notion that only deities (or even priests partaking ceremonially of sacred divinity) are flanked by animals, fantastic creatures and their symbols, then it would be feasible to suggest that the figure depicted on the Tanagra larnax is associated with funerary cult, in which the oversized birds emphasise the presence of the chthonic deity.

'Καινοφανή ειδώλια' and other bird models

The excavations at the necropolis of Tanagra have revealed several odd figurines, unique so far in the Mycenaean world, which Spyropoulos has associated with funerary cult[85]. These *καινοφανή ειδώλια* comprise a winged creature with a bird's head, an elongated serpentine body and a long flattened tail, on top of a circular or oval disc set on a schematic pair of horns of consecration **(fig. 22)**[86]. Their linear decoration consists of horizontal, diagonal and vertical lines, semicircles or *anthemia*, while some of the figurines were intended for suspension, as attested by the holes at eye level. The sockets at the corners of the lids of certain larnakes and the excrescences at the base of several figurines led the excavator to suggest

[85] Spyropoulos 1969a: 9-10, 13, pls. 2a, 7a; *idem* 1970b: 187-188, fig. 8; 1971a: 8-9. Finials have been reported so far from chamber tombs 6 and 60. Four finials were discovered *in situ* on the lid of larnax 12 and another two were found on the lid of a larnax from tomb 60. At least twenty finials were unearthed in chamber tomb 6. In the report in *ArchDelt.*, Spyropoulos has suggested that these creatures could represent either birds or winged bulls (1970e: 222).

[86] These figurines present similarities with the bird perching on a pair of sacred horns depoicted on the LM IIIB sarcophagus from Giophyrakia (illustrated and described in Kanta 1980: 21, fig. 113).

that they were used as finials crowning the four sides of the sarcophagi[87]. It is noteworthy that a piece of lead sheet was discovered on the head of one model, which the excavator has interpreted as horns[88].

Immerwahr has discussed the winged apparitions of the Tanagran sarcophagi in association with these curious figurines or soul-birds and concluded that the Mycenaeans 'made a distinction between the corporeal body that perished after death and the spirit or *psyche* which left the body and continued some sort of existence'[89]. Having stressed the apotropaic and prophylactic qualities of the crowning finials[90], Spyropoulos, additionally, states that the artistic and archaeological evidence from the cemetery is suggestive of a distinction not only between the earthly remains and the spirit, but, most importantly, of the differentiation between the Homeric *eidolon*, represented by the winged creatures, and the *psyche*, in the form of a bird figurine[91].

It should be noted that birds are frequently depicted on Late Minoan III sarcophagi associated either with imagery of sacrifice/libation or with allegories of the underworld[92]. Bird models have been unearthed in a

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[87] *Supra* note 86. In addition, traces of an adhesive substance survived in the sockets of the lids and on the figurines' base.

[88] The excavator has reported: '...ἐπί τῆς κεφαλῆς τοῦ ἑνός (*bird*) καί πρό τῶν φυλλοειδῶν "πτερῶν" εὑρέθη μολύβδινον ἔλασμα, κολοβόν...' (Spyropoulos 1971a: 9). A similar lead sheet was also reported from another tomb (Spyropoulos 1971a: 9).

[89] Immerwahr 1995: 117. She also suggested that the notion of the separation of body and soul at the time of death is indicated by the symbolic use of specific elements from the shaft graves of Mycenae (1995: 121 note 53).

[90] Spyropoulos 1971a: 9.

[91] Personal communication with Dr Spyropoulos.

[92] Watrous (1991: 293) and Long (1974: 36, 40, 43 notes 64-66) discussed the iconographical links between double axes and birds in Late Minoan funerary contexts. I briefly refer to the sarcophagi from Haghia Triadha, Episkopi Ierapetras, Mallia, Giophyrakia and Palaikastro. The role of the bird in depictions of the underworld will be discussed below. Tsipopoulou and Vagnetti (1999: 129-131) summarised the arrangement

number of Late Helladic burial places. Polychronakou-Sgouritsa has suggested that, just like the other types of figurines, the bird-shaped askoi and the feeding bottles, and bird models were intended as toys in child burials[93]. However, the selection of specific types of figurines as burial offerings and their association to other representations may have profounder symbolic connotations.

It is evident that birds held a key role in the Tanagran funerary attitudes. Apart from the unique finials, a number of bird models have been unearthed in several chamber tombs from Tanagra. At least 10 bird models, one identified as a dove(?), bearing linear decoration have been reported from chamber tombs 6, 60 and 103[94].

From the Argolid, a bird figurine was reported from the Atreus Bothros, pierced vertically by a small hole and French has suggested that it may once have been attached to the rim of a vase[95]. The wings are separately modelled and the whole is decorated in a naturalistic manner. A fragment from the same context seems to be part of a similar type[96]. Another rather simpler example was also reported from the Tholos of Clytemnestra[97]. No

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in which birds appear: a. isolated, especially in ritual scenes, b. in heraldic position with a central element, and c. in panels.

[93] Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1987: 23. The occurrence and function of figurines in the funerary context will be discussed in detail below.

[94] Spyropoulos 1969a: 10, 14; *idem* 1971a: 14; *idem* 1971c: 20; *idem* 1976a: 67, pl. 32ζ; *idem* 1976b: 11. Several figurines of the bird type from Tanagra are on display in the Archaeological Museum at Thebes (Demakopoulou and Konsola 1981: 86-87). The number of figurines will definitely rise following the final publication of the excavation results.

[95] French 1971: 160, pl. 24b, no 39-47. An example of a pair of doves surmounting the handle of a LH IIIB *kernos* has been illustrated by Vermeule (1960: 69, fig. 4).

[96] French 1971: 160, pl. 24b, no. 39-54.

[97] French 1971: 160.

further bird figurines have been reported up to the present from the LH IIIA-B cemeteries under investigation.

To sum up. In general terms, the motif of the bird appears in Aegean iconography either as a natural element in the literalistic view or as an emblem or attribute, i.e. the symbol, the messenger, the arrival or the epiphany of a deity[98]. Turning to Mycenaean funerary art, the fact that birds are frequently depicted on sarcophagi associated with libations or feasting scenes could denote the presence and participation of the chthonic deity or the dead in the ritual acts[99].

Butterflies and the notion of 'psychostasia'

The Mycenaeans were fascinated by the transformations and the life cycle of certain insect species. Gold leaf discs and sheets embossed with the pattern of butterflies, bees and marine creatures not only indicate an unusual body treatment but also imply a belief in the separation of the body and soul at the moment of death[100].

The butterfly's funerary connotation finds its most expressive form in the very name of the insect, *psyche*, which most probably owes its origins to

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[98] Morgan 1988: 63; Thomas and Wedde 2001: 6. Interesting is the scene on the Sellopoulo ring in which a bird sweeps down from the sky with a chrysalis just below its beak (Popham *et al.* 1974: 217).

[99] Note also Kourou's suggestion that the bird figurines from the Geometric tombs at Naxos could be symbols of the souls of the departed (1999: 179-182).

[100] In Peristeria Tholos II, Sp. Marinatos unearthed six golden bee-ornaments, possibly dated to LH II period (Marinatos 1962: 97, fig. 99a-b; *idem* 1964: 95). The connection between the bee, honey, death and afterlife has been discussed, among others, by Cook (1895), Frödin and Persson (1938: 350-352), Elderkin (1939: 206-210, 213), Forbes (1957: 79ff., esp. 87-89), Bodson (1978: 20ff.), Richards-Mantzoulinou (1979: 76-78), Davaras (1984: 82-82, 86, 87-89) and Laffineur (1985: 255-257). The regenerative

the life cycle and transformations of the creature, i.e. caterpillar→ chrysalis or nymph → butterfly[101]. The wide-open eyes on the head and the circular motifs on the wings of certain species of *Lepidoptera* must have been charged at some point with a prophylactic value[102]. However, the omission of this feature from several Mycenaean depictions led Laffineur to search for a deeper meaning and, subsequently, to the suggestion that the successive transformation stages of the butterfly could denote regeneration and thus a form of immortality[103].

Golden discs embossed with butterfly motifs and golden models of the insect occasionally accompanied the dead as early as Late Helladic I **(figs. 23a,b)**[104]. Taking as the starting point for his investigation the appearance of a pair of butterflies and *pupae* over the head of the female 'goddess' on the left upper panel of the 'Ring of Nestor' and the occurrence of the motif in GCA at Mycenae, Evans understood them as emblems of regeneration[105]. Persson argued that the chrysalis, just like the epiphanies of the deity, either in a human or a bird form, is a sign that the divine

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qualities of certain sea species, e.g. octopus and squid, are discussed in the section of marine symbolism.

[101] Cook 1925: 645, note 4; Laffineur 1985: 252. It should be noted that the word *psyche* in the sense of butterfly or moth is originally found in Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* 551 A (Dietrich 1974: 122, note 322; Bremmer 1983: 82).

[102] Cook 1925: 646.

[103] Laffineur 1985: 252-255; *idem* 1991b: 231.

[104] Regarding the cover areas of this thesis, relevant evidence has been uncovered in the cemeteries of Argolid and Attica, in particular, Mycenae and Thorikos. Mycenae, Grave Circle A: Schuchhardt 1891: 204-206, fig. 193 (shaft grave III); Evans 1930: figs. 100-102; Laffineur 1985: 252, figs. 4, 6, 7. Mycenae, Clytemnestra tholos: Wace 1923-25b: 365 fig. 79k, 373 no 12 note 1. Mycenae, T.518: Wace 1932: 87 no 76, 194, pl. XXXVIII: 76; Mycenae, T.15: Tsountas 1899: 103; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 77, no X2301(5-6), 310, pl. 12. Mycenae, T.102: Bosanquet 1924: 323, 324, fig. 1c; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 279, no 4902, 281, pl. 139. Thorikos Tholos IV: Mussche 1974: 19, figs. 11-13. Note also the evidence from Pylos Tholos IV (Blegen et al. 1973: 111, 117, figs. 190: 1,2, 191:1), Peristeria Tholos 3 (Marinatos 1967: 12, fig. 20) and the tholos at Kapakli (Kourouniotis 1906: 231, fig. 5, pl. 14).

[105] Evans 1925; *idem* 1930: 150-151, figs. 95, 96,97.

powers participate in human grief[106]. Combining Evans's and Nilsson's approaches to the subject, Dietrich concluded that the *pupae* were symbolic of the continuous reappearance of life from death without, however, playing any part in any ontological dogma or expressing any ideas of afterlife[107].

The chthonic significance of the butterfly is stressed by the presence of a pair of *pupae* on a sword blade from Shaft Grave I of Grave Circle B[108] and the incised decoration of a butterfly with outspread wings on the socket of a spearhead from a warrior-grave at the New Hospital site at Knossos **(fig. 24)**[109]. There seems to be no other reason why an insect associated with rebirth and regeneration should adorn objects exclusively associated with death.

Intriguing is the occurrence of engraved designs of butterflies on the golden scales from Shaft Grave III at Mycenae **(fig. 25)**[110]. Correspondingly, small scale pans of bronze, pierced at the rim with four suspension holes, occasionally accompanied the dead in their resting places ranging from LH II to LH IIIA date; in most instances no remains of the balance beam survived suggesting that it may have been made of some perishable material, most probably wood.

As regards the regions under investigation, decorated or plain scale pans have been reported to-date from Mycenae chamber tombs 46, 84, 515 and

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[106] Persson 1942b: 88-89.
[107] Dietrich 1974: 121-122; *idem* 1997: 31-32.
[108] Mylonas 1973: 118 (I-291), 317, fig. 99a.
[109] Hood and de Jong 1952: 249, 267 (II4), figs. 12, 15b, pls. 53a-b.
[110] Schuchhardt 1891: 205 fig. 193; Sakellarakis 1971a: 47.

529, the Kazarma tholos tomb, Prosymna tombs XXVI, XLIV, XXV, II and XLIII, Dendra tomb 10, Deiras tombs XXIV and 21*bis*, Thebes tomb 19, Thorikos Tholos III and the chamber tomb at Limnionas, Salamis[111].

However, the practice of depositing scale pans with the dead was not confined merely to the aforementioned regions. It is worth mentioning the scale pans from the tholos tomb at Vapheio, the Grave Circle at Pylos, Tragana tholos 1, Koukounara tholos 3, Myrsinochori (Routsi) tholos 2, the MME tholos and Mavro Spelio tomb IV[112]. In the Grave Circle at Pylos the balance beam (or staff) was found, whereas the example from Mavro Spelio preserved, in addition to the pans, the scale-arm and the scale-handle[113]. In the Tomb of the Ivory Pyxides in the Athenian Agora, 'a long piece of copper wire has been tentatively identified as part of a small symbolic balance'[114].

Schliemann attributed symbolic significance to the scales and asserted that the practice of depositing them with the dead most probably reflects the Early Mycenaean adoption of the Egyptian belief on the judgement of the

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[111] Karo (1930-33: 247, note 1), Spyropoulos (1972b: 102-103), Tripathi (1988: 363-364), Cavanagh and Mee (1998: 53 note 121, 55) have already cited several of the funerary find spots of Late Helladic and Late Minoan scale pans. *Mycenae*: Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 119,146, 241, pls. 45, 115; Wace 1932: 58 no 20, pl. XXXIX,20. *Kazarma*: Protonotariou-Deilaki 1969: 4. *Prosymna*: Blegen 1937: 351-352, figs. $215._{6,7}$, $543._5$, 196, $443._2$, 485. *Dendra*: Persson 1942a: 72-75 (plus a T-shaped gold-plate, probably part of the wooden cross-beam), fig. 86. *Deiras*: Deshayes 1966: 67 (DB 13), pl. LXIX, 2 (plus part of the cross-beam), 83 (DB 16), pl. LXXX, 4. *Thebes (Kolonaki)*: Keramopoullos 1910a: 233; *idem* 1917: 178, fig. 129:3 (plus a long and thin bronze sheet). *Thorikos*: Mussche *et al.* 1971: 80 no 6, fig. 42. *Salamis*: Tzavella-Evjen 1992: 85.

[112] Tsountas 1889: 145, 156. pl. 8,4; Blegen *et al.* 1973: 138, 168, fig. 228:5; Marinatos 1955: 248; *idem* 1956: 203; *idem* 1957: 99; *idem* 1960:196; Wilkie 1992: 251, 254; 276; 311, fig. 5-31, pls. 5-112, 5-131; Forsdyke 1926-27: 253, fig. 6, no III,8; Spyropoulos (1972b: 102 and note 8) also mentions seven scale discs from Gournia.

[113] Blegen *et al.* 1973: 139, 168; Forsdyke 1926-27: 253 no III,9.

[114] Immerwahr 1971: 106 and note 68, 168 (I-24), pl. 33; Pantelidou 1975: 201.

soul[115]. Evans stated that these fragile balances are 'an allusion to the weighing of souls, suggesting an analogy with the Egyptian idea of Thoth and Anubis weighing the heart of the dead man against the feather of Truth'[116]. As well as that, he interpreted the two figures riding a chariot on the Enkomi *krater* as representing the deceased's household in its sporting, military and economic aspect, and the man holding the balance as a steward **(fig. 26)**[117].

Nilsson argued that it is not plausible to adduce the Egyptian judgement of the dead in interpreting the scales from GCA and rejected Evan's theories on the basis that the conception of the judgement of the dead did not exist before the 5th century BC and that the 'scales of Justice' are to be found in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes and the later authors[118]. Following the Homeric tradition, though, he identified the male figure holding the scales on the Enkomi *krater* as Zeus with the Scales of Destiny[119].

Persson, on the other hand, adopted Evan's interpretation as regards the scale pans from Shaft Grave III, but claimed that the frequent occurrence of scales and weights argues for their ordinary use in Late Helladic graves, thus representing the household of the dead in its economic aspect[120]. Their

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[115] Schliemann 1880: 198; Schuchhardt 1891: 204-205.
[116] Evans 1930: 151. A brief but useful section on the Egyptian tradition of the *Judgement of the Dead* is found in Taylor's *Death and Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (2001: 18, 35-39, fig. 17).
[117] Evans 1935: 658-659. See also Vermeule and Karageorghis (1982: 195-196, III.2) for an illustration and further bibliographical references.
[118] Nilsson 1950^2: 34-35, 46-47; *idem* 1952: 691-692.
[119] Nilsson 1950^2: 36.
[120] Persson 1942a: 73. Lead weights have been reported from Tsountas's excavations [Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 241 (ΔM 3144), pl. 115, 248 (ΔM 3214), pl. 119], the Kazarma tholos (Protonotariou-Deilaki 1969: 4), the Vapheio tholos (Tsountas 1889: 145, 156-157) and Thorikos Tholos III (Mussche *et al.* 1971: 8, fig. 43).

use for weighing small objects was also stressed by Blegen[121]. However, as Tsountas and Picard argued, their fragility renders them inappropriate as an actual means of weighing, thus they were most probably intended for funerary use[122].

The concept of *psychostasia*, the weighing of the souls, along the later Greek lines, has also been discussed by Dietrich and Sakellarakis[123]. Dietrich has maintained that Zeus' scales in the Homeric *kerostasia* 'were subject to an older tradition' and that it is evident that the *psychostasia* in Homer constitutes a developed aspect of an earlier doctrine[124]. Spyropoulos, who summarised the available material, dated the mainland examples to LH I-IIIB times and expressed the view that in certain cases the *psychostatic* function of the scales is acceptable, whereas in other cases Persson's argument should be applied[125]. Likewise, Immerwahr suggested that the small scale pans could have fulfilled a symbolic function, yet the more functional ones, e.g. the examples from Prosymna, may have served a practical purpose like the weighing out of cosmetics, pointing to their association with mirrors and other feminine equipment[126].

Summing up, it seems that after LH I the use of the butterfly motif on scale pans ceases and is replaced by plain scale pans, yet retaining their primary symbolic character. Apart from the thinness and fragility of the scale pans

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[121] Blegen 1937: 351.
[122] Tsountas 1893: 121; Picard 1948: 290. .
[123] Dietrich 1964: 121ff.; *idem* 1965: 241-242; *idem* 1974: 121 and notes 317, 318; *idem* 1997: 31; Sakellarakis 1971a: 46. On an Attic red-figure cup Hermes is depicted holding a set of scales on the discs of which eidola of Achilles and Memnon stand (Carpenter 1991: fig. 325).
[124] Dietrich 1964: 124.
[125] Spyropoulos 1972b: 102 (notes 10-13), 103 (notes 1-3).
[126] Immerwahr 1971: note 68.

uncovered in the funerary context, another element that argues against the practical use of these scales is the fact that in at least one case the suspension holes are not symmetrically placed on the pan, thus the practical use of the scales should be re-examined[127]. Moreover, in consequence of inadequate information on the sex of the individuals buried in each tomb, the theory that they were exclusively intended for female burials requires re-assessment.

The notion of *psychostasia* is attested not only throughout the Mycenaean period as it also acquired a conspicuous place in later classical tradition. With reference to the LH I material one could detect foreign influences adapted to Early Mycenaean thought. What has not been stressed in previous studies is the fact that the Egyptian idea of the judgement of the deceased, which is mentioned as early as the Old Kingdom, was developed during the Second Intermediate Period with the introduction of *Spell 125* to the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (ca. 1750-1550 BC)[128]. Is it feasible, then, to assume that the Mycenae rulers during the Late Helladic I period via their contacts with Egypt came across this conception and consequently adapted it in their notions about death and afterlife? Given, though, the difficulties in the interpretation of symbols without the secure evidence of written sources, one should be cautious of oversimplifications and definite conclusions.

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[127] E.g. the suspension holes on a scale pan from Prosymna tomb XLIV (Blegen 1937: 352).

[128] Taylor 2001: 35-39, 196. *Spell 125* is related to the fate of the deceased and the passage of the soul to a new life.

Εἰς Ἀΐδαο δόμους: MYCENAEAN DEATHSCAPE AND SYMBOLISM

The Mycenaean artists did not succeed merely in crystallising the abstract image of the soul but there is evidence to suggest that they included in their repertoire their belief in the voyage of the soul to its final destination as well as imagery of the Underworld. The majority of studies on Mycenaean *Deathscape* has placed emphasis on the evidence from LH I burial contexts, whereas a certain bias is observed against the later material, which has not been extensively assessed.

At the same time, the artistic themes of the Tanagra sarcophagi have broadened prehistorians' field of research and understanding as regards Mycenaean mortuary practices and beliefs. Associated with and compared to the archaeological data and the remains of ritual activities in tombs, this unique repertoire is suggestive of the existence of a code of symbolic elements closely linked with the Mycenaean landscape and seascape of death.

It has been noted above that Early Mycenaeans were preoccupied with elements of the natural world that stimulated the imagination with their regenerative qualities. The belief in the *post mortem* destiny of the soul and its journey to the world of ancestors was another route towards the denial of the finality of death. The aim of the following section is two-fold: a. to investigate the belief in the journey of the soul to the underworld and b. to explore aspects of the imagery of the Mycenaean Netherworld.

'Ες 'Ηλύσιον πεδίον καί πείρατα γαίης: The journey of the soul to the Mycenaean Underworld

The belief in the journey of the soul to the realm of the dead was long-lived and potent among Bronze Age peoples. To those who lived within reach of the sea or a great river, the placement of the nether world 'in faraway lands next to deep-eddying Ocean' was instinctively right and justified[129]. The overseas land of the dead would only be accessible by a vessel capable of transporting the soul safely on the underground waters; thus, a symbolic item of this journey was frequently buried with the dead as an archetypal symbol of departure and an important element in the rites of passage[130].

The majority of studies on the subject have centred upon the Minoan evidence. The practice of depositing model boats with the dead or of decorating funerary monuments with analogous patterns in prehistoric Greece has been interpreted either as a means of facilitating the deceased's journey to the underworld or as an symbol of his maritime activities during his lifetime[131]. Moreover, the occurrence of ship motifs in Minoan mortuary contexts has been perceived as an appropriate Egyptian element adapted to the island's requirements and traditions[132].

In addition to the Shaft Grave period material, which has been extensively examined, few studies have been devoted to relevant material from LH III funerary sites. Discussing the iconography of Late Minoan III sarcophagi,

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[129] Hes. *Works and Days* 171; *Od.* δ. 563-568; Davidson 1975: 73; West 1997: 155-156. On the journey to the underworld in Greek tradition, see Alexiou 1974: 189-193.
[130] Davaras 1984: 72.
[131] Nilsson 1950^2: 623-630; Grumach 1968: 23-26; Alexiou 1972; *idem* 1973a; Davaras 1984; Watrous 1991: 298ff.; Dietrich 1997.
[132] Watrous 1991: 298ff.

Watrous has succeeded in distinguishing between Minoan tradition and Mycenaean innovation[133]. On a similar line of argumentation, this section aims to explore the issues of innovation and conservatism in the Mycenaean eschatological belief in the last journey of the soul as well as the regional diversity observed in the expression of this notion. In particular, the offering of appropriate means for the transport of the dead to the underworld will be followed by a discussion of representations of the actual journey to the soul's final destination. The study will focus on the study of funerary iconography, namely the sarcophagi, and the practice of depositing models of boats and chariots with the dead.

The offering of boats and chariots to the dead

Earlier examples

The earliest instances of boat depositions with the dead are attested in the mortuary traditions of Egypt and Mesopotamia[134]. Additional information on the destiny and passage of the deceased to the afterlife and the funerary barques is contained in the collection of *Spells for Going Forth by Day* (known as the *Book of the Dead*)[135]. The presence of ship patterns on rock-carvings in France, Italy, Scotland, Ireland and Scandinavia led Grinsell to

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[133] Watrous 1994: 298ff.

[134] Vanschoonwinkel 1982: 21-24; Taylor 2001: 103-105, fig. 104. In the Old Kingdom of Egypt actual solar barques were frequently buried with the dead. Models of boats made of wood, terracotta or stone were deposited in the tombs of the Middle Kingdom, whereas the solar barque became an important element in the painted decoration of the royal graves of the New Kingdom (see also Morrison 1995: 131-132, figure 151). In the tomb of Abargi in the predynastic Royal Cemetery of Ur two boats, one of silver and one of copper, were deposited. More common, however, were the boats made of argil or bitumen, such as those uncovered in Farah, Tello, Kish, Obeid, Ur, Eridu and Abu Hatab (Vanschoonwinkel 1982: 21-24).

[135] Taylor 2001: 196-198.

propose the possibility of an indirect derivation of the boat of the dead in northern Europe from Egypt via the Aegean[136].

In the prehistoric Aegean, symbolic qualities of chthonic nature have been ascribed to several Early Cycladic 'frying pans' decorated with spirals and ships **(fig. 27)**[137]. Their chthonic character is undoubtedly justified by their findspot in graves near or in front the head of the dead and on occasions resting on the bones of the hand[138]. More than fifty model boats have been unearthed in Cycladic, Minoan and Cypriot graves[139].

On the occasion of the publication of a Middle Minoan I terracotta ship model from the Mitsotakis Collection, Davaras re-assessed and accepted the notion expressed in earlier studies that the occurrence of ships in funerary contexts bears eschatological character **(fig. 28)**[140]. Dietrich, on the other hand, proposed that 'boats are appropriate gifts to the dead of a seafaring people and keen fishermen', suggesting that the bathtub and boat-like shapes of several Minoan larnakes were quite unsuitable for crossing the sea to the other world; he also considered remote the hypothesis of the Greek myth of Danae and Perseus set adrift in a larnax from Acrisius as

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[136] Grinsell 1941: 368-370. Davidson (1975: 76ff.) has also provided ample evidence on the ship of the dead in prehistoric Europe. *Contra* Grinsell, Vanschoonwinkel (1982: 21-24) expressed doubts on the validity of the evidence from Italy, France and Ireland.

[137] Zervos (1957: 258) has assumed that 'frying pan' boats served as the sacred 'barque solaire' of the 'Mother Goddess', whereas Thimme (1965: 83-84) attributed funerary and cultic significance to these patterns in association to a Sea-Goddess and/Mistress of the Dead. Goodison (1989: 34-38, esp. 37) integrates the sun in her interpretation of 'frying pans'.

[138] For the function of 'frying pans' of the EBA Aegean and the previous argumentation on the subject, see Coleman 1985: 191-219, esp. 202-204. Coleman, however, holds a sceptical view on the religious significance of these objects.

[139] Gray 1974; Marinatos 1933a; Davaras 1984: 59-63.

[140] Davaras 1984: 72-75; Nilsson 1950^2: 623-624; Grumach 1968: 23-26; Alexiou 1972: 95-96.

being reminiscent of the Minoan custom of burial at sea[141]. Other scholars have considered the interpretation of funerary boats in eschatological terms as arbitrary and illegitimate and interpreted the offering of a model boat as a reference to the deceased's past profession[142].

The Mycenaean evidence

Unless future discoveries reverse the present situation, the earliest instance of the deposition of a boat on the Greek mainland is attested in Laconia. During the 1999 campaign, a terracotta model boat was found in a MH/LH I built shaft grave close to Sparta (the Gymnastic Society's plot) and has been associated by Spyropoulos with the funerary ritual and the metaphysical beliefs of that period[143]. This discovery is important for the chronological introduction of the symbolism of the ship on the mainland. Regarding the deposition of model boats either of terracotta or of some other material in Late Helladic IIIA-B tombs, the evidence from the known to-date examples derives exclusively from Argolid and Boeotia.

In 1895 an ivory boat-shaped *pyxis* was unearthed in front of the stomion of tomb 88 at Mycenae[144] and has been interpreted as a boat with a bird-shaped prow dated to the LH IIIA1 period **(fig. 29)**[145]. Its counterpart was

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[141] Dietrich 1997: 27. The connection between the inhabitants of coastal Greece and the islands with the sea has also been stressed by Demakopoulou in her description of the model boat from Mycenae (*Mycenaean World* 240).
[142] Pini 1968: 74; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 45-48.
[143] Personal communication with Dr Spyropoulos. Other finds from the grave include MH/LH I pottery, semi-precious beads and boar tusks. The find has been briefly presented in the *Ergon of the Greek Ministry of Culture* for the year 1999 and it will be in the *Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of Peloponnesian Studies, Tripolis 24-30 September 2000.*
[144] Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 244.
[145] Sakellarakis 1971b: 188-233, figs. 1, 13.

found in a slightly smaller LM IIIA ivory model deposited in pit-cave 7 at Zafer Papoura, Knossos, which Evans had identified as *pyxis*[146]. Sakellarakis stressed the practical use of these ivory *pyxides* and rejected the idea that all Minoan-Mycenaean funerary model boats functioned as means of transportation to the Underworld[147].

Near the stomion of chamber tomb 79 at Mycenae one small terracotta boat was uncovered along with a triple figurine **(fig. 30)**[148]. The model, a hand-made and inferior specimen as compared to other contemporary representations of vessels, has an elevated, almost vertical prow. Two clay cylinders inside the hold of the model must represent benches[149].

The discovery of two terracotta models was reported during the 1966 excavations of chamber tomb 4 at Megalo Kastelli, Thebes[150]; inside one of the boats the model of a small quadruped was found[151]. The Mycenaean cemetery of Tanagra in Boeotia has also yielded several interesting examples of votive boats[152]. In some examples human figures are depicted seated in them, while a bird's head forms the prow of another model.

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[146] Evans 1905: 416, fig. 22; Marinatos 1933a: 175, no 24; Sakellarakis 1971b: 193-195, fig. 4.
[147] Sakellarakis 1971b: 222.
[148] Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 220, 222: Π 3099, plate 104: 3099. Height of model (max.): 3.1 cm; length (max.): 7 cm.
[149] Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 220, 222; Sakellarakis 1971a: 98, 99, no 3099; *Mycenaean World* 240, no 243.
[150] Pharaklas 1967: 228. The excavator did not include these finds in his latest publication on Thebes (*idem* 1996: 214-216); Symeonoglou 1985: 289 (Site 191, Greater Thebes K-11).
[151] The excavator has reported: 'δύο πηλίνας λέμβους, εντός της μιας εξ αυτων μικρόν τετράποδον' (?), without further mention to the models (Pharaklas 1967: 228).
[152] All examples mentioned from the Mycenaean cemetery of Tanagra are unpublished. The information on the material cited in this section comes exclusively from personal communication with the excavator of the cemetery, Dr Th. Spyropoulos. A brief reference to some models is made in *PAE* 1969a: 14. Some models are on display in the Archaeological Museum at Thebes.

Pini claimed that boats intended for the transportation of the dead to the nether world would have been much more commonly found in graves if such an afterlife belief lay behind their presence[153]. His assumption, though, that boat models were insignia of status and profession contradicts his own argument, if one takes into consideration the occurrence of boat models in inland sites, such as Tanagra, and their absence from island sites, e.g. Rhodes[154]. One should not exclude, though, the fact that a perishable material, most probably wood, could have been used for their manufacture in an attempt to imitate actual boats.

In iconographical terms, the offering of a boat is not illustrated on any of the mainland sarcophagi. However, the offering of a white, crescent-shaped object, usually identified as a boat, to the deceased by a male procession is portrayed on one of the long sides of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus **(fig. 31)**[155]. Long discussed the practical function of the boat suggesting that the vessel might furnish transportation for the journey to the underworld and that the cattle presented along with the model might represent either sustenance for the journey or the bulls supplied for the funeral games in honour of the dead[156]. Sourvinou-Inwood has suggested that the boat itself on the sarcophagus is to be associated with the divine cult practised in the cult unit of the Piazzale dei Sacelli[157].

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[153] Pini 1968: 74.
[154] As it will be mentioned below, chariot groups have been deposited in Rhodian funerary contexts.
[155] Long 1974: 46-49.
[156] Long 1974: 46-49.
[157] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 42. Conversely, Long (1974: 48, 52 note 53) has argued that the model from the votive deposit in Piazzale dei Sacelli and the other from the villa, 'are short and dumpy compared to the boat on the sarcophagus and cannot be regarded of the same type'.

On the other hand, Nauert put forward two explanations; one associated the boat offering with a deity who had assumed as a local function the protection of the maritime interest of Haghia Triadha, or a second explanation in which 'the boat was symbolic of the cyclical journey of the deity to whom it was presented', drawing a parallel with Osiris's solar barque[158]. Preziosi, Hitchcock, Watrous and Hiller have also associated the offerings, boat and cattle, with the common practice of contemporary Egypt[159]. Laffineur has proposed a different explanation for the boat associating it with the water libations offered to the dead, according to the triple Homeric libation formula and interpreted the scene as part of a necromancy rite[160].

The introduction of the symbolism of the ship in the funerary contexts of the mainland was followed by the introduction of another means of transport, namely the chariot. Mylonas was the first to have argued that three stelai from Shaft Grave V of Grave Circle A do not illustrate military events but races in honour of the dead buried therein[161]. Watrous was also tempted to associate the juxtaposition of chariot riders and marine motifs in LH III funerary art to the Shaft Grave period iconography[162].

The deposition of chariot models in LH III tombs, some equipped with parasols, stresses their civil function and their association with processions

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[158] Nauert 1965: 96.
[159] Presiozi and Hitchcock 1999: 179; Watrous 1991: 291; Hiller 1999: 361-368.
[160] Laffineur 1991a: 277-285.
[161] Mylonas 1951b: 134-147. However, Crouwel has expressed doubts regarding Mylonas' suggestion and interpreted the scenes as military (1981: 119ff).
[162] Watrous 1994: 301 note 95.

and ceremonies of cultic and/or funerary character[163]. Terracotta chariot figurines were unearthed in the cemeteries under investigation and, in particular, Argos, Mycenae, Nauplion, Prosymna, Vari-Varkiza and possibly Markopoulo[164] **(fig. 32)**. Chariot models are also attested in various other burial places of the Aegean, from Thessaly to the Dodecanese[165].

It has been assumed that boat and chariot models, as other types of figurines, could be considered as indicators of child burials, intended as toys to be taken to the underworld[166]. However, recent studies have ruled out any specific connection between child burials and figurines[167]. Without excluding, though, the use of several figurines as playthings, especially several uncovered in domestic contexts, the depictions of chariots in Mycenaean funerary art strengthens further the suggestion of the symbolic character and chthonic significance of the chariot as an allegory of the journey to the Underworld[168].

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[163] Crouwel 1981: 134ff.

[164] *Argos*: Deshayes 1966: 109 (DM 89), 200, pl. XCVIII(1). Terracotta dual chariot with occupant and parasol possibly dated to the early LH IIIB period. *Mycenae*: Tsountas 1888: 170; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 162, pl. 63 (dual chariot with two occupants and, possibly, parasol from a LH III tomb). *Nauplion*: Crouwel 1981: 161 (T34). *Prosymna*: Blegen 1937: 66-67, 256, 365-366, nos 415 and 416, figs. 617, 618 (two dual chariots with occupant and parasol from chamber tomb XXII). *Vari-*Varkiza: Crouwel 1981: 162 (T45). Dual chariot with two occupants from a LH III chamber tomb at Vari. *Markopoulo*: Long 1974: 31, 34 note 37 (with further bibliography). The model is of the dual type with two occupants. See also Crouwel 1981: 161 (T10), pl. 40a,b.

[165] The best example of a chariot group comes from a LH IIIB chamber tomb from Megalo Monastirion, Thessaly (*The Mycenaean World* 131). See also the chariot groups from Rhodes (Karantzali 1991a: 293-294, fig. 27; *eadem* 1999b: 405-406 and note 19).

[166] Blegen 1937: 255ff.; Mylonas 1954-55: 146; Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1987: 23, note 159; Karantzali 1991a: 294.

[167] Van Leuven 1994: 42-60.

[168] The discovery of a chariot group in the upper part of the fill of chamber tomb 3 at Pylona (Rhodes) led Karantzali to suggest that the artefact was part of the final dedication to the dead buried in the chamber, representing their journey to the Underworld (1999b: 406).

In the same context of eschatological beliefs, it is worth mentioning the dual horse burial at the outer end of the *dromos* of the Marathon tholos and the horse burials from Dendra, both examples giving the impression of being yoked to a chariot **(figs. 33a,b)**[169]. Vermeule assumed that these burials were most probably supplemented by less expensive versions of painted chariot *kraters* or terracotta chariot miniatures[170]. Along the same line of argument, she stressed the horse burials' role in the expression of a continuum of feeling and ceremony beginning from the moment of death through the escort of the deceased to his resting place, to the funeral games and, eventually, on his journey to the underworld[171].

Taking into account the fact that the entrance of the tomb was the passageway marking the boundary between life and death, these horse burials may acquire eschatological connotations. Horse burials and the offering of chariot and boat models to the dead were most probably ritual acts intended for the safe passage and incorporation of the soul into the realm of the dead. The departure of the Mycenaean *psyche* was surrounded by powerful conventions of iconographical behaviour mixed with a shared and, at the same time, diverse pretence of knowing how the dead could reach the land of the dead.

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[169] Vermeule 1964: 298-299, pl. XLVIII (B); Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990: 94-96, figs. 4,7,11-17.
[170] Vermeule 1979: 60-61.
[171] Vermeule 1979: 61.

The otherworldly voyage of the Mycenaean soul: the iconographical evidence

The archaeological record has revealed a considerable amount of evidence regarding the Mycenaean belief that the soul, leaving its earthly housing, went on an otherworldly journey. In addition to the personal belongings of the deceased, drink offerings and food provisions were arranged neatly around the corpse. Certainly the meaning of these *enagismata* resulted not only from the family's affection and respect, but also by their intention to contribute and assist the deceased to its transition to the nether world.

As has been demonstrated above, in LH IIIA-B period winged hybrids appeared on the Tanagra larnakes. Through these depictions several families or individuals of the local community expressed their belief that the soul was to fly to Hades. Occasionally, the deceased is equipped with special boots for the journey beyond the tomb[172]. Two Mycenaean clay boots have been reported from Attica, one from chamber tomb Γ at Alyki and another one possibly from Pikermi, now at the National Archaeological Museum at Athens, painted with patterns at the ankles that resemble wings **(fig. 34)**[173]. Papadimitriou, followed by Konsolaki-Yannopoulou, associated it with the Egyptian practice of providing the dead with shoes for the journey to the Underworld[174].

The convention that the soul may ride a chariot or sail in a boat was materialised not only via the offering of terracotta chariot and boat

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[172] Vermeule 1979: 63-64.
[173] Stubbings 1947: 55, fig. 24; Papadimitriou 1955: 94-96, pl. 25b,c.
[174] Papadimitriou 1955: 96; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 1990: 53-54. For the continuation of the custom in later times, see Kourou 1999: 178-179.

miniatures and the rare burials of horses with the dead, but also with depictions of boats and chariots on several funerary monuments.

The sarcophagi iconography

A unique vision of the Mycenaean underworld is portrayed on the front side of a larnax from chamber tomb 47 at Tanagra, Boeotia **(fig. 35)**. Although poorly preserved, the lower right section of the front panel depicts a ship with an up curved prow, a mast and a bank of oars sailing among floral patterns -most probably poppies- abstract forms resembling Φ- and Ψ- figurines, 'wheels' and other circular motifs consisting of cross patterns and dots[175]. The scene is rendered in black and red. Spyropoulos has discussed the symbolic and metaphorical character of the image relating the ship to a funerary barque and the vegetation and the other symbols to an allegory of the land of shadows[176]. Immerwahr also commented on this 'curiously unorganised composition' and contrasted the 'stark and amorphous' scene of the Tanagra larnax with the idyllic nature of the Minoan journey to the other world[177].

The idyllic pilgrimage of the soul to the hereafter via a Nilotic and peaceful landscape has been illustrated on a LM IIIB larnax from Gazi **(fig. 36)**[178]. The ship occupies the main decorative panel, moving from right to left. In the foreground, just below the ship, a bird pecks at what seems to be a

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[175] Spyropoulos 1973a: 21, pl. 10a. It should be noted that the decorative panel is ill preserved and, in addition to that, the flaking slip renders the reading of the scene extremely difficult.
[176] Spyropoulos 1973a: 21.
[177] Immerwahr 1995: 117.
[178] Alexiou 1972: 86, 90-95, fig. 1; *idem* 1973a: 3-12, pls. 1-2.

papyroid plant and a fish swims nearby[179]. The other long side is decorated with two octopuses, and each end panel bears two incurved altars.

Alexiou commented on the general religious character of the decorative themes of the Minoan larnakes and suggested that the boat, as in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian funerary tradition, symbolises the passage of the dead to another dimension and the sea journey beyond the Ocean to the Isles of the Blessed[180]. Due to the absence of any occupation-related funerary depictions and everyday themes from Minoan funerary art, he concluded that any theories proposing that the motif of the ship marked a sailor's grave should be considered invalid[181]. A boat in unsophisticated technique is also portrayed on a larnax of the same date but of unknown provenance, now in Switzerland **(fig. 37)**[182].

The juxtaposition of religious symbols and elements of chthonic character is further witnessed on the iconography of a LM IIIB sarcophagus from a chamber tomb at Kalochorafitis. During an excavation campaign, Lembesi unearthed eight larnakes, one of which is interesting in terms of its unusual decoration. One of the long sides features a horse-drawn chariot with two occupants, a large bird and a boat sailing among fish; a deer, although a secondary motif, may imply a hunting scene[183]. The other side depicts bull hunting, three male figures, birds and a bucranium with a solar disc

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[179] Alexiou (1972: 86, 90-95; *idem* 1973a: 3-12) described two birds in the foreground, whereas Watrous mentions one bird and a fish (Watrous 1991: 298).
[180] Alexiou 1972: 95-97; *idem* 1973a: 9-10.
[181] Alexiou 1972: 95-97, note 4 (*contra* Evans); *idem* 1973: 7.
[182] Gray 1974: 19, 47, C 40a.
[183] Alexiou 1973b: 471; Crouwel (1981: 160, L7) mentions only one occupant.

between its horns[184]. The two end panels bear a palm tree and an agrimi, and a large bird and a male figure respectively[185]. In addition, all scenes are scattered with the motifs of 'wheels' like the ones seen on the Tanagra larnax.

Alexiou stressed the ritualistic character of the decorative elements and Rethemiotakis has argued for the interpretation of the chariot and the ship as symbols of the descent to the underworld[186]. Sourvinou-Inwood maintained that the juxtaposition of a boat and a chariot on this larnax makes the above interpretation less likely and proposed that, in general, the boat in funerary contexts may have pertained to the social persona of the deceased- as did perhaps the chariot when it is not shown in operation during a funerary ritual[187]. Note, however, that representations of chariots participating in the funerary ritual occur on larnakes both of the mainland and Crete[188].

The notion of the chariot of the dead travelling over the sea is fully developed on the front panel of the larnax from Episkopi Ierapetras **(fig. 38)**[189]. A boat-shaped chariot is illustrated riding over an octopus, described by Vermeule as representing the sea, and a line of Y's, which may indicate the sea waves[190]. One male figure leads the chariot holding reins and whip, accompanied by two passengers each holding 'a circular

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[184] Alexiou 1973b: 471.
[185] Alexiou 1973b: 471.
[186] Rethemiotakis 1979: 258.
[187] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 48, note 110.
[188] Spyropoulos 1974: 23-24; *idem* 1972c: 207, see also plate in page 206; Crouwel 1981: 138-139, 160.
[189] Vermeule 1979: 67-68; Kanta 1980: 156-158; Crouwel 1981: 138-139, 160, L6; Watrous 1991: 301.
[190] Vermeule 1979: 67-68.

object mounted upright on a shaft', most probably parasols[191]. The second occupant seems to be holding a small, rectangular object in his other hand, identified by Vermeule as a rattle[192]. Three figures occupy the upper right register of the panel and proceed from left to right raising their hands in a mourning or farewell gesture. They seem to be holding kylikes and flowers, possibly lilies or poppies[193].

Grumach and Rutkowski argued that the main scene represents the symbolic departure of the deceased on a chariot[194]. Kanta, on the other hand, maintained that a funerary procession is depicted as indicated by the presence of kylikes, banners and various other objects, and identified the octopus as a filling ornament; however, she stressed the eschatological character of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus and the larnax from Gazi[195]. Recently, Watrous supported the idea that the scene may be a Cretan version of the Mycenaean funerary concept of the chariot voyage of the dead to the nether world[196].

The 'chariot tradition' seems to have been followed by the artist of the LM IIIB larnax from Kavrochori **(fig. 39)**[197]. The front panel of the larnax is occupied by a large bird on a palm tree facing a chariot and its two horses; the motifs of a fish, a flower, and an argonaut are arranged around its margins[198]. The marine creatures have been taken as a metaphor of the sea,

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[191] Crouwel (1981: 138) has put forward several interpretations regarding these objects, e.g. standards of some kind, a fan or sprinkler (for the smaller object).
[192] Vermeule 1979: 67-68.
[193] Rutkowski (1968: 226 note 41) mentions that one of the figures is throwing a kylix.
[194] Rutkowski 1968: 226.
[195] Kanta 1980: 158.
[196] Watrous 1991: 301.
[197] Rethemiotakis 1979: 231, 243-258.
[198] Rethemiotakis 1979: 231, 243-258; Watrous 1991: 301.

whereas the idea of the Underworld, to which the chariot is directed, is implied and emphasised by the presence of the palm tree and the bird[199]. The decoration of the end panels with motifs of octopus, fish and wavy lines may symbolise the journey across the sea. Marine and Nilotic elements co-exist on the decoration of the lid panels, another reference to the distinction between life and death. Accordingly, Rethemiotakis accepted the function of the chariot as the means of transportation to the underworld and added that the representation might have been the visual expression of a popular religious myth of that period[200].

At the cemetery of Zafer Papoura, a larnax of similar decoration was unearthed in chamber tomb 9 **(fig. 40)**[201]. The drawings, attributed in red on buff, are of the crudest kind and little has survived of the original decoration. Nothing can be read on its front side apart from the four-spoked wheel and part of the frame of a chariot, moving left. The rest of the panel is decorated with a hunting scene, whereas a palm tree decorates the partition of the two panels. A series of rock or wave patterns runs along the whole length of the face.

The female figures riding a griffin-drawn and an agrimi-drawn chariot on the east and west end respectively of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus have been interpreted as goddesses expected to provide a divine escort of the soul ensuring its welfare and safe arrival in the underworld **(fig. 41)**[202].

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[199] Watrous 1991: 301.
[200] Rethemiotakis 1979: 258.
[201] Evans 1905: 419-420,fig. 26a; Vermeule 1965: 135.
[202] Long 1974: 32, 57, 74.

Tomb carvings

The belief in travel to the nether world did not find its visual expression merely via the decoration of sarcophagi with boats and chariots but also by means of tomb carvings. Up to present, only two monuments have provided evidence for the practice, one in the mainland and the other on Crete.

Illicit excavations on the western slope of the hill at Dramesi in Boeotia unearthed a large structure built of large stone blocks with two massive lintel slabs over the possible doorway **(fig. 42)**[203]. Of interest is one of the stones uncovered, which in its original form must had been a rectangular pillar or anta, measuring 1.46m x 0.43m x 0.54m[204]. The fore face of the block is decorated with the patterns of six ships, sketched in broad and occasionally not definite outlines, arranged one above the other in a group of three near the bottom of the stone and a similar group of three near the top[205]. The boats are of various sizes and shapes, all proceeding from right to left[206]. Blegen took the pillar to be part of the façade of the 'Treasury' of king Hyrieus built by the Minyan craftsmen Trophonios and Agamedes, and identified the site with the Homeric town of Hyria[207].

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[203] Blegen 1949: 41. According to Blegen, the 'Mycenaean pottery and human bones uncovered to the south of the "doorway" seem to indicate a tomb-deposit'.
[204] Blegen 1949: 41. One of the faces of the pillar is badly damaged, the other three bear remains of shallow incisions or carvings.
[205] The pillar was broken into two pieces. For the description of the carvings and the technique employed, see Blegen 1949: 41-42.
[206] Blegen 1949: 41.
[207] Blegen 1949: 41. *Contra* Blegen, Kilian-Dirlmeier (1995: 49) suggested that the tomb was a large cist-grave, whereas N. Papadimitriou (2001: 113) stresses the possibility that the tomb may in fact be a rectangular built chamber tomb. As regards the date of the tomb, Papadimitriou (2001: 113) suggests that the sepulchre must have been built at the transitional MH/LH phase and remained in use at least until LH IIA.

Unfortunately, the date of the carvings cannot be estimated with absolute certainty. On the other hand, the artistic similarities between the block carvings and the ship on a LH IIIC pyxis unearthed by Kourouniotis at Tragana led Blegen to suggest that the Dramesi ships were carved during the Mycenaean period, and to the assumption that they were probably intended for the decoration of the sepulchre of a leader who participated in an expedition similar to the one against Troy[208]. Vermeule offered an alternative explanation interpreting the pillar as the 'memorial for a sailor, who never came home'[209].

Although nothing analogous is known on the mainland, it seems that the carvings at Dramesi were not unique in the Aegean. The incomplete graffito of a boat equipped with an up curved prow and a bank of rowers engraved on the gypsum lining of the rock-cut sepulchral chamber of the Temple-Tomb at Knossos **(fig. 43)**[210] could be considered as parallel to the slabs described by Blegen and could have borne the same metaphysical character. Despite the absence of more examples of similar tomb carvings, it is tempting to suggest their metaphysical nature as this is emphasised by their presence on the façade of the sepulchre that signifies the passage, the liminal zone between the world of the living and the sphere of the dead.

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[208] Blegen 1949: 42. With reference to Blegen's statement on the character of the ships, it should be mentioned that fragments belonging to two LH IIIC *kraters* have been uncovered at the settlement of Kynos, eastern Lokris, not far from Dramesi, illustrating warships upon which warriors are fighting (Dakoronia 1996: 1171, note 30, pl. 4; *Λοκρίδα, Ιστορία και Πολιτισμός:* 43-44 and fig. 22, 98-99 figs. 3-5.
[209] Vermeule 1964: 258.
[210] Evans 1935: 956, pl. 66b.

By boat, chariots or wings: concluding thoughts on the voyage of the soul to the Mycenaean underworld

Given the relative uniformity observed in LH III burial practices, of interest is the diversity detected in the Mycenaean artistic expression of the conceptual journey of the soul to the underworld. A case can be made, therefore, regarding the different existing traditions on the matter.

The cemetery of Tanagra is indicative of this traditional syncretism acting as a crucible for the production of different notions. On a series of representations winged apparitions are flying to the Underworld, whereas a ship is depicted just entering the land of the ancestors and terracotta boat models are offered to the dead members of the community.

The role of the boat as a means of transport to the prehistoric other world has been interpreted in relation to the Egyptian and Mesopotamian funerary practices. However, as Laffineur has urged, the practice in these Eastern Mediterranean civilisations originated in cosmological and mythological concepts possibly of no corresponding meaning for the Aegeaners[211]. It seems more likely that Greek seascape *per se* played an essential role in the formulation and development of the connection between death and the sea in prehistoric Greece.

Given the preoccupation of several Minoan larnakes with sea elements, N. Marinatos regarded the sea 'as a source of life and a final resting place of

[211] Laffineur 1991b: 233.

the dead'[212]. She observed that in postpalatial art the association with the sea becomes explicitly funerary, whereas landscapes of the kind are untypical and almost absent on the mainland sarcophagi[213]. The same scholar pointed to the role played by molluscs and other sea creatures in the definition of seascape, 'the marine counterpart of terrestrial fecundity'[214].

Elements of marine fauna were introduced and adopted in the funerary iconography of the mainland during LH I period. Images of octopuses and squids adorned the shrouds of the dead in Grave Circle A at Mycenae **(fig. 44)**[215]. Laffineur has suggested that the purpose of these funerary images was to provide the deceased with 'magical assurance of protection or of accession to a new life in the other world'[216]. The magical symbolism of these creatures most probably derived from 'their faculty of metamorphosis, their ability to regeneration or their hibernation habits'[217]. Keller attributed the golden figures of octopuses with seven tentacles from Shaft Grave IV to the artist's intention to make a precise and indisputable reference not only to the mutilation –related to the hibernation behaviour of the creature- but also to the symbolic value of regeneration following death[218].

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[212] Marinatos 1997: 288. She also suggested (1993: 231) that the employment of see creatures in the decoration of LM sarcophagi is a symbolic reference to earlier Minoan burials at sea.
[213] Marinatos 1993: 231; *eadem* 1997: 288, 291.
[214] Marinatos 1997: 288.
[215] Laffineur 1985: 259; *idem* 1991b: 231. Sea creatures, e.g. seashells, were also unearthed at the funerary contexts at Peristeria, Messenia (Marinatos 1967: 12, fig. 16).
[216] Laffineur 1984: 7.
[217] Laffineur 1984: 7; *idem* 1991b: 231.
[218] Cited in Laffineur 1984: 7. Given the existence of octopus' figures with eight tentacles, though, Laffineur attributed the lack of one or more tentacles to artistic clumsiness (Laffineur *ibid.*).

During the same period, Mycenaean marine funerary symbolism was enriched with the introduction of the boat from Laconia. Although, sea creatures became extinct in the iconography of the LH III mainland larnakes, the symbolism of the ship survived either in the form of a decorative element or in the shape of a miniature offering model.

Alexiou, who convincingly stated that occupation-related themes and everyday life scenes are incompatible with the funerary iconography, expressed the view that all vases with ship representations, found either in tombs or in domestic contexts, were intended for funerary use[219]. Vases with ship decoration come to-date from Tragana, Skyros, Varkiza and Asine, dating exclusively to LH IIIC times[220]. In particular, the boat scene on the stirrup jar from Skyros has attracted scholarly interest **(fig. 45)**; it has been described as a simple sailing vessel, whilst some have considered it to be a warship, mainly on the account of its bird-shaped prow[221]. Note, though, that bird-prow boat models have been deposited in the cemetery at Tanagra. Moreover, since both examples have been unearthed in funerary contexts, the eschatological character of the bird could be stressed.

Evidence suggests that the Mycenaean belief in the journey of the soul did not confine only to the sea, but was also extended to landscape travel. It

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[219] Alexiou 1972: 92-95, 97; *idem* 1973: 7.
[220] *LH IIIC pyxis from Tragana Tholos A, Messenia*: Kourouniotis 1909: 107-109, no 11, figs. 13-15; Korres 1977: 238-241, pls. 143d, 144 and 145a-b; *idem* 1978: 333. Korres (1977: 241) has suggested the probable existence of ship depiction(s) on pottery from Skias's excavations of Tragana Tholos A (Skias 1909: 281). *Stirrup jar from chamber tomb at Skyros*: Parlama 1984: 146ff., figs. 31-32, pl. A; *Krater from chamber tomb 1 at Varkiza/Vari* (the 1960 excavation season): Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1988: 99, fig. 7δ; *Stirrup jar from the settlement at Asine*: Frödin and Persson 1938: 300-302, fig. 207(2); Kirk 1949: 117-118, fig. 5.
[221] *The Mycenaean World*: 126, no 66.

has been stated above that Mylonas and Watrous were tempted to read in the iconography of certain stelai from Grave Circle A, the concept of the deceased riding his chariot to the afterworld. These readings, if correct, define the later Mycenaean tradition reflected on the repertoire of a number of LM III sarcophagi, the deposition of chariot models with the dead and the occasional horse burials unearthed in Mycenaean graves.

Chariot scenes have been understood either as an abbreviated reference to funerary processions and funerary games or as an affordable substitute of actual horse burials[222]. Steel has suggested that they should be considered as denoting an aristocratic style[223]. Associating, though, the LH III vases with chariot representations from funerary contexts **(fig. 46)**[224], the co-depiction of chariots and swordsmen as well as bull-leaping scenes on a larnax from Tanagra **(fig. 47)**[225] and the permanent athletic installations associated with the cemetery of Megalo Kastelli[226], it would also be plausible to highlight the artist's intention to illustrate the *repeated* games in honour of the dead.

'κὰτ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα, ἔνθα τε ναίουσι ψυχαί': Visions of the Mycenaean Underworld

Whereas the Minoan larnakes deal with the world of the dead in the sense that the deceased continues an earthly existence in the Underworld, the

[222] Vermeule 1979: 61-62.
[223] Steel 1999: 805-806.
[224] It is worth listing the examples from Kopreza and Nauplion (Stais 1895: 259, no 12; Protonotariou-Deilaki 1973: 91, pl. 90στ).
[225] Spyropoulos 1969a: 14-15, pl. 13a; *idem* 1970b: 23-24, figs. 16 and 17.
[226] Spyropoulos 1973b: 256-258; *idem* 1974: 22-24.

mainland sarcophagi convey in the most remarkable way the message of death and the *post mortem* fate of the soul. In the following section focus is placed on two elements frequently depicted in the imagery of the Mycenaean underworld, namely mythological creatures and palm trees. Since there is ample evidence for their employment in the religious contexts of the mainland, it is interesting to examine their meaning and role in the Mycenaean funerary context.

Mythological creatures

Among ships, boats and winged figures, the Sphinx played an important role in the funerary iconography of Mycenaean mainland. The earliest indication of the occurrence of the creature in a funerary context is attested in Shaft Grave III of GCA, in which as many as six sphinxes and one griffin in gold plate were uncovered along with octopuses and butterflies **(fig. 48)**[227]. Nonetheless, it is difficult to determine the character of these early mythological depictions, which may have been merely decorative elements, adopted from neighbouring Mediterranean regions, or maybe emblems of religious and/or socio-political status.

During Late Helladic times, the sphinx seems to possess a central place in the iconography of death. On a number of Tanagra larnakes the mythological creature is depicted either alone in a floral background[228], held on leashes by a female figure[229] or standing opposite a sacred pillar

[227] Schuchhardt 1891: figs. 186, 187.
[228] Spyropoulos 1970a: 35-36 (larnax from tomb 24); *idem* 1973a: 21, pl. 11a (larnax from tomb 15); *idem* 1979a: 34, pl. 20a.
[229] Spyropoulos 1970a: 35(larnax from tomb 32).

connected with a priestess[230]. At this point, it is worth noting the larnax from tomb 15, which depicts on each of its long sides a winged sphinx -a bearded male and a female one- between two Mycenaean palm trees and ornamental fillings **(figs. 49a,b)**. This remains to-date a unique representation of a male sphinx in the art of the Mycenaean Aegean.

The connection of sphinx with death becomes explicit on a larnax from tomb 115[231]. *Pace* Spyropoulos, the artistic association of the mythological-symbolic nature of the sphinx, representing the sphere of the dead, and the grieving act of the female mourner, standing for the mortal aspect, expresses in the most profound way the encounter between life and death. This hypothesis is further supported by the fact that the larnax served as an ossuary for the remains of secondary treatment rites.

The scene on a larnax from tomb 51 has attracted scholarly interest **(figs. 50a,b)**[232]. On both sides a sacred pillar becomes the focal point of ritual action; on the front side two pairs of female priestesses flank the pillar, the *exarchoi* touching the shaft, whereas the obverse side depicts a single figure approaching from the right, being met by a Sphinx coming from the left, both touching the sacred pillar. The sphinx is wingless and portrayed with four legs and, strangely, with two arms. A bull and a horse fill the vacant space above and below its body.

A version of the Oedipus cycle has been inferred from analogous traditions. Spyropoulos has suggested that the image of a Sphinx in a rocky

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[230] Spyropoulos 1971a: 12, pl. 18b (larnax from tomb 51); *idem* 1971c: 13-18, figs. 12, 13.
[231] Spyropoulos 1979a: 34.
[232] Spyropoulos 1971a: 12; Demakopoulou and Konsola 1981: 84; Immerwahr 1995: 113.

landscape decorated the interior of the frescoed chamber tomb at Megalo Kastelli, Thebes[233]. Unfortunately, the only surviving remains of the fresco comprise a rocky landscape at the bottom and a broad circle of red colour on top. The depiction of a sphinx would be, according to the excavator, in harmony with the mythological tradition of the particular monument[234]. Additionally, an ivory pyxis decorated with antithetical sphinxes on each side was uncovered in the same tomb[235]. However, the connection between human figure, sphinx and Boeotian locale should not be overstressed, mainly because of the creature's occurrence in several other contexts.

On the occasion of an interim report of the aforementioned larnax, Spyropoulos understood the scene as illustrating the particular moment during which the world of the mortals, represented by the human figure, unites with the sphere of myth, corresponding to the sphinx, 'in the mystic context of religious symbolism'[236]. Vermeule has interpreted the sphinx as 'the prototype of the *ker* of death, the attendant on the corpse if not its swallower' and the sacred pillar as 'the central pillar of the coffin-house'[237].

N. Marinatos has convincingly interpreted the pillar as a barrier between two spheres corresponding to the earthly aspect, represented by the human figure, and its otherworldly counterpart associated with the mythological creature[238]. Additionally, she proposed that the other side of the larnax is

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[233] Spyropoulos 1972a: 310-311.
[234] Spyropoulos 1972a: 310-311; *idem* 1973b:
[235] Spyropoulos 1972a: 310, pl. 252a.
[236] Spyropoulos 1971a: 12.
[237] Vermeule 1979: 69. A view also shared by Immerwahr (1995: 113).
[238] Marinatos 1991: 290.

suggestive of ritual actuality, whilst the column could stand for the tomb or the liminal zone between this world and the realm of the beyond[239].

Golden, ivory and glass plaques engraved with the motif of one or more sphinxes adorned the shrouds or the biers in several burial contexts of the regions under investigation[240]. It is worth listing the examples from Deiras tomb VI[241], Menidi tholos[242], Clytemnestra Tholos[243], Mycenae tombs 15 and 52[244] and Spata[245].

In general terms, sphinxes bear emblematic and sacred character in Mycenaean palatial art. Their significance as insignia of sacred status is underlined by their representation on wall paintings, sealstones and ornaments, depicted crowning shrines or flanking sacred pillars and deities[246]. It seems, though, that during the LH IIIA-B period their religious significance was adopted in funerary iconography and symbolism coinciding with the establishment and consolidation of a set of religious acts in honour of the dead.

Taking into account the depiction of a griffin on a larnax from Palaikastro[247] and of two others drawing a chariot on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus[248] as well as the fact that griffins are regarded as royal

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[239] Marinatos 1991: 290.
[240] Tzavella-Evjen 1970: 43ff; Poursat 1977a: 59.
[241] Vollgraff 1904: 385-386, fig.22; Poursat 1977b: 113, pl. XXXVIII;
[242] Lolling *et al.* 1880: pls. VIII,4, 10; Poursat 1977b: 148-149, pls. XLIV, XLV.
[243] Wace 1921-23b: 370-371, fig. 81.
[244] Tsountas 1888: 142; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 78 (E 2408), 132 (X 2451), 154 (E 2462), pls. 13, 36, 53.
[245] Koumanoudis and Kastorchis 1877: pl. A; Haussoullier 1878: 203-204, 214-216, pls. XVII.2, XVIII.1; Tzavella-Evjen 1970: 45-46.
[246] Immerwahr 1990: 137-138.
[247] Watrous 1991: 293, pl. 82:a.
[248] Long 1974: 28 ff.

emblems[249] and/or as being subordinate to deities[250], the Mycenaean choice of the sphinx seems to be conscious and deliberate serving the need and desire for divine protection. In the case of the frescoed royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli the sphinx, which is traditionally connected with it, could have additionally served the desire for display of social status and wealth.

A brief reference to the association of mythological creatures and death should also be addressed with respect to the Minoan Genius. As regards its position in iconography, the Genius appears either single, in repeated pairs or as two figures symmetrically placed facing each other, accompanying or flanking a human being[251]. Occasionally, the demon is depicted stabbing lions, sacrificing deer, carrying dead animals or pouring libations[252].

The role of the genius as soul-escort has been highlighted by Chryssoulaki, who maintained that on a sealstone from a LH III cemetery in Achaia a genius is depicted carrying a young man in Minoan kilt, thus becoming 'the mediator between this world and the divine, the carrier and the leader of sacrificed animals or human corpses'[253]. However, she does not exclude the possibility of the scene constituting an instant of mythical action, narrating the death and rebirth of a divine being and, consequently, the annual cycle of nature[254]. With reference to the scene depicted on the

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[249] Their association with rulers is suggested by their depiction in the throne rooms at Knossos and Pylos.
[250] On a fragment of LH IIIB wall painting from Mycenae a deity carries a winged griffin (Kritseli-Providi 1982: 28-33, pl. Ba, 2a). On seals griffins flank deities, pose heraldically on either side of a deity or are held on leashes led by a personage (Younger 1995: 182ff; Palikisianos 1996: 841-842).
[251] Chryssoulaki 1999: 115.
[252] Marinatos 1993: 199-200; Chryssoulaki 1999: 115-116.
[253] Chryssoulaki 1999: 116, pl. XVI,17.
[254] Chryssoulaki 1999: 116.

Tiryns Ring, Morris has associated the Genii holding libation jugs and moving towards an enthroned female figure as the Linear B *di-pi-si-jo-i* (*Dipsioi* or The *Thirsty Ones*) and wonders whether the scene, like that on the amphoroid krater from Tiryns, narrates a ritual act for a deity or figure associated with death as contrasted to depictions of standing goddesses and those with weapons[255].

Palm trees

Of interest is the association of sphinxes and genii with palm trees in sarcophagi representations and engraved plaques. Nevertheless, the association of sphinxes and palms as well as the depiction of isolated palms on the mainland sarcophagi rules out the use of the specific plant merely as a decorative element. The presence of palm trees on the mainland sarcophagi is co-depicted with other elements of the natural world[256], with priestesses[257], or with sphinxes[258]. It seems that for the Mycenaeans this particular species had borne symbolic connotations linked with afterlife and regeneration.

In ethnographic terms there are indications of a strong correlation between the symbolic significance of trees and speculations about life and death[259]. Rival has argued that 'tree symbols materialise the living process at three

[255] Morris 1992: 209.
[256] Vermeule 1965: 131 (larnax no 5), pl. XXVIII; Spyropoulos 1974: pl. 11b; *idem* 1976a: pl. 33e
[257] Spyropoulos 1971a: 13 (larnax from tomb 17)
[258] Spyropoulos 1973a: pl. 11a; *idem* 1974: 14.
[259] Rival 1998: 23; Bloch 1998: 44ff.

levels: that of individuals, that of communities, and that of life itself'[260]. Their evergreen appearance has made appropriate symbols of life, vitality and self-regeneration[261]. The life-giving nature of the palm that renders it an essential symbol of flourishing life and the overcoming of death has been recently stressed by Ellen and Morgan[262]. Morgan has ruled out any coincidence as regards the denomination of the bird *phoenix* after the corresponding Greek word for the tree; the mythical bird of Egyptian origin that rose from the ashes of a fire to a renewed life and symbolised *Ba*, the animated existence of the deceased[263].

In Minoan art the palm has been identified as a sacred symbol associated with fertility and procreation, since it is most often artistically related to religious motifs and scenes, namely altars, horns of consecration, deities, genii and the imagery of libation and sacrificial acts[264]. The conceptualisation of palms as an exemplary kind of tree in Mycenaean religious and funerary symbolism is also clear. In addition to the representations of the plant on the mainland sarcophagi, palm trees and leaves were deposited in Shaft Grave III of Grave Circle A in the form of gold plates as early as LH I[265]. A glass plaque engraved with the motif of a palm tree from Nauplion was illustrated in 1880, whereas a similar plaque of gold was reported from Thebes[266]. Ivory plaques in the shape of palm

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[260] Rival 1998: 24.
[261] Rival 1998: 23.
[262] Frazer 1941: 119; Morgan 1988: 28; Ellen 1998: 66ff.
[263] Morgan 1988: 28.
[264] Marinatos 1984: 115-122 *contra* Nilsson 1950^2: 285.
[265] Schuchhardt 1891: 200, 204.
[266] Kastorchis and Kondakis 1879: pl. no 1; Lolling 1880: plate for page 144 (no 5); Philios 1897: 100-101 and note 1 (in page 101).

trees have also been reported, amongst other examples, from chamber tomb VI at Deiras **(fig. 51)**[267].

RELIGIOUS ICONS: THE DEPOSITION OF FIGURINES IN MYCENAEAN TOMBS

Terracotta figurines in great numbers and of many types have been uncovered in graves, sanctuaries and habitation levels of Late Helladic IIIA-B **(fig. 52)**[268]. Scholars have unanimously considered figurines associated with sacred and domestic contexts as votive offerings and religious symbols linked with the beliefs and sacred rituals of the Mycenaean society. On the other hand, the connection between burial and figurines is yet to be defined, whereas the fact that their interpretation is based mainly on the meaning and function of their counterparts from sanctuaries and habitation sites further obscures their role.

Surprisingly, the fact that identical or similar types of figurines occur in different contexts has been too lightly dismissed by prehistorians. Based on comparisons with other Mycenaean artistic media and epigraphical sources, the variety of types deposited with the dead could not in any way be considered a mere coincidence but rather a conscious choice reflecting the desire of the living to express their beliefs and care for the dead.

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[267] Vollgraff 1904: 384-386.

[268] For a detailed discussion on the Mycenaean figurines and figurines, their typology and their function in religious and domestic contexts, see French 1971: 101-187; *eadem* 1981b: 173-177; Tamvaki 1973: 207-265.

Taking into account the above remarks and the tenet that symbol is context-dependent and not *vice versa*, the objective of this section is to examine the symbolic meaning and function of figurines in Mycenaean taphonomy and, with special reference to multiple and seated figurines, throne models and large figures, to suggest that they were inextricably linked with the religious life of the Mycenaeans and the practice of funerary cult.

Anthropomorphic figures and figurines in Mycenaean sacred and domestic contexts: a summary of their function and meaning

Small terracotta figurines in Mycenaean sacred and domestic contexts have been considered to signify the popular religious beliefs, as contrasted to the official cults or 'the cults conducted by the elites'[269]. Their religious and talismanic function is corroborated by the fact that some of them were perforated for suspension or decorated with necklaces adorned with pendants[270]. Krogulska argued that their use as amulets survived until at least the archaic period as indicated by a Boeotian figurine of archaic date, now at the Museum of Louvre, that appears to wear what must be a Φ-figurine as a pendant on a necklace[271].

Kilian interpreted the distributional pattern of figurines associated with doors and hearths at Tiryns as evidence for their protective and apotropaic

[269] Hägg 1981a: 38-39; *idem* 1996: 387; *idem* 1998: 110-111. The figurines unearthed in domestic contexts have been interpreted in religious terms or as toys (French 1971: 107-108; Demakopoulou and Divari-Valakou 2001: 183).
[270] Hägg a: 38 note 28; Wright 1994: 75-76, where he also cites Kilian-Dilmeier.
[271] Krogulska 1968: 230-231, pls. IX (fig. 28), XI (fig. 31).

character[272]. He also classified all anthropomorphic and theriomorphic figurines, chariot models, miniature furniture and vessels, large animal figures, rhyta and large-size terracotta figures as characteristics of an assemblage deriving from Mycenaean official cult practices[273]. Wright has argued that figurines might have symbolised the large figures of Cult Centres and thereby provided a symbolic link to the seat of cult at the administrative centres[274].

Religious icons for the dead: a re-assessment of previous studies on their function and meaning

Schliemann's identification of the female and bovine figurines from his excavations at Tiryns, Mycenae and Grave Circle A with ox-eyed Hera ensured their conspicuous place in the history of Mycenaean culture and religion[275]. Since then, the ubiquitous prevalence of figurines in Mycenaean funerary contexts and the diversity observed in their typology and distribution has attracted scholarly interest, although no coherent explanation on their purpose has been produced so far.

Small terracotta figurines are commonly attested in the burial contexts of the mainland from LH IIIA onwards [276]. Most common are the female Φ-and Ψ-figurines and the *kourotrophos* type, several of which crowned with

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[272] Kilian 1988a: 148.
[273] Cited in Hägg 1995: 389.
[274] Wright 1994: 75. The same scholar has suggested that they would have served the same function as the miniature portable paraphernalia related to saints sold at shrines and burial places (*op.cit.* 76).
[275] Schliemann 1880; French 1971: 102.
[276] Mylonas 1966: 114-116; French 1971: 107-108.

a wreath or bearing parasols[277]. Multiple and seated types are occasionally present. Animals, birds and chariot groups are not infrequent. In certain cases boat models and furniture are also included[278].

Figurines were characteristic grave furnishings in the funerary contexts of the Argolid (with the exception of Asine from where no figurines have been reported), Korinthia, Boeotia and Euboea. On the other hand, Attica seems to follow a completely different pattern of distribution. Cavanagh has observed that whilst figurines seem to have been common votive offerings in the cemeteries of the west coast of Attica (Voula-Alyki, Varkiza and Eleusis) and in the tombs of Salamis, they were rare at Athens and Thorikos, and totally absent from the cemeteries of Brauron, Kopreza, Ligori, Pikermi, Velanideza and Vourvatsi[279].

The absence of figurines from the Mycenaean cemeteries of eastern Attica does not entail, according to Cavanagh, different religious beliefs, but a variation of popular ones[280]. Along this line of argument, he has suggested that, whereas some of the variations in ritual practice can arise from differences of status and class, others are based on possible localised patterns of beliefs; thus, within this cultural framework and in terms of the

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[277] The kourotrophic type follows a standard form: a single female figurine of the T-, Φ- or Ψ-type nestles a single child against its left breast, either clasped in the left arm (in the Ψ- or T-type) or unclasped as in the case of Φ-figurines (Olsen 1998: 386).
[278] Apart from the throne models that will be discussed below, few pieces of furniture have been unearthed to-date in Mycenaean tombs, i.e. a table from Zygouries T. XXXV (Blegen 1928: 64), a table and a 'bier' from Prosymna Ts. XLV and XXIX respectively (Blegen 1937: 366-367). See also Higgins 1956: 40.
[279] Cavanagh 1977: 161-163; *idem* 1998: 109, 113; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 74.
[280] Cavanagh 1998: 113.

opposition of village-community to village-community, important social or religious symbols are emphasised or ignored in diverse ways[281].

More analytically, Kondakis remarked that female figurines accompanied child burials in the Nauplia district[282]. Some years later, Tsountas suggested that the deposition of figurines in the tombs at Mycenae was not dictated by religious beliefs or associations with the deities of the Underworld, but they were ordinary grave furnishings. He stated that figurines were to be found mostly in the poorer tombs of the cemeteries he had excavated[283]. Considering, though, his general remarks on the excavated tombs and their finds, it is clear that to Tsountas the term 'poor tomb' would stand for a funerary monument containing only pottery and not valuable items.

Marinatos attributed the diversity observed in the distribution of figurines to the different religious beliefs and domestic gods of the lower social strata as contrasted to those of the royal and aristocratic clans[284]. Blegen pointed to the striking correlation between child burials and figurines at Prosymna and identified the female examples as nurses caring for the well being of the children after death, the animals as symbolic milk supply and toys, and the chariot groups as toys[285]. On the other hand, Wace appeared more cautious and Deshayes argued that they were not exclusive to child burials[286].

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[281] Cavanagh 1998: 113.
[282] *Αθήναιον* 1880: 520.
[283] Tsountas 1888: 167-171.
[284] Marinatos 1927-28: 20, note 5.
[285] Blegen 1937: 255ff.
[286] Wace 1932: 143; Deshayes 1966: 243.

Persson proposed a function similar to the *Ushebtis* of contemporary Egypt and argued that they were substitutes for wives and perhaps female servants[287]. Nilsson suggested that the Φ-type represented votaries and the Ψ- divinities, when found in sanctuaries, whereas in graves they fulfil a function similar to Persson's *Ushebtis*. He maintained that anyone, who was incapable of acquiring anything valuable after death, would believe that figurines could secure comfort and protection in the other world[288].

Mylonas rejected Persson's hypothesis and interpreted the Φ-icons as divine nurses and the Ψ-type as the Goddess of Blessing, both entrusted with the *post mortem* well-being of children. The multiple figurines and the *kourotrophoi* were also employed to verify this interpretation, since both types were assumed to have been exclusive in child graves. According to his suggestion, female animal figurines were intended to supply the milk for the journey to the Underworld, whereas the chariot models were simply toys[289].

Picard put forward a more generalised religious interpretation, which French also favours[290]. He proposed that different types of female figurines might have represented different aspects of the same deity or even different divinities, though in some cases they might have symbolised the worshippers. Animal figurines and other group models might have served

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[287] Persson 1931: 89.
[288] Nilsson 1925: 304-308.
[289] Mylonas 1954-5: 139-152; *idem* 1966: 114-116. Weisner (1938: 190-191) also regarded them as goddesses securing life after death.
[290] Picard 1948; French 1971: 108.

as substitutes of everyday life elements used as offerings or as fulfilling magic or superstitious purposes.

Tamvaki emphasised the probability of a non-religious function of the figurines, being instead favourite everyday items, such as children's toys, votive objects of some kind or cheap substitutes for large religious figures connected with everyday life, household cult and popular religion[291]. They could have been reflections of fashion in Mycenaean society, although she did not exclude the connection of some of them with sympathetic magic and the wish for childbirth[292].

Cavanagh has suggested that figurines in graves may represent either worshippers imploring the deity for the renewal of the mother's fertility or the deity placed in the grave in order to achieve the renewal[293]. Similarly, Laffineur argued that Φ-figurines and animal models are elements of the imagery of fertility cults[294]. In his discussion of art for children, Gates argued that a figurine could serve as a toy or as a protector of the children after death. In another instance, the *kourotrophos* type has even been considered 'the archetypal symbol of the woman-nurse, hence the Goddess-Mother'[295].

With respect to the protective character of female figurines, interesting is a group of *kourotrophoi* above the shoulder of which rises a parasol **(fig. 53)**.

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[291] Tamvaki 1973: 258. In 1975 Tamvaki also suggested that figurines found in habitation sites and within houses could have been employed as images of ancestors, kept to be venerated by the living. However, she dismised this hypothesis on the grounds that all figurines are female (Tamvaki 1975: 238).
[292] Tamvaki 1973: 258.
[293] Cavanagh 1977: 161.
[294] Laffineur 1986: 80-81.
[295] Gates 1992: 167-169, where he also cites Divari-Valakou's view on the matter.

Blegen suggested that the prototype of this type as well as the chariot groups with the 'canopy' might well have been set by a rhyton in elaborate form[296]. He confessed, though, that no actual rhyton of this type was known to him and that it could have been a mixture of elements of entirely different sources[297]. Following Crouwel's suggestion the deposition of chariot models in LH III tombs, some equipped with parasols, stresses their civil function and their association with processions and ceremonies of cultic and/or funerary character[298], it is tempting to suggest that the addition of a parasol to the typical simple *kourotrophos* type could have aimed to stress the religious significance of the item. Thus, could the various types of *kourotrophoi* be interpreted as different aspects of the Goddess-Earth who welcomes and embraces the deceased represented as a diminutive figure?

It is evident so far that traditional interpretations relate the deposition of anthropomorphic and theriomorphic figurines in tombs *a.* with the *post mortem* fate of the dead, in particular, the children, *b.* with deities associated with death or fertility (although the role of protector could have been played by the *kourotrophic* type), *c.* with everyday-related objects (toys) and *d.* with remedial qualities.

Archaeologists have frequently stressed the rarity of figurines associated with primary adult burials as contrasted to the connection between figurines and primary child burials, e.g. Prosymna, Eleusis, Varkiza and

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[296] Blegen 1937: 366.
[297] Blegen 1937: 366.
[298] Crouwel 1981: 134ff.

Alyki[299]. Mylonas, who adopted the formula *child burials* ↔ *figurines*, argued that their frequency in disturbed contexts renders the understanding of their meaning and function problematic[300]. One, however, should be cautious as regards the definition of 'disturbed contexts' and the term 'child burials' in the absence of skeletal remains.

Very often excavation reports tend to describe as 'disturbed contexts' heaps of bones and skeletal remains 'swept aside' in the chamber or the *dromos* of the tombs, resulting from the cleaning of the chamber on the occasion of fresh interments. However, these heaps of bones, as shall be demonstrated below, are the result of ceremonial interference with the ancestral remains during the performance of secondary burial rites. Thus, the occurrence of figurines in heaps of bones or in ossuary pits should not be associated merely with the removal of the grave furnishings of displaced primary burials but most likely with the deliberate ceremonial handling of the *disiecta membra* in the context of post-burial ritual.

Turning to the second point, excavators frequently characterise as *child burials*, any badly preserved or decayed human remains or their total absence commonly attested in cists, niches or pits of the main chamber or the *dromos* of the tomb. However, the state of preservation of skeletal remains depends mostly on the conditions within the burial facility, the exposure of the corpse and its condition at the time of the burial. Based on a careful analysis of the data from Prosymna, van Leuven ruled out any

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[299] Mylonas 1966: 115; Cavanagh 1977: 162.
[300] Mylonas 1966: 114; *idem* 1975b: 251. However, he himself admitted that the child burials of graves Θπ13 and Mπ6 at Eleusis were not furnished with figurines (*idem* 1975b: 250).

specific link between child burials and figurines, suggesting that they were used against barrenness, miscarriage and birth defects, while quadrupeds were employed in order to enhance lactation or even male potency and robustness, and observed that tombs belonging to all four wealth classes have produced figurines[301].

Through the eyes of Hera: an investigation of the religious function and symbolic/eschatological meaning of figures and figurines in Mycenaean tombs

Although much scholarly emphasis has been placed on the purpose and meaning of simple anthropomorphic figurines in tombs, less attention has been paid to the religious significance of other types, i.e. multiple and seated figurines, throne models and large figures, and their association with the Mycenaean religious practices. The evidence from other Late Helladic III artistic media and the epigraphical sources, though, suggest that they should not be considered mere votive offerings but rather elements fulfilling purposes of the ritual acts in honour of the dead and/or depictions of chthonic deities or the dead themselves.

Multiple figurines

Only three Mycenaean sepulchres associated with child burials, namely Mycenae tomb 79, tomb 6 at Voula-Alyki and one at Glyka Nera- Pallene, have produced to-date examples of the triple figurine type **(fig. 54)**[302].

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[301] Van Leuven 1994: 42-60.

[302] Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 222 (Π 3230), pl. 104; Papadimitriou 1954: 85; Masouridi 2001: 6-7.

These clay groups consist of two Φ-figurines attached to each other at the side with a diminutive figure, most probably a child, perched on their common shoulder. The indication of only two breasts in all four examples, one for each figurine, placed almost in the middle of their torso, completes the 'Siamese' appearance of the Φ-figurines. In the model from Voula-Alyki and the one (of the two) from Glyka Nera the small figure clutches at the heads of the supporting figures and wears a necklace.

Interestingly, this type of figurine seems to relate iconographically to the triple ivory group found on the Citadel of Mycenae in which the child wears a necklace of round beads as in the terracotta examples **(fig. 55)**. Mylonas, who examined in detail the examples from Mycenae and Voula-Alyki and compared them with the Mycenae ivory trio, proposed that they represent divine nurses taking care of the child they carry, and ruled out any association with Demeter, Persephone and the child Iakchos[303]. Polychronakou-Sgouritsa described them as holy triads protecting the child in whose tomb they were placed[304]. The excavators of the Glyka Nera cemetery suggest that these divinities represent the deities leading the dead child to the Underworld[305].

Nevertheless, it would be hazardous to speculate on the identity and names of the divinities represented in the cited examples. The recently discovered Linear B tablets from Thebes, according to Godart, mention the triad

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[303] Mylonas 1956: 120.
[304] Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1986: 157-158, where she also cites depictions of triple female deities from the Mycenaean minor arts as well as earlier and contemporary parallels from the Cyclades and Anatolia.
[305] Masouridi 2001: 6-7.

Mother Earth, Zeus protector of fruit and Kore[306]. Moreover, the depiction of a holy triad on a larnax from Tanagra has been suggested by Spyropoulos, who associated the scene with the ivory group from Mycenae and attributed religious significance to it[307].

Turning to the written documents, based on the epigraphical evidence connecting Mother Earth with animal offerings and attributes as well as on the later tradition, Godart has suggested that the Mycenaean *ma-ka* (Μα Γα) became the later Greek Demeter[308]. Although, the name of Demeter may not be attested in Linear B, the recording of *Kore* is appealing[309]. One should also not overlook the fact that Persephone may be recorded under the mention *pe-re-*82*, which could, according to Ventris and Chadwick, be reconstructed as *Preswā* and compared with *Πέρση* and the first element of the compound *Περσεφόνη*[310], a view also shared by Murray[311]. The connection between Demeter and Kore and their association with the Linear B *Potniāi*, the Mistresses, should also be considered in these terms[312].

For lack of solid written evidence on the nature of these deities and their cult, though, it would be reasonable to be cautious on the attribution of these mentions to the triple figurines. On the other hand, their resemblance

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[306] Godart 2001: 464.
[307] Spyropoulos 1975a: 426, pl. 302b; *idem* 1975b: 26, fig. 21. I am not sure, though, whether this suggestion could be applied to the interpretation of multiple figurines.
[308] Godart 2001: 466.
[309] Scholars have attributed the mention *da-ma-te* (PY 114=En 609) to Demeter, which in use at least does not signify a divine name, according to Ventris and Chadwick (1973^2: 410-411, 538).
[310] Ventris and Chadwick 1973^2: 127, 410-411.
[311] Murray 1979: 148.
[312] Ventris and Chadwick 1973^2: 126-127, 410-411. For a fuller discussion of *Potniai* and their connection to Demeter and Kore, see Trümpy 2001: 417ff.

to the ivory group from Mycenae speaks for their indisputable religious character and probably, for a similar if not identical function. Certainly, these groups should not be classified in the *kourotrophic* style, since there is no indication that the diminutive figure adorned with the necklace is under the protection of the female figures, considering its prominent position in all four groups. This remark is further strengthened by the scene on a LH IIIA2 *krater* from Klavdhia (Cyprus), where a small figure is being flanked by two larger figures[313]. In a recent discussion, Rystedt identified the scene as religious, in which the small figure plays the role of a cult image standing on a pedestal or an elevating element, and the two larger figures represent worshippers in act[314].

Seated figurines, empty 'thrones' and the cult of the dead

Seated figurines, dressed or nude, single or of the *kourotrophic* type, have been unearthed up to present in burial contexts of the Argolid (Mycenae, Dendra, Berbati, Nauplion, Prosymna), Korinthia (Kato Almyri), Attica (Agora, Voula-Alyki) and Boeotia (Thebes, Tanagra) **(fig. 56)**[315]. Based on the tripod fashion of the 'thrones', Mylonas paralleled them to the portable three-legged altars, often found with other cult paraphernalia, and suggested that they were the special seats of a divine figure[316]. In his view, the horn-like projections on top of some examples with solid back recall the horns of consecration and, therefore, provide another indication of the

[313] Karageorghis 1958: 385; Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982: 30, 98, IV.18.
[314] Rystedt 2001: 396.
[315] Mylonas (1956) discussed in detail several examples of 'thrones' with or without occupants; Higgins 1956; French 1971: 167-172; Tamvaki 1973: 246-255.
[316] Mylonas 1956: 118-119.

sacred character of the models[317]. Christopoulou has also pointed to the cultic significance of these models pointing to the incorporation of two religious elements in their typology; the tripod throne terminating in sacred horns, and the figurine[318]. To her, the placement of such models in the tombs may indicate the desire for the protection of the dead[319].

Papadimitriou suggested that the enthroned figurines were associated with child burials, symbolising the Great Mother-Goddess whose worship survived in later periods[320]. He also proposed that these models were imitations of actual wooden thrones intended for deities[321]. Blegen assumed that the 'throne' models reflect in a way the style of furniture, presumably of wood, produced in LH III[322]. After having examined several examples from the citadel of Mycenae, Tamvaki concluded that one should not attribute religious significance to all versions of 'thrones' and seated figures and she inclined to believe that seated figures and the decoration of the models may indicate fashions and tastes in furniture as this is also reflected in other identified pieces of furniture, e.g. tables and biers[323].

Without excluding the fact that these models might have been imitations of actual domestic furniture, Platon suggested that they were associated with religious performance and, in particular, the cult of the dead[324]. In general terms, the connection between enthroned figures and cultic activity has

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[317] Mylonas 1956: 118-119.
[318] Christopoulou 1988: 190.
[319] Christopoulou 1988: 190.
[320] Papadimitriou 1954: 84-87.
[321] Papadimitriou 1957: 32.
[322] Blegen 1937: 367.
[323] Tamvaki 1973: 260-261.
[324] Platon 400-401.

been established by their iconographical association with ritual offerings and ceremonial acts as depicted in large-scale painting, the minor arts and on pottery[325]. Additionally, many scholars have associated enthroned figures depicted in Mycenaean art with the world of the dead. Morris has suggested that the scene on the Tiryns ring could be a narrative episode of a ritual act for a deity or figure associated with death receiving libations by the Linear B 'Thirsty Ones'[326]. Along the same line of argument, her suggestion that the seated figure holding a kylix on the Tiryns *krater* may be interpreted as an enthroned deity presiding the chariot races in honour of the dead, if not as an actual image of the deceased[327], could be applied in the case of the terracotta enthroned figurines uncovered in tombs.

Rather appealing is the existence of empty 'throne' models in the Mycenaean tombs. It is worth citing the examples from the Argolid (Mycenae, Nauplion, Dendra, Prosymna), Attica (Menidi, tomb at 50, Dimitrakopoulou Str. at Athens) and Boeotia (Thebes, Tanagra). Of exceptional importance is a 'throne' model from Tanagra decorated with double axes[328]. The motif of double axes is *per se* sacred and its occurrence on an equally sacred element, the throne, certifies the religious character and role of the find.

The cultic significance of 'thrones' in funerary contexts is supported by the decoration of a LM IIIA2 larnax from Klima Mesaras. The foreground of

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[325] Karageorghis 1958: 386; Eiwanger and Donder 1988: 39; Immerwahr 1990: 118; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996: 135.
[326] Morris 1992: 209.
[327] Morris 1992: 209.
[328] Demakopoulou and Konsola 1991: 86.

the right-hand half of one of the long sides is occupied by a large throne, behind which stands on an elevated platform, a male figure in profile **(fig. 57)**[329]. The excavator has interpreted the scene as a narrative episode of the epiphany of a deity whose divine status and chthonic/regenerating qualities are expressed by the throne and the marine/vegetal setting of the rest of the decorated panels[330]. One is to wonder, though, why the 'divine' figure occupies a secondary place in the scene, tucked behind the conspicuous presence of the throne. In this fashion, the throne becomes the element of primary importance in the iconographical arrangement of the scene.

In general terms, the throne played a significant role in Mycenaean religious life. PY Fr 1222 records the mention *to-no-e-ke-te-ri-jo* (*thorno-helkē-tērion*), which scholars have interpreted as the 'Strewing of the Throne' (*θορνο-ελκτήριον*)[331], the 'Raising of the Lamentation' (*στονο-εγερτήριον*)[332], a sacred banquet/sacrifice (*θοινο-εχετήριον*)[333] or as the unction of the throne (*θορνο-εκχευτήριον*)[334]. Ventris and Chadwick, who preferred to leave the issue open, suggested that the mention could denote a shrine, without whatsoever pursuing the interpretation any further[335]. Hiller

[329] Rethemiotakis 1995: 174ff. A throne is also depicted on one of the long sides of a larnax from Pigi rethymnou and has been associated with a *prothesis* scene (Baxevani 1995: 31, figs. 10-11.
[330] Rethemiotakis 1995: 172ff.
[331] Bennet 1955: 21, 30; Ruijgh (1967: 113), Gérard-Rousseau (1968: 224, where she also cites Bennett and Heubeck) and Hiller (1981: 121).
[332] Palmer 1963: 252, who accepted the mention as a festival for the mourning over the dead Young god.
[333] C. Milani's interpretation cited in Gérard-Rousseau (1968: 225).
[334] L.A. Stella and G. Maddoli cited in Gérard-Rousseau (1968: 225). This hypothesis is also supported by the recording of sage-scented oil in the same tablet (see Ventris and Chadwick 1973^2: 482).
[335] Ventris and Chadwick 1973^2: 482. Murray (1979: 317) also chose not to support any of the aforementioned interpretations.

suggested that the best explanation is the libation on the throne performed in honour of the *wanax* who is a cult-figure himself[336].

Considering the fact that artistic items deposited with the dead serve not only the needs of the dead but also the desire of the living to give substance to the religious/eschatological notions of their time, it would be feasible to suggest that the 'throne' models and the scene from Mesara reflect the association between death and religion in Late Helladic III times. If the suggestion that enthroned figures are the divine recipients of homage, offerings and acts, is valid, then the models of seated figurines in Mycenaean tombs could be interpreted in similar grounds, namely as chthonic deities, if not as the dead themselves, believed to be perpetually present in the tomb presiding over and receiving commemorative rites and honours from the living community. On a similar line of argument, if thrones are accepted as the seats of divine figures, then the 'throne' models without occupants in tombs could be considered as the aniconic presence of the chthonic deity or the dead ancestors, and/or as connected with special ceremonies involving the pouring of libations, as in the case of *to-no-e-ke-te-ri-jo*.

Large figures, 'θεοφορία' and Mycenaean funerary cult

The discovery of large wheel-made terracotta figures in the sacred places of major or minor centres led scholars to suggest that they were associated

[336] Quoted in the discussion in *Politeia II*: 391.

with the official level of cult in Mycenaean mainland **(fig. 58)**[337]. Up to present, large anthropomorphic figures have been unearthed at Mycenae, Tiryns, Phylakopi, Ayia Irini, Asine, Midea, Menelaion, Amyklaion, Tsoungiza and Aegina[338].

Concerned with the examples from Mycenae, Phylakopi and Tiryns, Taylour, Renfrew and Kilian have argued that they could have served as cult images[339]. On the other hand, M. Caskey interpreted the ones from the Temple at Ayia Irini as worshippers who stood or danced in constant attendance of a divine epiphany in terms of a perpetual enactment of liturgies[340]. Employing the Mycenae figures as an example, Laffineur suggests that the archaeological contexts allows, in most favourable cases, to get a more precise idea of their function[341].

Renfrew has distinguished various degrees of identification and interpretation, viz. a. representations of anthropomorphic deities, b. representations of abstract deities who occasionally acquire human form but could equally be represented as something else, c. votaries placed in the cult place as reminders of already performed acts or as indicators of

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[337] See the introduction of this section.
[338] *Mycenae, Temple Complex*: Moore and Taylour 1999: 46-71, 87-107; *Tiryns, Rooms 117, 110 and 110a*: Kilian 1981b: 49-58; *Phylakopi*: Renfrew 1985; *Haghia Irini, Kea*: Caskey 1981: 127-135; *eadem* 1986; *Asine, House G, Room XXXII*: Frödin and Persson 1938: 308-310; *Midea*: Demakopoulou 1999: 197-205; *eadem* 2001: 27-28; Demakopoulou and Divari-Valakou 2001: 182ff.; *Menelaion*: Catling 1995: 190-193; *Amyklaion*: Demakopoulou 1982: 54-56; *Tsoungiza*: Wright 1994: 69-70; *Aegina*: Pilafidis-Williamson 1995: 229-234. See also the distribution map by French (in Renfrew 1985: 414, fig. 10.1).
[339] Taylour 1969: 92; *idem* 1970: 278; Renfrew 1985: 364; Kilian 1981b: 54-58; *idem* 1988a: 148.
[340] Caskey 1981: 133; *eadem* 1986: 35ff.
[341] Laffineur 2001: 388.

continuous cult practice, and d. votive figures or offerings representing either the deity or the human[342].

Kilian and Mylonas, followed by Albers and Demakopoulou, pointed to a specific function and use of terracotta figures and assumed that they were carried around in ritual processions, either in hands or on wooden sticks, as indicated by the impression of what appears to be a wooden stick on the inside of a figure found close to the Cult Centre at Mycenae[343].

In a fresco fragment from the South House in the Cult Centre at Mycenae a pair of female hands is depicted holding a diminutive female figure **(fig. 59a)**[344]. Based on artistic similarities, Mylonas and Kritseli-Providi connected the scene with another fragment depicting a foot on a stool, and interpreted the whole as a seated goddess holding a votive offering[345]. Immerwahr prefers to consider this element as the facsimile of an actual female person, perhaps conveying the idea of a child dedication[346]. Another fresco fragment from Tiryns illustrates a life-size female procession, a member of which holds what appears to be a terracotta figure[347] **(fig. 59b)**.

Boulotis, who studied the Tiryns fragment in detail, has concluded that it depicts a terracotta idol being carried along with a long piece of cloth by a high priestess in the course of a ceremonial procession[348]. Undoubtedly,

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[342] Renfrew 1985: 22-23.
[343] Kilian 1981b: 54-58; Mylonas 1983: 145; Albers 1994: 136-137 (who pointed to the impression of the wooden stick on the inside of a Mycenae figure); Demakopoulou 1999: 203.
[344] Kritseli-Providi 1982: 41-42, pl. 6.
[345] Mylonas 1981:319; Kritseli-Providi 1982: 42-43.
[346] Immerwahr 1990: 119.
[347] Boulotis 1979: 59-67.
[348] Boulotis 1979: 59-67, esp. 63. The role of cloth in cult has been recently explored by Nosch and Perna (2001).

both fragments depict a sequence of interconnected ceremonial events, i.e. the processional carrying of a terracotta figure and its offering/dedication to the deity or her priestess in a shrine.

The Linear B term *te-o-po-ri-ja,* possibly a foreshadower of the classical *θεοφορία (theophoria),* i.e. the carrying of a god image or a *xoanon* in religious ceremonies, is recorded in two tablets from Knossos, KN Ga 1058 and Od 696 (+ KN L 698)[349]. Interestingly, the term appears together with wool (*145 in Ga 1058) and textile products (*pe-ko-to* and *164 in L 698). Judging by the written and artistic documentation of the practice, Hiller associated the offering of wool and textiles with the ceremonial transference of the cult image to the shrine, a pattern also observed in classical cultic acts[350].

Surprisingly, a female procession is illustrated on a larnax from the cemetery at Tanagra, the *exarchos* depicted carrying what seems to be a large monochrome figure on her left hand, whereas with the right one she waves to the other members of the procession **(fig. 60)**[351]. Spyropoulos has suggested that the diminutive figure is presented dressed in actual clothes according to the Mycenaean tradition and interpreted it as a *palladion* held aloft by a priestess, who is inciting the mourning procession to plead with the goddess to take pity on the dead[352]. Cavanagh and Mee noticed that both the priestess' hands are extended towards the procession, therefore,

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[349] Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 315, 585; Hiller 1984: 139.
[350] Hiller 1984: 144, 149. See also his comments in the discussion in *SCABA*: 126.
[351] Spyropoulos 1974: 12-13. Although one could not be sure as to whether the monochrome attribution of the figure is deliberate or not, it is tempting though to associate it with the monochrome figures with the forbidding expression from the Cult Centre at Mycenae.

the *palladion*, an artistic metaphor of divine epiphany, must be standing above or behind the priestess, perched on a ledge or placed on a bench or platform[353]; alternatively, it could represent the deceased, present in spirit at the religious act[354].

Corroborating is the discovery of a large wheel-made female figure in tomb 40 at Mycenae **(fig. 61)**[355]. Although its hands are missing, they must have been raised, thus presenting similarities with the figure on the Tanagra larnax. The large size of the religious icon from Tanagra and that from Mycenae and their similarities with corresponding ones from cult places supports their classification to the type of wheel-made figures found in sacred places of Mycenaean date. It is worth noting the Mycenae figure was not associated with any burials since the tomb was found clear of skeletal remains and only a small number of vases, glass jewellery and figurines was uncovered[356].

Nevertheless, the large figure from the tomb and, most importantly, the larnax depiction -a unique instance in the iconography of death-, leave no doubt as regards the performance of festivals in honour of the dead, during which *theophoria* was also practiced. Applying Renfrew's indicators, the large terracotta figure would have played the role of an attention-focusing device required by all general aspects of religious activity. The spiritual presence of the chthonic deities, if not of the dead themselves, may have

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[352] Spyropoulos 1974: 13.
[353] Cavanagh and Mee 1995: 46-47.
[354] Cavanagh and Mee 1995: 46-47.
[355] Tsountas 1888: 169, pl. 9 (15); Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 114 (Π 2494), pl. 28.
[356] Tsountas 1888: 150; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 113.

been reflected in the use of this ritualistic symbol. Moreover, if the figure on the larnax is indeed of the wheel-made type, then it is illustrative of the concurrent use of religious symbols of the popular and official level, at least in occasions of communal feasting, like the performance of funerary cult.

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF DEATH: LEARNING ABOUT DEATH AND AFTERLIFE IN LATE HELLADIC TIMES

An enormous amount of scholarly work has placed emphasis on the early treatment of the dead in order to throw light on the origins of symbolism, ritual and religion. Many scholars have seen in the provision of grave furnishings the evidence for the concept of an afterlife or even of the concept of the soul[357]. Certainly, 'the body represents our primary and most fundamental source of contact with death. In a sense, the only portrait of death which we have is that which is inscribed on the livid corpse. The corpse is therefore not merely an object over which people vent their emotions but also one which is utilized to convey a representation of death and the hereafter'[358].

The way humans deal with the corpse reveals a great deal about human behaviour and their engagement with the material and spiritual world. The awareness of death and the feeling of being towards death provide the

[357] Vermeule 1979: 56; Parker Pearson 1999: 147.
[358] Prior 1989: 21.

context of human action[359]. Likewise, the symbols of death reveal the meaning of life and those of life define what death must be[360].

The symbolic value of Mycenaean funerary art has been crystallised in the decoration of funerary monuments, the depictions on clay sarcophagi or the deposition of carefully selected items with the dead. Up to the present, interpretations put forward for the survival of the soul after death have been to a significant degree influenced by the later literary tradition, viz. Homeric and classical texts. Additionally, the Egyptian and Minoan influence in the formation of certain ideas has been stressed and it should not be overlooked, principally due to the evidence for frequent commercial contacts and cultural exchanges between the Mycenaean mainland, Crete and Egypt during the Shaft Grave period onwards. However, for lack of a complete corpus of multi-cultured funerary scenes, it would be wise to be cautious of general conclusions and extrapolations.

A thorough examination of the funerary repertoire appears to indicate that for the Mycenaeans the passage from life into death and beyond was not the abrupt transition between two extremes but rather death was considered as a stage in the continuation of human existence. Funerary iconography was employed by the Mycenaeans as a language through which they attempted to achieve a link with the distant and remote land of their ancestors and to modify their response to death via a system of associations and metaphors. No doubt, the material from Early Mycenaean funerary contexts and, in particular the evidence from GCA, has attracted intense

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[359] Parker Pearson 1999: 142.
[360] Warner 1959: 320.

debate and discussion as regards its symbolic value, considered either as eschatological references or as insignia of status and power.

In 1965 Vermeule pointed to the existence of a new class of objects in the art market, products of illicit trade, namely a number of clay larnakes. Her thorough study of only a restricted number of examples was followed by the discovery of the celebrated larnakes at the Mycenaean cemetery of Tanagra. Since 1968, when the excavations at Tanagra began, Spyropoulos unearthed a unique group of clay sarcophagi whose depictions elucidated in the most remarkable way the *νεκρικά θέσμια* of the Mycenaean world. For the first time, since the 19th century when the first Mycenaean tombs were excavated, the actual remains of past funerary rites found their visual expression in the depictions of these unique monuments.

Most importantly, the decoration of funerary monuments with eschatological (winged creatures, mythological creatures, means of transport to the underworld, otherworldly visions) and religious scenes (processions of male and female religious officials, sacred pillars, festive scenes) as well as the actual deposition of sacred insignia and symbolic items with the dead highlight the intention of the Mycenaean people to express their eschatological beliefs and their need to present in the artistic repertoire the religious practices connected with funerary cult.

CHAPTER IV

Mycenaean Funerary Landscapes, Tomb Design and Symbolism

... to lead me captive to the house of darkness...,
...to the house which none who enters ever leaves,
on the path that allows no journey back,
to the house whose residents are deprived of light...[1]

INTRODUCTION

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. Yet, the incorporation of funerary locales in natural and man-created landscapes reflects the conscious and carefully thought-out activity by which the ancestors are placed within human biographies and socio-political geographies and by which religious and eschatological perceptions are materialised, cemented and, occasionally, forged.

Similarly, the amount of energy and expenditure invested in the construction and decoration of tombs reflects the religious beliefs as well as the socio-political/economic status -actual or desired- of the deceased and of the living community. Every single feature of the tomb bore

[1] *Gilgamesh* VII 184-7 (after *The Epic of Gilgamesh. The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian,* translated and with an introduction by Andrew George). Penguin Books, 1999.

symbolic connotations inextricably linked to the belief for continuation of an earthly existence in another dimension also to the need of the living to communicate with the dead.

This chapter combines three broad themes, namely cemetery location, tomb architecture and eschatological symbolism. More specifically, the questions addressed are: Can the relationship between the Mycenaean living and the dead be explored archaeologically via the investigation of their spatial and topographic separation? Can the choice in placing the dead reveal the ways by which death was incorporated into Mycenaean cosmologies and religious practices? How might one investigate the physical or symbolic barriers placed to separate and protect the living from the dead?

Answers are sought in the investigation of the location of Mycenaean tombs and their incorporation into the natural and man-created landscapes of LH III mainland, and in the exploration of the ritual and symbolic character of Mycenaean tomb design, with special reference to the tripartite plan of the typical tholos and chamber tombs, their fresco decoration and fixed structures of ritualistic nature. Since the focal point of this thesis is the religious aspect of ancestor veneration, comparisons with the Mycenaean sacred architecture seem inevitable and requisite.

THE LOCATION OF MYCENAEAN FUNERARY LANDSCAPES VIS-À-VIS THE SETTLEMENT

In archaeological terms, the understanding of past funerary activities and beliefs can be explored on the basis of the relationship between cemetery and natural landscape and the incorporation of funerary locales into man-created settings of socio-political and/or religious character. Since classical antiquity cemeteries were consistently placed outside settlement areas, a pattern observed until late Roman times[2]. With *The Hour of our Death* Ariès has ascertained how modern attitudes towards death and decomposition have influenced proximity and distance between settlements and cemeteries in Western Europe and America since the 18th century AD[3]. Although modern Greek legislation delimits the location of cemeteries to a distance of 250 metres from city boundaries and 100 metres from isolated houses, it seems to be the norm in several villages that the houses of the living are located in immediate proximity to the dwellings of the dead **(fig. 62)**[4].

Turning to LH mainland, in Early Mycenaean times a trend is apparent towards the creation of cemeteries outside habitation areas, as contrasted with the common practice of intramural inhumation in pit and cist graves during MH times. Dietz attributed this pattern to changes in religious customs and Wright understood it as an outward expression and display of the growing complexity of the Mycenaean socio-political organisation[5].

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[2] Kurtz and Boardman 1971: 70.
[3] Ariès 1981.
[4] Panourgia 1995: 192 note 2; Seremetakis 1991: 159-161.
[5] Dietz 1991: 275-276, 293; Wright 1987.

In *Chapter II* it has been demonstrated how the placement of monumental tombs as territorial markers, the juxtaposition of funerary, sacred and secular geographies and the manipulation of religious practices through the combination of ritual, architecture and tradition were exploited in LH IIIB Mycenae with the aim to serve as a constant reminder of the link between politics, the living élites, the ancestors and the divine.

Scholars have also observed that the location of Mycenaean tombs was to a certain degree determined by geographical and geological conditions, viz. the local topography, the angle of the hillside employed for tomb construction, the quality of the bedrock, factors of erosion and preservation[6]. Cavanagh and Mee considered the proximity between LH III cemeteries and their Early Mycenaean predecessors to be significant in terms of traditional patterns[7]. In a thorough examination of the data they questioned arguments related to the symbolic relationship between location, proximity and orientation of cemeteries *vis-à-vis* their associated settlements, the placement of tombs beside or along roads and the use of cemeteries and/or single tombs as territorial and land markers[8].

The objective of this section is to examine whether eschatological tenets and ritual practices dictated the spatial positioning of Mycenaean cemeteries in relation to settlements.

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[6] Wells 1990: 127; Cavanagh and Mee 1990: 55; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 42.
[7] Mee and Cavanagh 1990: 227ff., 242.
[8] Cavanagh and Mee 1990; Mee and Cavanagh 1990.

Cemetery orientation and symbolism[9]

The symbolic implications of cemetery location and orientation were originally discussed by Persson who argued that the Mycenaean cemeteries were localised west of the settlements so that the living would not be troubled by the spirits of the dead in their journey to and from Hades[10]. The same orientation and location pattern was adopted for the cemeteries of Prosymna, Mycenae and Zygouries. *À propos* the location and orientation of the tombs at Prosymna, van Leuven detected a correlation with religious factors including solar worship; '*within each group, particular tomb locations were determined primarily by choosing the terrain that would permit a desired orientation, towards the sun at certain times of the year and day, in accordance with solar characteristics of the funerary cult*'[11].

On the other hand, instances of inconsistent orientation and location observed in several cemeteries of the Argolid and Korinthia, e.g. Tiryns, Berbati, Asine, Schoinochori, Lerna, Kokla, Argos, Nauplion and Moulki, override Persson's rule[12]. Similarly, no fixed pattern of cemetery orientation and location is registered in the record of LH III Attic cemeteries[13].

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[9] Part of this section has been discussed in a joint paper with the title '*The cemeteries of the Argolid and the South-eastern Aegean in the Mycenaean period: a landscape assessment*', presented by the author of this thesis and M. Georgiadis in the *8th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists, Thessaloniki, 23-29 September 2002.*

[10] Persson 1942a: 152-153.

[11] Van Leuven (1975: 204). This suggestion was also shared by Goodison 1989: 85.

[12] See also Cavanagh and Mee 1990: 55 and Mee and Cavanagh 1990: 227.

[13] The bibliographical references for the cemeteries of Attica, Boeotia and Euboea are cited in the *Site Catalogue* in *Chapter I.*

More analytically, the Mycenaean necropolis of the Agora is situated to the northwest of the Athenian Acropolis, the West Cemetery at Eleusis 750m north-west of its associated acropolis and the Menidi tholos 1500m west-northwest of the Nemesis settlement. The chamber tombs at Brauron are located 200m east of the acropolis, whereas some of the Spata tombs were cut into the south-western foot of the hill of Magoula, where the LH settlement was most probably situated. The Marathon tholos tomb was placed ca. 1000m to the south-east of the acropolis at Agriliki.

Chamber tomb cemeteries were in use on all sides of the Kadmeia in Thebes, and in particular to the east and south. Mycenaean tombs have been unearthed on the south side of Thisbe and to the north-west near Palaiokastro. A cemetery and a settlement of EH and LH IIIB date were positioned ca. 1000m to the north-west of the Dramesi 'tholos'. On the north side of Mikro Vathi Bay where a settlement has been unearthed, some chamber tombs were located. In 1975 remains of Mycenaean buildings were associated with the Tanagran necropolises to the east, whereas just north of the Kallithea cemetery an extensive LH settlement is situated on a hill at Eleon (Dritsa).

The settlement remains, albeit sparse, uncovered near the gulf of Haghios Stephanos, at the foot of Vathrovouni and in the Kaki Kephali promontory provide substantial evidence as regards the diverse orientation of the cemeteries at Chalkis. Similarly, the chamber tomb cemetery at Aliveri: Livadhi is situated to the south of the Magoula settlement, whereas the tholos at Bellousia ca. 2000m to the north-east of Lepoura, where remains

of the nearest known LH habitation area have survived. *À propos* the necropolises of the Oxylithos valley, the tombs at Evrima are situated at a distance of ca. 1000m east-northeast from the settlement on the Palaiokastro hill.

Nevertheless, the uneven ratio of excavated cemeteries and settlements renders the understanding of cemetery-settlement relation extremely difficult. At this point, it is worth citing Cavanagh and Mee's observation that the placement and orientation of several cemeteries might have also been the result of practical necessity, e.g. Nauplia and Athenian Agora[14]. Interestingly, inconsistent orientation is also noted in the choice of location for Mycenaean sacred buildings and statements associating their alignment with the topographical conditions of the associated landscape have been put forward[15].

In conclusion, the spatial analysis of the regions under consideration suggests that there seems to be *no* fixed compass reading linked to a *commonly* shared Mycenaean belief, viz. that certain points of the compass were not regarded as particularly significant for the *post mortem* welfare of the departed. Such an observation is further supported by contemporary artistic accounts of the journey of the dead to the underworld. The boats on the Dramesi pillar, the ship on the larnax from Switzerland and the chariot on the Episkopi sarcophagus appear to follow a left-to-right direction. Similarly, the male procession with the bovid models and the ship on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus moves towards the right in order to meet the

[14] Mee and Cavanagh 1990: 242; Immerwahr 1971: 98.
[15] Whittaker 1997: 23.

deceased, whereas the chariots on the short sides follow the opposite direction. On the other hand, the ship on the larnakes from Tanagra and Gazi and the chariot on the Zafer Papoura sarcophagus proceed towards the left.

Diversity is also noted in the flying movement of the artistic renditions identified as souls. The creature on the Kassel larnax flutters towards the right looking over her left shoulder, a movement also shared by the right figure on the Tanagra sarcophagus. Conversely, the other two figures on the Tanagra larnax, i.e. the left one on the long side and the one on the short end, move towards the left. Similarly, the floating diminutive creatures on the fresco from Room 31 at Mycenae proceed from right to left. Thus, the artistic repertoire seems to support the results of the spatial analysis, suggesting that the orientation of cemeteries *vis-à-vis* the world of the living was not a fixed matter in Mycenaean eschatology. The choice of placing the dead was dependent on the beliefs of the individual communities, rather than part of a Mycenaean eschatological *koine*.

On the other hand, the study of the placement of LH III cemeteries suggests that the location of Mycenaean necropolises was to a certain degree determined by the local topography, and in particular rivers, streams and sources of water, natural elements that might have been transformed in the minds of Mycenaean people into symbolic barriers between life and death. Moreover, the requirements of (post)liminal ritual would have determined to a considerable extent the proximity and distance of cemeteries, settlements and water sources.

The symbolic significance of life-giving water in Mycenaean death

In search of the necropolis of Mycenaean Nemea and after a thorough examination of the Argolic and Korinthian funerary data, Dabney proposed that the location of LH cemeteries was to a certain degree dictated by hydrological conditions, and concluded that a source of water near the cemetery would have served the needs of Mycenaean funerary ritual and post-funerary cleansing[16].

À propos the connection between cemetery location and hydrological conditions, worth citing is, *exempli gratia*, the case of the Kalkani cemetery whose burial clusters were positioned and orientated towards the bank of a ravine and a rich water source, while the tombs excavated by Tsountas were located in the banks of the stream beds of Kokoretsa, Asprochoma, Agriosykia and 'Eliais'. The location of the Mycenaean cemeteries at Prosymna and Vraserka was associated with the stream identified as the *Ἐλευθέριον ὕδωρ* by Pausanias. Similarly, the rivers Inachos and Charadros would have dictated the positioning of the cemeteries of the valley around Argos, as in the case of Schoinochori. At Dendra a ravine separated the settlement from the necropolis.

Hydrological conditions would have determined the positioning and orientation of Attic, Boeotian and Euboaen cemeteries. For example, part of the Athenian Agora cemetery sloped towards the Eridanos, a stream was associated with the necropolis at Kopreza, whereas coastal formations would have dictated the placement of several necropolises as in the case of

[16] Dabney 1999: 171-175.

Brauron. The association of the cemetery at Alyki with water is proved not only by its proximity to the sea but also by the name of the area itself, *αλυκαί* standing for coastal marshes. It is noteworthy that the clusters of chamber tombs at Thebes are associated with Chryssorrhoas, Ismenos and the stream of Dirki.

Dabney attributed the increase in population and population density during Mycenaean times to the fact that the location of cemeteries at a distance from the settlements prevented the spread of epidemics linked to contamination from the dead[17]. Her discussion of a link between Mycenaean cemeteries and water sources is appealing; however, her interpretation on the level of contamination may be validated only in the case of the cemeteries located to a distance (>500m) from the settlement, but not of those located closer to habitation areas (≤500m), e.g. Asine, Kokla, Argos, Brauron, Thebes. Elements of Mycenaean funerary art, epigraphical testimonies and the archaeological evidence are also suggestive of the key-role held by water in ancestral ceremonies and of its highly symbolic value *à propos* the human passage from life into death and the afterlife fate of the departed.

Water is as significant to life as it is to death in ancient and modern Greece. Water and wine are used to clean the corpse before burial or the bones after exhumation (*ανακομιδή*). Everyone who has come in contact with the departed has to cleanse the stigma of death with water outside the church or the house of the deceased. Fresh flowing water is a powerful symbol in

[17] Dabney 1999: 175.

Greek lament songs (*μοιρολόγια*). The afterworld is associated with thirst. dryness and heat and the dead (*οι πεθαμένοι*) are synonymous with the thirsty ones (*οι διψασμένοι*) depending on their living relatives to quench the thirst of their souls with fresh water[18]. The dead cross 'the river' in order to reach Hades and coins are symbolically placed in the coffins as 'Charon's fee'[19].

The significance of water, and especially the sea, as a barrier between the sphere of the living and the world of the dead in Mycenaean times has been established in *Chapter III*. In connection to the survival of this tradition into later times, the symbolic presence of boats in Iron Age funerary contexts should be stressed[20]. The journey to the Land of the Blessed over the Ocean is predominant in the Homeric poems, as is the idea of Charon ferrying the dead over the Styx.

Vermeule noticed that the dead were given more drink than food and attributed the popularity of the pilgrim flask in Mycenaean burials to the 'ultimately eastern nervousness about the consequences of losing the liquids of life'[21]. The deposition of vessels associated with the storage, pouring and serving of water, e.g. *hydriai*, rhyta, cups, jugs and ewers, in funerary contexts is also suggestive of the performance of ceremonial acts in which the use of water, along with other liquids, was essential.

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[18] See, *exempli gratia*, Trypanis 1951: 110.
[19] Modern Greek funerary attitudes have been discussed by Alexiou (1974), Politis (1978) and Danforth (1982). Valuable information on 'the thirst of the dead' from prehistoric to early Christian times is cited in Deonna (1939: 53-77).
[20] A boat model was deposited with the dead in Tomb X at Fortetsa near Knossos (Brock 1957: pl. 36 No 542i).
[21] Vermeule 1979: 57-58.

Appealing is the Homeric reference to Odysseus's triple libation of honey mixed with milk, wine and water to the dead[22]

The use of water in death rituals is emphasised on both long sides of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus. On the left panel of side A two priestesses followed by a harpist are depicted performing a libation ritual with the employment of three buckets signifying most probably a triple libation **(fig. 31)**. Laffineur has identified the scene as a portrayal of the Homeric triple libation formula and, therefore, as part of a rite of necromancy[23]. The same scholar associated the offering of a boat model to the dead on the right panel as a symbolic reference to water[24].

The right panel of side B illustrates a priestess, followed by a musician playing the flutes, performing a rite in front of an altar on top of which an ewer forms the focal point of ritual action **(fig. 63)**. The co-depiction of ewers and tree branches is evocative of the ivory or glass plaques found in Mycenaean burial contexts illustrating single Minoan Genii or pairs standing before or on either side of palm trees and pouring libations[25].

The Mycenaean belief that the dead faced thirst and dryness in the underworld could be supported by the name of a class of deities whose name *Dipsioi* (=the *Thirsty Ones*) and an associated festival (*dipisijewijo*) appear in a number of Linear B documents recording the offering of olive

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[22] *Od. κ.* 518-520; *λ.* 27-28.
[23] Laffineur 1991a: 277-285.
[24] Laffineur 1991a: 280.
[25] The symbolism of palm tress and Genii has been discussed in *Chapter IIII.*

oil at Pylos[26]. Guthrie's proposal that the mention could refer to the thirsty dead has raised debate among scholarly circles[27]. Nevertheless, as shall be demonstrated in *Chapter V*, this entry -if associated with other Linear B mentions for the dead, e.g. *dopota* and *tiriseroe,* and with elements from Mycenaean sacred contexts- could elucidate key aspects of the function and ritual performance of Mycenaean funerary cult.

The need of water for the performance of burial and post-funerary ritual is given in all cultures[28]. In the case of Mycenaean funerary cult, water was essential for the practice of libations, sacrifices and feasting. The purification of the tomb after secondary burial treatment, the ritual cleansing of the skeletal remains after their removal from the tomb and the ritual cleansing of the mourners from the taint of death would require the existence of a source of water not far from the cemetery.

The establishment of Mycenaean funerary locales near valleys, rivers, streams and water sources, elements inextricably linked to fertility, rebirth and the continuation of life, may be indicative of the desire of the living community to attract the benevolence and protection of the ancestors. Finally, it is tempting, albeit speculative, to suggest that crossing a river or a stream in order to visit the tomb might have borne symbolic and eschatological connotations for the living with respect the placement of symbolic barriers between the world of the living and the sphere of the

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[26] Palmer 1963: 242-245; Gérard-Rousseau 1968: 61-62; Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 540.
[27] Guthrie 1959: 45-46.
[28] The importance of liquids in Mycenaean post-funerary rites is discussed in *Chapter V*. Thus, only a brief account of what is thoroughly discussed in *Chapter V* is reiterated here.

dead, as well as the incorporation of the dead in the sphere of the ancestors in the context of customary rites of passage.

THE ABODES OF THE DEAD: TOMB DESIGN, RITUAL AND SYMBOLISM

In his analysis of ritual indicators, Renfrew stressed the requirement of a boundary zone between this world and the next as the focus of ritual activity[29]. In general terms, any cult building can be considered part of the liminal zone that separates and, at the same time, unites the natural and the supernatural. By entering a place set apart for cult one expects to contact the divine and benefit of its blessing. Cult buildings are intended to fulfil two main functions; to shelter the deity worshipped therein –either permanently in the form of a cult image, or during divine epiphanies-, and to provide a special *locus* for congregational worship by means of a specialised and purpose-built structure equipped with the appropriate facilities for the performance of religious ritual.

Houses for the gods in Mycenaean Greece

The exploration of LH sacred art suggests that the Mycenaeans housed their deities in specially reserved buildings from the Shaft Grave period onwards and valuable information on the elaborate construction of tripartite shrines can be obtained by the golden models discovered in Shaft Graves

[29] Renfrew 1985: 18-19; Renfrew 1994b: 51.

III and V of Grave Circle A at Mycenae[30]. Epigraphically, sanctuaries were probably recorded under the mention *wo-ko* (=*οἶκος*, house) in Theban and Knossian Linear B documents, possibly an indication of their similarities with contemporary domestic edifices[31]

TH Of 36]no-ri-wo-ki-de ku LANA 1 a-ke-ti-ra$_2$ wa-na-ka[
po-ti-ni-ja, **wo-ko-de**, a-ke-ti-ra$_2$ ku LANA 1

KN As 1519 [.]-ri-ne-wo, **wo-i-ko-de**,
to-so VIR 10

Architectural remains of Mycenaean sacred buildings have been excavated up to present at Mycenae (the *Cult Centre*), Tiryns (Rooms 119, 117, 110 and 110a in the Unterburg), Pylos (Room 93), Methana, Asine (Room XXXII in House G), Phylakopi and Kea[32]. Representations of shrines on the minor arts, e.g. the rings from Mycenae **(fig. 64)**, Dendra, Volos, Aidonia, Berlin and Thebes[33], and on wall paintings from Mycenae and Pylos[34], complement to a significant degree the archaeological understanding of their construction mode and their original appearance. Interesting is a LH IIIA1 fragmentary terracotta model from Menelaion at Sparta, which has been identified as a sanctuary[35].

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[30] Karo 1930-33: pl. XVIII (nos 242-244) and pl. XXVII (no 26).
[31] Ventris and Chadwick 1973^2: 592; Spyropoulos and Chadwick 1975: 88-89; Hiller 1981: 98-103; *TITHEMY*: 37.
[32] Whittaker 1997: 163-183, where she cites the available bibliographical references; Moore and Taylour 1999; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 1995; *eadem* 2001b.
[33] *CMS* I: nos 86, 108, 191, 199; CMS V (1B): nos 114, 113; *CMS* V(2): no 728; Mylonas 1977: 10-12; Kaza-Papageorgiou 1998: 49-50, 93-94.
[34] Lang 1969: 139-140, pls. 77, 78; Immerwahr 1990: 191, 198; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996: 63 (no 74a), 71 (no 104).
[35] Catling 1989. For objections, see Whittaker 1997: 24.

In spite of the *common* religious function of Mycenaean cult buildings, architecturally they are differentiated in terms of their size, the alignment of their entrance, the proportions of the central room and the existence or not of subsidiary rooms. Although on present evidence their purpose cannot be determined, Whittaker has questioned the primary use of the anterooms of the central rooms of the sanctuaries at Mycenae (the Temple and the Room with the Fresco) and Phylakopi as storerooms and maintained their use as secondary cult rooms[36].

A consistent feature of Mycenaean sacred architecture is the presence of a platform or a number of platforms against the wall opposite the main entrance. The presence of stone-built benches, covered with clay or plaster, in the sanctuaries at Mycenae (the Temple, Tsountas' House Shrine and the Room with the Fresco[37]), Tiryns (Rooms 110, 110a and 117), Phylakopi (East and West Shrines) and Methana, and their association with objects of ritualistic nature (figurines, tables of offerings, beads, miniature vessels, rhyta, kylikes) classify them as attention-focusing ritual devices **(fig. 65)**[38].

The 'holy triad' of Mycenaean funerary architecture: dromos, stomion and chamber

By investigating the limitations of what prehistorians may hope to discover behind prehistoric megalithic monuments, Chris Scarre has argued that all

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[36] Whittaker 1997: 21-22, 75.
[37] The bench in the Room with the Fresco at Mycenae was plastered and decorated (Marinatos 1988: 245-246).
[38] Whittaker 1997: 18ff; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 213, 216-217.

three stages of development –from tomb as house to tomb as status indicator, to tomb as religious statement- can be accessible to archaeological analysis without the aid of written sources[39]. The study of Mycenaean tholos and chamber tomb types suggests that their choice and use as the eternal dwellings of the dead was not determined merely by functional practicality but rather dictated by the belief in the *post mortem* survival of the soul and by the requirements of religious performance in honour of the ancestors.

Consequently, the objective of this section is to investigate the reading of the tripartite plan of the typical Mycenaean tombs, viz. the tholos and chamber tomb types[40], as the boundary zone between the terrestrial and subterrestrial worlds and as places of contact between the spheres of the sacred and the profane. Since the discussion of the Mycenaean tombs' tripartite division will be based on the stages of funerary ritual and as a matter of convenience, it is useful to provide a brief account of the issues of *liminality*, rites of passage and their connection to funerary ritual.

Liminality, rites of passage and the sanctity of funerary ritual: a brief account

Van Gennep's universalistic theory of the *Rites of Passage*, originally published in 1909, and Hertz's contribution to the collective representation of death, introduced *liminality* and *transition* into social anthropology[41].

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[39] Scarre 1994.
[40] A similar pattern is followed in the design of a typical shaft grave with its roof, shaft and burial chamber.
[41] Van Gennep 1960; Hertz 1907.

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'[42]. In particular, Hertz focused on the parallel transitional stages, transformations, readjustment and redefinition experienced by mourners, corpse and soul, and suggested that the passage of the soul as a homology or model of the passage of the soul might be an invariable universal, a supposition questioned by Parker Pearson[43].

Arnold van Gennep investigated the ritual activities marking the individual's life cycle (pregnancy, childbirth, initiation, marriage and death) and set a tripartite structure of transition from one social condition to another, viz. *preliminal rites* or *rites of separation*, *liminal or threshold rites* (rites of marginality/transition) and *post-liminal rites* (ceremonies of incorporation/re-aggregation)[44]

death	ONE DISTINCTION	marriage
alive/dead	TWO CATEGORIES	single/married
alive→dying→dead	THREE STAGES	single→engaged→married

Schema of van Gennep's rites of passage (Source: Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 30, fig. I)

Van Gennep emphasised the importance attached to the transformative power in these rites, a power often referred to as *liminality*, a derivative of the latin word *limen* (=threshold), an indication of 'the status of the transition stage as outside the normal constraints of human time and space,

[42] Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 111.
[43] Hertz 1960: 78-79; Parker Pearson 1999: 22.
[44] Van Gennep 1960: 10-11. The *liminality* theory was later discussed and elaborated by Turner (1969), Leach (1976), Huntington and Metcalf 1991 (with objections, especially pp. 108ff.).

and as a different set of conditions that are both more powerful and dangerous'[45]. 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'[46].

Interestingly, the variability of rites surrounding death seems to contrast with the seemingly universality of Van Gennep's tripartite system of rites of passage[47]. Leach argued that 'in the case of mortuary ritual it is often a dogma that death is only a gateway to future life'[48]. According to Murphy, 'the basic function of funerary ritual is a rite of passage between life and death'[49]. 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'[50].

In mortuary terms, the *rites of separation* entail the detachment of the dead from the settlement and their placement in a formal disposal area that acts as a liminal zone. Purification, banqueting and drinking ceremonies may accompany this act. During the *liminal or transition stage* the deceased moves 'betwixt and between' the world of the living and the plane of ancestors, whereas the mourning period continues in the living community. By the end of this stage and the beginning of the re-aggregation phase

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[45] Cunningham 1999: 59.
[46] Turner 1967: 94; Leach 1976: 33-36, 77-79, fig. 8.; Parker Pearson 1993: 204.
[47] Van Gennep 1960: 146-165; Branigan 1993: 120-121; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 105; Murphy 1998: 32ff.; Parker Pearson 1999: 22.
[48] Leach 1976: 79.
[49] Murphy 1998: 32.

(*post-liminal rites*), 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.

The symbolic function of the tombs' dromos

Apart from its general functional practicality, in ritual terms the *dromos* of a typical Mycenaean tomb could be taken to signal the first stage in the symbolic passage from life to death and the incorporation of the departed into the realm of the ancestors. It has been established in *Chapter II* that public participation in ancestral ceremonies in the Atreus Treasury and the Tomb of Clytemnestra would have been possible as indicated by the white-stuccoed floor of the *dromoi* and the presence of an open area before the monuments.

Inferences for the performance of ritual acts in honour of the sacred dead in the *dromos* can be drawn from certain structural elements, namely pits, cists and niches, and the presence of potsherds, vessels and jewellery, animal bones, remains of secondary burials as well as traces of ritual feasting in the fill of the *dromoi*, as shall be thoroughly discussed in *Chapter V*. Moreover, on several occasions excavators have noted the care taken for the careful formation of the *dromos* as contrasted to the careless construction of the burial chamber, e.g. the tombs at Tanagra[51].

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[50] Tambiah 1979: 121; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 106.
[51] Spyropoulos 1969a: 7; *idem* 1970a: 31.

The dual character of niches and pits in the *dromoi*, i.e. for burials or for the deposition of bones in the context of secondary rites, led Nilsson to argue that all cases should be considered individually and to conclude that they were closely connected with funerary cult[52]. Conversely, Mylonas argued that the contents of the niches prove that they could not have been used for cult purposes[53]. Lewartowski has reckoned that in more than 135 chamber tombs primary burials and *disiecta membra* have been deposited in pits and niches cut into the floor and the walls of the *dromos* in close proximity to the *stomion*, the vast concentration of the cases being attested in Attic and Argolic cemeteries[54].

Pits cut into the floor of the *dromos* of a number of chamber tombs at Mycenae (505, 514, 519, 527 and 530), Panaghia (I), Prosymna (I, IV, XI, XIII, XIV, XXXIX and XXXIX) and Tiryns (XIX) had received the skeletal remains and the offerings during the religious performance of secondary treatment **(fig. 66a)**[55]. *Disiecta membra* and offerings have also been discovered in rock-cut niches in the passageways of chamber tombs at Deiras (XXXVI*bis*), Asine (I:2, I:3, I:4), Mycenae (505), Panaghia (I), Prosymna (VI, XXXIX, XXXVII), Nauplion, Alyki 2 and Tanagra (98, 117?, 127, 136 and 137)[56]. Pits and niches have also been reported from

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[52] Nilsson 1950[2]: 587-589.
[53] Mylonas 1966: 179.
[54] Lewartowski 1996: 749, 762-763. Unfortunately, in most interim reports of the excavated tombs, the evidence from pits and niches uncovered in the dromoi is omitted or overlooked. Nevertheless, the number of examples will rise dramatically after the final publication of the excavation results.
[55] *Mycenae*: Wace 1921-23b: 368ff; *idem* 1932: 12, 14, 49, 68, 87, 94-95, 106-107, 226; *Panaghia*: Mylonas 1972: 115; *Prosymna*: Blegen 1937: 70, 131-132, 154-155, 167, 191, 193, 201, 218, 235; *Tiryns*: Rudolph 1973: 81, 88.
[56] *Deiras*: Deshayes 1966: 111; *Asine*: Frödin and Persson 1938: 167, 169, 172-175, 356; *Mycenae*: Wace 1932: 12, 14; *Panaghia*: Shelton 2000: 53; *Prosymna*: 124, 154-155; *Nauplia*: Kondakis 1878: 186; *ArchDelt.* 28 (1973) 91; *Alyki*: Papadimitriou 1954: 77;

the Mycenaean cemetery at Aidonia[57]; however, no additional information exists as to their function and use.

The niches in the *dromoi* of Asine tomb I:5, Mycenae tomb 529 and Palamidi (Nauplion) tomb 4 have attracted the interest of archaeologists **(fig. 66b)**[58]. On matters of detail, the examples from Asine and Mycenae were carelessly constructed near the entrance to the tomb and were closed with rubble packing and a slab respectively. The Asine niche was filled with blackish earth, calcinated animal bones, a clay figurine in the shape of a cow's head and pottery. The recess at the tomb of Nauplion was constructed in the outer end of the *dromos*, contained bones and pottery fragments and was not sealed. The niche at Mycenae contained nothing but soft friable earth.

Nilsson related them to the Mycenaean cult of the dead and suggested that they may have received funerary offerings made by later members of the family[59]. Based on the evidence from Mycenae (tomb 505) and Prosymna (tombs VI, XXX and XXXVII), Wace concluded that these niches would have served as child burials, whose skeletons were apt to decay completely[60], a suggestion partly accepted by Mylonas who interpreted them either as ossuaries (*οστεοθηκαι*) or as burial niches[61].

Tanagra: Spyropoulos 1976a: 62; *idem* 1979a: 30; *idem* 1979b: 6; *idem* 1982: 112-113; *idem* 1984: 143-144.

[57] Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 23.

[58] Frödin and Persson 1938: 175, 178-179; Wace 1932: 99; Lolling 1880: 162.

[59] Nilsson 1950[2]: 587-588.

[60] Wace 1932: 128-129.

[61] Mylonas 1951a: 88.

The excavators of the Asine necropolis maintained that the position of the niche in tomb I:5 and its finds point to the remains of a sacrifice in honour of those buried in the chamber, as in the case of tomb I:4[62]. However, since the pottery from the recess in Asine I:5 is Protogeometric, any connection with the *Mycenaean* funerary cult should be excluded[63]. On the other hand, as shall be demonstrated in *Chapter V*, the alcoves at Mycenae 529 and Palamidi 4 are typical of the arrangement of the Mycenaean tomb's individual architectural features with the aim to facilitate the secondary rites in honour of the dead. Indicative of the customary offering of gifts to the dead after the burial 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[64].

Interestingly, two recesses were cut into both sides of the outer end of the first *dromos* leading to the chamber of the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli (Thebes), the so called *Tomb of Oedipus's Sons.* Influenced by the later literary tradition connected with the particular monument, the excavator interpreted them as guard posts[65]

ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφής
οἴκησις ***ἀείφρουρος***[66].

If one would accept Spyropoulos's interpretation and consider that this may *de facto* be the royal tomb of Mycenaean Thebes, one could plausibly

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[62] Frödin and Persson 1938: 175, 179.
[63] This does not exclude the case of hero-cult performed in later times, in which case a number of Mycenaean tombs became the focus of cultic activity.
[64] Wace 1932: 35,131, fig. 18 (the recess is indicated with the letter *c* on the plan).
[65] Spyropoulos 1972a: 310; *idem*1973b: 255.
[66] Sophocles' *Antigone*: 891ff.

argue that this constitutes proof for the hypothesis that the *dromoi* of a number of tombs, if not all, may have stayed open for some time before and after the burial, as, for example, in the case of the elaborate tholoi at Mycenae and Orchomenos, Asine I:2 or Dendra Tomb 14[67].

The use of the inner end of the *dromos*, close to the *stomion*, as the focal point of ritual activity in Mycenaean tombs is emphasised by the remains of sacrificial and libation ceremonies. The occurrence of shattered or intact drinking vessels and, in particular kylikes, in front of the *stomion* or in the *dromos* fill has been associated with liminal rites. The presence of single or pairs of grooves in the *stomion* of a number of tholos and chamber tombs suggests that the pouring of liquids (wine, water or even blood) was customary and extended beyond the time of the burial.

Exceptional is the case of tomb 14 at Aidonia, a tomb without a burial chamber, comprising of a carelessly constructed *dromos* and a false *stomion* in front of which the skeleton of a horse was found *in situ* and beneath it the jawbones of fourteen more[68]. At the inner end of the passageway leading to the stomion of the Kokla tholos, a pair of well-preserved skeletons of sheep/goat was uncovered[69]. Outside the entrance of the earlier tholos tomb at Kazarma the excavations uncovered the skeleton of a whole calf probably sacrificed on top of a stone pile or platform, which was employed as an altar[70].

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[67] Frödin and Persson 1938: 162, 166, 169-170; Åström 1977: 106.
[68] Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 25.
[69] Demakopoulou 1990: 122, fig. 21.
[70] Deilaki-Protonotariou 1969: 3.

***The ritual significance of the stomion* (fig. 67)**

The zone between the exterior and the interior of the house is often taken to symbolise an area of contact between the natural and the supernatural. In a similar way, entrances, and in particular, thresholds are often conceived as liminal zones and at the same time as the gateway for evil spirits and death[71]. The symbolic importance of the threshold in Mycenaean religious beliefs and superstitions is most probably reflected on the distributional pattern of figurines associated with doors and thresholds[72].

Specific architectural features and the remains of ritual activity are suggestive of the Mycenaean tomb *stomion*'s key role in the negotiations between life and death. In iconographical terms, the function of the tomb and, in particular the *stomion*, as symbolic barrier between the living and the dead, is supported by the scene on the larnax from tomb 51 at Tanagra **(fig. 50b)**[73]. On one of the long sides a female priestess is illustrated approaching from the right being met by a Sphinx moving from the opposite direction; both figures are depicted touching a sacred pillar, which has been interpreted as the tomb or the liminal zone between the earthly sphere, represented by the female figure, and the underworld, suggested by the presence of the mythological creature[74].

The religious and ritual significance of the tomb's threshold is also supported by the scenes on the end panel of a larnax from Tanagra and the

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[71] Van Gennep 1960; Hertz 1960; Hodder 1990: 129-130, 137; Parker Pearson and Richards 1994: 24-29; Whittaker 1997: 134.
[72] Kilian 1988a: 148.
[73] Spyropoulos 1971a: 12.
[74] See relevant section in *Chapter III*. The pillar's general sacred character has already been discussed by Evans 1901, Nilsson 1950[2]: 243ff., Mylonas 1977: 54-56.

Haghia Triadha sarcophagus. Two pairs of horns of consecration above a frieze of beam-ends crowns a rectangular structure inside or just in front of which a winged figure, most probably a soul, is portrayed on one of the Tanagra larnakes **(fig. 16b)**[75]. On the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, a male procession brings offerings to the deceased who is standing before a frescoed tomb **(fig. 31)**[76].

Cavanagh has noted that the symbolic connotations of the threshold are implied in the desire for the formation of entrances in collective tombs of Early Helladic date, e.g. Haghios Kosmas, Tsepi Marathon and Manika, and the types Beta and Gamma in the West cemetery at Eleusis, even though they were not used for the introduction of the bodies in the burial chamber[77]. He also noted that Marathon Tumulus I had two of its cists with jambs, a threshold and lintels, whereas an experimental entrance was constructed in Tumulus II[78].

In front of the entrance of a typical LH tomb, the *dromos* widens to a considerable degree, an element that could reveal the desire of the Mycenaeans to create extra space for the performance of the appropriate funerary and ancestral rites. Whole or fragmentary pots, especially kylikes and other drinking vessels, are frequently uncovered before the walled entrance or in its packing fill. These finds have been interpreted either as potsherds belonging to vases that were either broken and thrown out during

[75] Spyropoulos 1977b: 19.
[76] Long 1974: 49-50.
[77] Cavanagh 1987: 167.
[78] Cavanagh 1987: 167; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 118.

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.

Just below the packing fill of the *stomion* of tomb 2 at Dendra a pit was discovered containing a hoard of bronze objects[79]. Kontorli-Papadopoulou associated the find with the cists and pits in the chambers of Mycenae 2, 5 and Dendra 7, 10 and argued that they contained offerings deposited in order to avoid tomb-robbers or during cleaning operations in the tombs[80]. Considering, though, the fact that offerings under the blocking wall of the chambers are also attested elsewhere, e.g. Prosymna II, it would be plausible to suggest that these were offerings intended to placate the spirits of those buried in the tombs.

Appealing is also the case of a number of chamber tombs that have their façade and, at least in one instance, the chamber frescoed. Additionally, the presence of pairs of grooves in the *stomion* has puzzled excavators. In relation to the ritual activity observed in this specific part of the tomb, the examination of frescoed sepulchres and grooves will contribute to the archaeological understanding of the *stomion*'s function as the focal point of commemorative rites and, at the same time, as the communication channel between the living and the dead.

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[79] Persson 1931: 75ff., figs. 49-51.
[80] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 157-158.

Decorated façades and wall paintings in Mycenaean chamber tombs

Elaborate cult buildings and tholos tombs

Artistic representations of Mycenaean sanctuaries indicate that their façades were decorated, a suggestion also supported by the archaeological discoveries. Elaboration characterised the entrances to the Room with the Fresco at Mycenae, Room 117 at Tiryns and the West Shrine at Phylakopi, as mirrored in the use of carefully selected construction materials and the presence of columns and other ritual installations, e.g. baetyls[81].

The elaborate and monumental entrance of several tholos tombs on the mainland, and in particular the Treasuries of Atreus and Minyas, followed by the Tomb of Clytemnestra and the tholos tombs at Tiryns and Kokla, would have served the outward expression of power and wealth on behalf of the ruling élites, and, at the same time, would have provided the focal point and the proper space for the performance of equally elaborate ancestral rites. Amongst the earliest examples of Mycenaean wall painting is the tholos tomb at Kokla[82]. A thick layer of stucco covered its façade, which was then painted with a frieze of blue and red discs, imitating wooden beam-ends, on an off-white ground, and with a zone of carelessly painted blue bands. On the other hand, only faint traces of spirals have survived on the jambs of the *stomion* of the tholos at Tiryns[83].

The elaborate decoration of the Atreus and Minyas Treasuries, followed by the Tomb of Clytemnestra, has rendered them the most outstanding

[81] Whittaker 1997: 135.
[82] Demakopoulou 1990: 113-114.
[83] Müller 1975: 2.

examples of decorated sepulchres of the Mycenaean world[84]. Unfortunately, only fragments of the façade of the Atreus Tholos have survived scattered in the Museums of Athens, London, Munich, Karlsruhe and Berlin[85]. On either side of the tholos' entrance two rectangular stepped bases are preserved, which supported two semi-columns of green stone carved in zigzag and spiral motifs. Zones of red porphyry and various other coloured stones sculptured with spiral motifs and semi-rosettes formed the rest of the façade **(fig. 68)**.

The presence of two parallel rows of bronze rivets on the walls of the *stomion* suggests that a double door was secured in place[86]. Given the presence of extra slabs in the area of the tholos and the comparative material from the side chamber of the Minyas Treasury, it has been suggested that, despite the prevailing darkness, its ceiling and walls had borne sculptured decoration[87]. The interior of the main chamber was also most probably decorated, as specified by the discovery of small holes with remnants of bronze rivets in them, on the walls of the chamber.

Elaborate was also the decoration of the façade of the so-called Tomb of Clytemnestra[88]. Originally, fluted semi-columns of gypsum stood on either side of the doorway. Today only their semicircular fluted bases of polished conglomerate remain *in situ*. Across the base of the *tympanon*, i.e. the

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[84] The carvings of a lion and a griffin decorated the façade of the royal tomb at Pellana, and possibly a palm leaf the chamber of the tomb. The excavator argues that the lion and the griffin were the emblems of the royal dynasty of Mycenaean Lakedaimon (personal communication with Dr Th. Spyropoulos).
[85] Mylonas 1966: 121-122; Pelon 1976: 425-426.
[86] Doors and thresholds decorated with bronze sheet closed the entrances not only of the Atreus Treasury but also the *stomion* the Tombs of Minyas and Clytemnestra.
[87] Mylonas 1966: 121.
[88] Mylonas 1966: 123; Pelon 1976: 426-425.

section above the lintel, ran a band of bluish limestone carved with disc motifs, representing beam-ends. The relief triangle itself was decorated with red stone and patterns of triglyphs and semi-rosettes.

The skilful decoration of the Atreus Treasury could only be rivalled by the grandeur of the Tomb of Minyas at Orchomenos **(fig. 69a)**[89]. Its façade has not survived, but in all probability, was decorated in a similar way to the Atreus Treasury. The presence of small holes with bronze rivets in them suggests that the main chamber was decorated. The limestone ceiling of the side chamber was elaborately engraved with compositions of rosettes and the pattern of the up-and-down spiral and fan-shaped papyrus blossoms with a projecting dagger-shaped bud **(fig. 69b)**.

The aforementioned instances of decorated sepulchres are unique to-date among other tholoi of the same date. On the other hand, excavators have noted the existence of a number of chamber tombs that had their façades plastered and frescoed.

The iconography of Mycenaean chamber tombs: description, distribution, dating and artistic comparanda

From his excavations on the hill of Panaghia at Mycenae, Tsountas reported the existence of five decorated chamber tombs, i.e. tombs 52, 53, 54, 78 and 81. The façade of tomb 52 was plastered and decorated with a band of red colour[90], while tomb 53 with a band of rosettes in black, white,

[89] Schliemann 1881b: 135ff.; Pelon 1976: 235.
[90] Tsountas 1888: 158.

red and yellow **(fig. 70a)**[91]. *À propos* tomb 54, the only remark made is that near tomb 53 another one (i.e. tomb 54) was discovered with its *stomion* plastered and frescoed[92], whereas the façade of tomb 78 was simply covered with greenish stucco[93].

More elaborate was the decoration of the entrance of tomb 81 at Mycenae **(fig. 70b)**[94]. The doorjambs were rendered in red/brown paint, their borders defined by a band of white colour, whereas the bases and the capitals were painted in blue. A row of red/brownish discs imitating beam-ends on an off-white ground bordered by a band of red/brown colour on either side decorated the space above the lintel. Additionally, the space above the bench in the chamber was plastered and frescoed in red, yellow and blue. Wace understood the decoration of the façade as 'a painted version of the carved stone decoration directly above the lintels of the Treasury of Atreus and the Tomb of Clytemnestra'[95]. He also reported that several other tombs on the same hill had the doorjambs and the lintel covered in plaster and Xenaki-Sakellariou located a tomb south of the Cyclopean tholos tomb that bore remains of plastered decoration[96].

The French excavations at Deiras unearthed three sepulchres, tombs V, VI and XII that had their façades stuccoed and decorated. The decoration of tomb V consists of a row of up-and-down spiral and fan-shaped papyrus pattern in yellow and blue, on a red ground; the panel's border is painted

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[91] Tsountas 1890: 36; *idem* 1891: 1-5.
[92] Tsountas 1891: 1.
[93] Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 216.
[94] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 133-134; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 225.
[95] Wace 1949: 33.
[96] Wace 1949: 33; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 320.

black **(fig. 70c)**[97]. The façade of tomb VI was stuccoed and painted in deep red[98]. The decoration of tomb XII was partly destroyed, yet adequate traces and fragments survived to give an idea of the monument's original appearance **(fig. 70d)**[99]. Thus, the ground of the decorative panel was rendered in yellow on which triangles alternately painted in dark red and grey (or most probably blue) were arranged in two vertical rows.

A thick layer of good quality white plaster covered the doorjambs of tomb II at Prosymna, upon which a polychrome pattern of connected spirals bordered by plain bands was painted **(fig. 70e)**[100]. A similar band of spirals decorated the face of the lintel across the opening of the *stomion*. Interestingly, the tomb's decoration is similar to the façade of the tomb depicted on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus **(fig. 31)**[101].

The stucco that covered the façade of tomb 15 at the Kolonaki cemetery (Thebes) was decorated with a polychrome design imitating wood grain, whereas white-stuccoed were the walls and the floor of another chamber tomb at Thebes[102]. From Megalo Kastelli, Spyropoulos reported the discovery of a chamber tomb featuring a façade on which traces of red colour were just preserved[103]. Special reference should be made to the unique, up to present, case of the royal tomb with the double *dromos* at Megalo Kastelli, Thebes[104]. The second entrance to the chamber bears

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[97] Vollgraff 1904: 369-370.
[98] Vollgraff 1904: 370.
[99] Deshayes 1966: 33, pl. XLIV(3).
[100] Blegen 1937: 174.
[101] Long 1974: 49-50.
[102] Keramopoullos 1917: 159; Papadakis 1919: 33.
[103] Spyropoulos 1973b: 253.
[104] Spyropoulos 1972a: 310.

decoration of successive zones of spirals and bands imitating wooden boards **(fig. 71a)**. Rows of discs, imitating wooden beam-ends, decorated the rock lintel, while the left corner and the eastern wall of the chamber bear at least two female mourners in procession before a two-storey palanquin **(fig. 71b)**[105].

On the wall opposite the second entrance, an elaborate scene was painted. A pattern of hummocks conveys a rocky landscape at the bottom, while on top only a broad circle bearing remains of red colour has been preserved **(fig. 71c)**. The excavator suggested that the Mistress of Animals would have been depicted, or maybe the image of a Sphinx, a theme quite familiar in this part of the Mycenaean world and also in harmony with the tradition of the specific monument. However, the poor preservation of the wall painting prevents the secure interpretation of the scene. In addition to the walls' decoration, the two benches were also plastered and decorated with the traditional Mycenaean pattern of up-and-down spiral and fan-shaped papyrus blossoms.

Unsurprisingly, all chamber tombs described above provide evidence for great expenditure of energy and wealth. They were well constructed with elaborate *dromoi* and well-cut chambers, occasionally provided with benches and other architectural elements, e.g. grooves, niches and pits. Furthermore, in most cases, they are positioned in the centre of the cemetery. The offerings consist of good quality pottery of domestic and ritualistic use and jewellery of precious and semi-precious materials.

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[105] For the use of palanquins in the Bronze Age Aegean, see Demakopoulou 1989: 25-33.

The dating of the tombs' decoration is not easy, given the nature of Mycenaean multiple funerary practices. Unfortunately, in several cases excavators do not provide adequate information on the pottery uncovered. However, based on the existing evidence, it seems that Mycenae tombs 52, 53, 54 and 78, Asine tomb I:2, the tombs at Deiras and the Kolonaki tomb excavated by Keramopoullos were constructed in LH IIIA-B, the peak of their use being defined in LH IIIA2-B. Pottery finds from Mycenae tomb 81 and Prosymna tomb II date their construction in LH IIB, but they continue in use during the next period, when they were most probably frescoed.

Two phases could be distinguished in the construction and re-arrangement of the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli; one in LH IIIA2, when the tomb was originally constructed, followed by the phase of the re-arrangement of the chamber, the opening of the second *dromos* and the decoration of the monument in LH IIIB. Thus, the initiative for decorating these tombs was possibly the product of a particular moment, i.e. LH IIIA2-B, when the tholos tombs became at certain regions at least the prerogative of the ruling élites and a sharp increase in the number of chamber tombs occurred.

Scholars have argued that the choice of decorated chamber tombs might have been the result of the builders' taste, their owners' wealth or the desire to imitate the magnificent prototypes set by the elaborately decorated tholos tombs in their vicinity[106]. These indications, along with

[106] Wace 1949: 33; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 320; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 153.

the similarities with elements in large-scale palatial art[107], could provide a plausible explanation for their distribution restricted to Argive and Boeotian cemeteries. The decorative program followed in the interior of the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli indicates a strong link with the local Boeotian artistic tradition of mourning figures, as suggested by the repertoire on the Tanagra sarcophagi.

Without any doubt, the skilful decoration of these tombs would have reflected the special status of their owners, and, more importantly, it would have had a psychological effect on the celebrants attending the ceremonies, acting as focus of attention (Renfrew's indicator 2) and recalling similar decorative patterns from sacred contexts.

Grooves (Table VI.I)

As has already been stated, in several cosmologies the grave has been considered as a 'spiritual tunnel', the appropriate place and medium through which customary acts and words reached the sphere of the dead. The exploration of the architectural arrangement of the standard Mycenaean tombs suggests that this belief was also part of Mycenaean eschatological beliefs. The function of the *dromoi* and the entrance as foci of repeated ceremonies in the context of funerary cult is supported by the presence of single or pairs of grooves overlapping the *stomion* or being restricted to its area.

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[107] Band friezes of connected spirals, rosettes, geometric patterns and imitations of wooden beams and boards are included in the repertoire of Orchomenos, Tiryns and Pylos. The combination of up-and-down spiral and fan-shaped papyrus blossoms occurs in every Mycenaean palace, with the exception of Pylos (Immerwahr 1990: 142-144).

Grooves occur in a small number of chamber tombs from the Argolid and Boeotia, viz. Prosymna tombs II, and XLIV, Dendra tombs 6 and 9, Aidonia, Thebes Kolonaki tombs 15 and 26 **(fig. 72)**[108]. Dendra tomb 8 and Thebes Kolonaki 4 feature grooves in the side chambers[109]. From Prosymna tomb XXXVII only a single broad but shallow groove was reported, which began ca. 2.50m from the inner end of the *dromos* and extended down the middle of the passage through the doorway and to some distance into the chamber itself[110]. Interestingly, depressions and grooves have been reported from tholos tombs at Messenia (Peristeria 3, Tragana 2 and 1, Goulouvari 2 and 1, Routsi 2 and Nichoria) but none from the chamber tombs of the same region[111]. Marinatos reported a single groove from the middle of the *dromos* of chamber tomb A at Kontogenadha on the island of Kephallenia and conceived it as a storm-water drain[112].

Opinions vary *vis-à-vis* the nature of these grooves. Keramopoullos, followed by Persson, Marinatos and Vermeule, suggested that they served the needs of burial ritual and in particular the smooth running of the funeral cart and the protection of the doorjambs against contact and abrasion by the hearse's wheels[113]. Blegen, on the other hand, admitted his difficulty in understanding their purpose at Prosymna[114]. Andronikos took account of

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[108] Blegen 1937: 175, 207; Persson 1942a: 21, 53; Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 23; Keramopoullos 1917: 159, 194.
[109] Persson 1942a: 40; Keramopoullos 1917: 130.
[110] Blegen 1937: 123-124.
[111] Korres 1982: 91ff.; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 151; *eadem* 1995: 119.
[112] Marinatos 1933b: 71, fig. 7.
[113] Keramopoullos 1917: 159, 194; Persson 1942a: 155-157, who also put forward an Egyptian connection; *PAE* 1957: 118-119; *PAE* 1959: 120; Vermeule 1964: 298.
[114] Blegen 1937: 175, 207.

these grooves as perhaps wheel-marks, but he thought them more likely from skid-poles of biers[115].

Following an assessment of the previous argumentation, Pelon suggested that they could simply reflect the tomb maker's or the owners's personal taste for refinement of the tomb construction[116]. Discussing the evidence from the Messenian tholoi, Korres raised a number of objections and stated that the formation of depressions and grooves in these tombs must have been the result of the performance of burial customs of the advanced LH I period[117]. According to his argument, the introduction of the horse into the Greek mainland must have caused the appearance of this practice, although he seems unable to understand why it disappeared from Messenia at the end of LH I or slightly later[118].

Kontorli-Papadopoulou took Keramopoullos's suggestion further and proposed that the desire to protect the frescoed doorjambs, as in the case of Prosymna tomb II and Thebes Kolonaki tomb 15, would have sanctioned the carving of the grooves[119]. 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 her to attribute cultic significance to the feature[120]. Her argument is further supported by the evidence from Prosymna tomb II, in which case ten arrowheads and a bead

[115] Andronikos 1968: 132-134.
[116] Pelon 1976: 326-328.
[117] Korres 1982: 92.
[118] Korres 1982: 92-93.
[119] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 151.
[120] Kontrorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 151.

of amethyst were placed in one of the two shallow grooves cut into the rock along the north-eastern doorjamb[121].

Pace Keramopoullos and Persson, Åkeström argued that there was certainly no space for a wheeled vehicle in LH tombs and that there were fundamental differences between Egyptian skid-poles and Mycenaean tombs, a suggestion proposed by Persson[122]. Alternatively, he suggested that they were channels intended to facilitate communication -by means of pouring libations- between the mourners and the deceased after the *stomion* had been blocked[123]. Cavanagh and Mee, who also understood the *stomion* of Mycenaean tombs to be the focus of ritual, a passage and a barrier literally and spiritually at the same time, suggested that grooves should also be interpreted from this perspective[124].

Based on their construction qualities in Dendra tomb 9, though, Wells questioned their communicative effect in this particular tomb, suggesting that grooves were rather 'part of the closing rites of the chamber –perhaps another emphasis on the boundary between the realms of the living and the dead'[125]. The examination of Dendra tomb 8 led her to suggest that the chamber was probably used before its actual completion and that the grooves might have been of constructional significance, thus they would have been obliterated, had time allowed such an action[126].

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[121] Blegen 1937: 175.
[122] Åkeström 1988: 203-205.
[123] Åkeström 1988: 203-205.
[124] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 49.
[125] Wells 1990: 135.
[126] Wells 1990: 135.

Kontorli-Papadopoulou's argument on their use for the protection of the frescoed doorjambs cannot be accepted unreservedly since not all frescoed sepulchres feature grooves in their passageway. Similarly, the existence of at least two examples of single grooves rules out the hearse hypothesis. Valuable comparative material for the ritualistic nature of these grooves is undoubtedly provided by the libation channel found next to the throne of the Mycenaean megaron at Pylos and its association with a number of miniature kylikes scattered on the floor[127]. Thus, the presence of grooves and of pouring and drinking vessels in the *dromoi* or near the stomion of the Mycenaean tombs could be considered from this ritualistic point of view. More importantly, this may be another indicator of the repeated performance of commemorative rites in honour of the dead even when the entrance of the tombs was blocked, and may well provide indirect evidence that the *dromoi* might have been left open for some time after the interments.

The symbolism of the chamber

'Tombs may be the houses of the ancestors and, alternatively, the living may consider themselves to dwell within the houses of ancestors'[128]. Similarly, in modern Greece the tomb is referred to as the last residence, *η τελευταία κατοικία,* and the belief is expressed for an immaterial existence therein. Nevertheless, a great amount of effort was invested in the construction of the typical Mycenaean tombs in order to ensure the

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[127] Blegen and Rawson 1966: 88.
[128] Parker Pearson 1999: 21.

facilities and comforts of a 'living' house for the dead. At the same time, the grave was a sacred place, where the ancestors were honoured and placated with customary rites and offerings.

The rectangular shape of the chamber and the saddle-shaped roofs of a number of chamber tombs have been employed as part of the argument on the secular symbolism of the Mycenaean tomb[129]. Kontorli-Papadopoulou attributed the formation of gabled roofs to structural refinements, to the desire to imitate the roof of an actual house, to influences from earlier or foreign prototypes or to 'local inspiration, religious in origin, concerned with well-being in the after-life'[130]. Although LH III funerary architecture shared common features with its contemporary sacred and domestic architecture, the archaeological evidence suggests that the function of the individual features in all three types of Mycenaean architecture was context dependent and, consequently, similar or even identical elements served different ideas and needs in different contexts.

The suggestion that the chamber of the tombs imitated actual houses could be valid in terms of the rectangular shape, but this cannot explain the choice of circular shape commonly attested in Mycenaean typical tombs. Mycenaean houses comprise a rectangular ground-plan with the exception of few examples of the apsidal type, e.g. Unit III-3 and sections of curvilinear walls at Nichoria[131]. Tsountas compared the circular shape of the tholos tombs with the Homeric *καλύβη* and the *θησαυροί* [132]. Goodison,

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[129] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 147.
[130] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 147.
[131] Hiesel 1990; Aschenbrenner *et al.* 1992: 398-403; Walsh and McDonald 1992: 462.
[132] Tsountas 1885: 32ff.

on the other hand, drew a parallel between the circular shape and the entrance passage of the tombs and the female anatomy of the womb[133]. Her interpretation, though, does not seem convincing and for lack of secure evidence it is preferable to leave the question open.

In ethnographical terms, the passage from the *dromos* and the *stomion*, associated with day and light, to the main chamber, connected with darkness and night, is often conceived as a metaphor of the transition from life to death. The chamber was the last resting place of the dead and the eternal dwelling of the soul, connected with the final stage of the incorporation of the dead to the realm of the ancestors.

Pits, cists and niches are invariably attested in the bulk of Mycenaean typical tombs, their function determined by the ceremonial requirements of LH burial practices and the cult of the dead **(fig. 73)**. Tsountas observed that some of the cists served to 'secure an inviolate repose to individuals of peculiar distinction in the family'[134]. On the other hand, Mylonas argued that the niches in the chambers could not have served for a cult of the dead as the entrances of the tombs were walled up after each interment and that they were not accessible to the public for the periodic observances required by a cult[135].

The placement of *disiecta membra* and offerings could classify them as ossuaries, whereas the remains of ritual activity (animal bones, objects connected with libation and sacrificial rites, black earth, charcoal and

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[133] Goodison 1989: 85.
[134] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 137.
[135] Mylonas 1951a: 84; *idem* 1966: 179.

ashes, etc) and the deposition of valuable offerings could sanction their characterisation as receptacles of ritualistic nature[136]. The religious and symbolic nature of the chamber is further supported by specific architectural features, namely benches and side chambers, whose counterparts are also attested in contemporary sacred and domestic structures.

Benches (Tables IV.I and IV.II)

The presence of one or more platforms in Mycenaean sacred, domestic and funerary architecture is interesting. The interpretation of stone-built benches in sacred buildings as attention-focusing devices of cultic significance has been based on their association with objects of ritualistic nature and the remains of ceremonial acts[137]. Platforms of stone or mud-brick covered with plaster constituted a common functional installation of Mycenaean domestic architecture[138]. Their interpretation as benches, beds or storage shelves is supported by their diverse dimensions and their connection with specific areas of the house and/or with movable domestic equipment.

The construction of one or more benches along the walls of the chamber of a number of typical Mycenaean tombs in the areas under discussion has been associated with the requirements of burial ritual **(fig. 74)**. The concentration of this kind of fixed installation is attested in the cemeteries

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[136] Viz. Mycenae 5 and 7 and Dendra tombs 7 and 10 (Tsountas 1888: 137-138; Persson 1942a: 31-32, 63, 87).
[137] Whittaker 1997: 18ff; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 213, 216-217.
[138] Whittaker 1997: 129ff. (with relevant bibliography).

of the Argolid, Korinthia and Boeotia, followed by Attica with less than five examples reported to-date; no platforms have been reported from the necropolises of Euboea[139].

In several instances, rock-cut benches were used for primary burials in the main chamber, e.g. Mycenae 529, Asine I:1, Kato Almyri XIV, or in the side chamber as in the case of Prosymna XXVI. In the bulk of reported cases, rock-cut benches or low platforms formed of unworked stones or slabs, were employed for the deposition of *disiecta membra* and/or offerings, viz. Mycenae 530, Prosymna L, XI and XIII, Deiras XXVIII, the Tomb of the Ivory Pyxides in the Athenian Agora, Brauron 5, the chamber tomb at 106, Dimitrakopoulou Str. (Athens), Keramopoullos's tomb at Megalo Kastelli and Tanagra 94 and 77. For lack of *dromoi* in the case of pit-graves 107 and 111 at Tanagra, the benches would have been of practical necessity for the introduction of the body into the burial chamber.

Tsountas stressed their use as provisional repositories for the body and the funeral accessories, or possibly for the offerings in honour of the dead[140]. Keramopoullos conceived them as 'καθέδραι' (=seats), or 'κλῖναι, λέχη' (=biers or beds) and associated them with the requirements of the cult of the dead[141]. A multiple and repeated function has been proposed by Pelon, who considered the evidence from the tholoi at Dimini (tholos A) and

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[139] Unfortunately, a large number of tombs in the areas under discussion still remain unpublished. In other cases, the interim reports provide only a summary of the discoveries with emphasis placed more on the finds and less on the secondary architectural features of the tombs themselves. In the case of benches, the omission of essential information on their possible connection with skeletal remains or offerings, their construction mode or dimensions obscures to a significant degree the understanding of their function.
[140] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 136.
[141] Keramopoullos 1917: 109.

Kopanaki and the chamber tomb XXVI at Prosymna[142]. Cavanagh and Mee understood them as couches on which the dead might recline in metaphorical comfort, whereas in the cases where total absence of skeletal remains *in situ* is observed, they preferred to interpret them as altars[143].

The tholos tomb at Kokla offers a unique insight to the function of benches in the context of post-funerary ritual[144]. The chamber features a low rectangular bench, carefully fashioned of small stones and coated with plaster, on top of which four silver drinking vessels had been deposited. Beneath the bench, three more vessels were set on the floor. Demakopoulou suggested that the objects comprise a group most likely intended for use in a burial ritual. However, given the absence of any skeletal remains in the chamber, the careful blocking of the *stomion* and the double animal sacrifice in front of the entrance, it would be feasible to reconstruct the performance of a post-funerary ceremony in which the bench was employed as an attention-focusing device and in all probability as an altar on which offerings were deposited and pouring rites were performed in honour of the ancestral spirits.

Plausible is the interpretation initiated by Wace *à propos* the evidence from Mycenae tomb 518[145]. In the main chamber a lamp with an *alabastron* in it and a deep bowl were placed on top of a rock-cut bench. *Disiecta membra* and earlier funerary offerings were collected in the side chamber of the tomb. The association of the vessels with the bench as well as the

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[142] Pelon 1976: 354-355.
[143] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 65.
[144] Demakopoulou 1990: 119.
[145] Wace 1932: 75-78.

stratigraphy of the side chamber led Wace to the suggestion that at stated times the living relatives entered the tomb and, by means of ceremonial acts and memorial feasts, 'held some kind of communion with the dead'[146].

The use of benches as altars or as platforms for the deposition of vessels or connected with cultic activity is also clear in Prosymna V, VI and X, Dendra 2, Berbati 1 and the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli. The case of Prosymna tomb V with the deposition of a miniature stirrup jar and the upper part of a similar larger vessel on a bench should be associated with a pouring ritual, in which case the bench would have served as the receptacle for libations. A large amount of charcoal was found on and around a plastered stone-built bench in the chamber of the so-called *Cenotaph* (or tomb 2) at Dendra.

The presence of charcoal, the traces of fire on the wall above the bench and the presence of other installations of analogous cultic nature in the chamber support its interpretation as an altar or a hearth. The placement of a LH IIIIB amphora filled with ashes and small animal bones on a frescoed bench in the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli should be seen as a ritual act of propitiation and honour towards the dead during the re-arrangement of the monument.

The care taken for the formation and, occasionally, decoration, of benches in funerary architecture is revealing of their special nature. No doubt, they must have fulfilled multiple functions, even in different stages of use of the same tomb, from burial repositories to altars. The lack of detailed

[146] Wace 1932: 78.

information, though, prevents the drawing of definite conclusions. On the other hand, comparisons with analogous installations from contemporary sacred and secular architectures could elucidate their use either as functional installations or as attention-focusing cultic devices. Based on comparisons with securely characterised contexts and had their height permitted the performance of ritual activities, it would be feasible to assume that benches in funerary contexts were of ritualistic nature.

Cavanagh and Mee's suggestion that these benches could have been metaphorically intended for the spirits of the dead could be connected with the deposition of terracotta throne models in the tombs, as has been discussed in *Chapter III*[147]. One should also consider the possibility that at least on certain occasions these installations could have functioned as seats for those attending the burial or post-funerary rites in the tombs. However, the suggestion advanced by Kontorli-Papadopoulou that the bench in Deiras XXXIV[148] could have functioned as a seat for the mourners, should be dismissed as invalid, since the height of the bench does not exceed 0.20m.

Side chambers (Table IV.I)

Subsidiary rooms are frequently featured in connection with Mycenaean sacred and domestic edifices and have been interpreted as secondary cult rooms and storerooms and/or extra domestic space respectively. The elaborately constructed and decorated side chamber of the Minyas

[147] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 65.
[148] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 149.

Treasury, followed possibly by the example of the Atreus Tholos. is exceptional and provide the stimulus for the examination of this special feature's role in Mycenaean funerary architecture and symbolism.

Apart from the main burial chamber the Tholos of Minyas incorporates in its plan a square carefully-built side chamber roofed with a ceiling of elaborately sculptured green schist slabs[149]. Its rubble walls were probably lined with slabs decorated in relief, but nothing of the kind has survived[150]. Similarly, a rectangular annexe room was hewn into the rock to the right of the main entrance to the Atreus Treasury[151]. In the north-western corner an empty pit (1.75x0.80x0.45m) was found. Based on the presence of the pit and on comparisons from the Mycenae chamber tombs, Tsountas and Wace argued that this chamber was intended as an ossuary on the occasion of fresh interments in the main chamber[152].

A number of chamber tombs comprise side chambers cut into one or more sides of the main chamber; the Argive cemeteries have the lead with sixteen examples reported to-date, followed by Attica and Boeotia with considerably fewer examples[153]. Normally only one lateral chamber is attested, with the exception of Prosymna XXV with three side rooms and Spata 1 with two interconnected **(figs. 75a-c)**[154]. The construction mode of

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[149] Schliemann 1881b: 144ff.; Pelon 1976: 236-237.
[150] Schliemann 1881b: 144ff.; Pelon 1976: 236-237.
[151] Wace 1932: 350-352.
[152] Tsountas 1888: 135, note 1; Wace 1932: 351-352. For the theory that the side chambers of the Atreus and the Minyas tholoi might have been used for primary burials and the main chamber was intended as a cult place, see Kavvadias 1909: 643 and Pelon 1990: 111.
[153] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 147.
[154] Blegen 1937:88-90; Koumanoudis and Kastorchis 1877: 167ff. Some of the Aidonia tombs are equipped with side chambers, although no further information has been provided yet for their discovery and individual characteristics (Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 23). According to the published plan, though, tombs 3, 6 and 7 feature niches and not side

these supplementary rooms resembles that of the main chamber and their entrances were also blocked with stones; their shape varies from rectangular and irregular to oval.

There seems to be no consistency in the alignment of the side chamber *vis-à-vis* the main chamber; in Mycenae tombs 6, 27 and 49, Prosymna XXXVI, Dendra 6 and 8, and Spata 1 the side chamber was placed to the right of the main chamber, whereas in Prosymna III and XXXIII to the left[155]. In the cases of Mycenae 5, 79 and 518 the supplementary chamber opens to the wall opposite the main entrance of the tomb[156]. All the above examples exhibit dimensions smaller than the main chambers and vary in shape with oval and rectangular being the predominant types.

Diversity is also observed in their purpose and function. The lateral chambers of Prosymna XXVI and Dendra 6 received primary burials, whereas in the case of Mycenae 6, 27, 79 and 518 and the west and north side chambers of Prosymna XXV, they were employed as ossuaries for *disiecta membra* and offerings. Interestingly, in the side chamber of Mycenae 27 a niche was cut into the wall to receive a skull and a jug. In Mycenae 49 and Prosymna XXXVI only artefacts were uncovered, while the two side chambers of Spata 1 contained ashes and charcoal, human bones and various other objects, e.g. beads. The side chamber of Mycenae

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chambers. In tomb 6 niches were cut into the three walls of the chamber (Krystalli-Votsi 1998: plan in page 22). A triple chamber tomb has been unearthed in the cemetery at Pylona on Rhodes (Karantzali 1998: 88, fig. 3).

[155] Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 61; Tsountas 1888: 138, 154; Blegen 1937: 107, 121-122, 181; Persson 1942a: 23, 39-40; Koumanoudis and Kastorchis 1877: 167ff.

[156] Tsountas 1888: 137; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 220; Wace 1932: 75.

5 and the eastern annexe room of Prosymna XXV received indiscriminately primary and secondary burials.

Based on the evidence from Mycenae, Prosymna and Dendra, Persson suggested that side chambers could provide an indication of early date for the construction of the tomb and that the prototypes should be sought in the chamber tombs of Egypt[157]. On the other hand, Blegen categorically argued that 'the presence of a side-chamber cannot be regarded as giving any chronological clue to the period of construction of the tomb'[158]. Kontorli-Papadopoulou suggested that the evidence for side chambers in the LH IIIC cemetery at Palaiokastro in Arcadia overrides Persson's suggestion and proposed that one should search the prototypes in the earlier examples from Kythera, Phylakopi, Knossos or Cyprus[159].

Although our understanding of the function of side chambers depends on a handful of examples, it is obvious that the introduction and development of Mycenaean secondary treatment custom must have dictated the creation of extra available space for the deposition of the *disiecta membra* and the performance of the appropriate rites. Traces of ashes and charcoal, bones and offerings in them point to a nexus of ceremonial acts related to the ancestral spirits.

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[157] Persson 1942a: 158.
[158] Blegen 1937: 148.
[159] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 148. The pottery from Palaiokastro, displayed in the Archaeological Museum of Tripolis, provides a *terminus post quem* of LH IIIA times, if not earlier, judging by the presence of an LH IIA *alabastron* decorated with double axes and a squat jug with hatched loop decoration of LH IIA date.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON FUNERARY LANDSCAPES, ARCHITECTURES OF DEATH AND SYMBOLISM IN MYCENAEAN TIMES

The spatial patterning of graves within cemeteries and of cemeteries within lived landscapes forms an important dimension of the mortuary practices of any given community[160]. According to Saxe's *Hypothesis 8*, the maintenance of formal areas of disposal, exclusively for the dead, is one means of attaining or legitimating lineal descent from the ancestors to control crucial but restricted resources and *vice versa*[161]. Equally, the ancestors themselves might be viewed as crucial yet restricted resource[162]. Parker Pearson has urged that concepts of exclusivity, boundedness, permanence and specialisation in mortuary terms are difficult to define, unless identified and treated within the contextual framework, temporal and cultural, that sustains them[163].

Modern scholarship has attempted to explore the choice and constraints that govern the precise location, distance and direction of Mycenaean cemeteries from contemporary settlements and interpreted their spatial distribution as the result of conscious human behaviour, dependent on socio-political/economic claims on land and authority, environmental constraints, visibility and intervisibility, cemetery and settlement expansion, traditional patterns, cosmological perceptions and ideas of pollution.

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[160] Chapman and Randsborg 1981: 14.
[161] Goldstein 1980: 7-8; Parker Pearson 1993: 206; *idem* 1999: 30.
[162] Parker Pearson 1993: 206.
[163] Parker Pearson 1993: 206.

Unquestionably, the uneven ratio of excavated Mycenaean cemeteries as contrasted to contemporary settlements obscures to a certain degree the analysis of spatial and topographic relationship between cemetery and the lived landscape. However, a multi-faceted examination of symbolic and functional factors indicates that specific environmental elements, namely water sources, streams and rivers, were conceived as literal and metaphorical barriers that separated and at the same time united the living and the dead. Crossing the river held powerful connotations as regards the journey of the soul to the Underworld and its incorporation to an otherworldly dimension.

The employment of water in the performance of burial rites and the cult of the dead would have sanctioned the cemeteries' positioning within the landscape. Certainly, the formation and maintenance of formal landscapes for the ancestors, in a similar way as places of supplication and worship of the supernatural, was conditioned by the Mycenaean perception of and attitude towards death and reveal a great deal on the incorporation of the ancestors within the Mycenaean culture and religion.

For thousands of years societies have devoted substantial resources to the procurement of goods and 'houses' for the ancestors. Such consumption patterns are attested in the prehistoric mortuary contexts of the mainland, intensified during the LH period with the construction and decoration of elaborate tholos and chamber tombs. The appropriation of components from the contemporary sacred architecture indicates that for the Mycenaeans the tomb was not merely the final resting place of the

motionless dead but rather a sacred place and a liminal zone where the ancestral spirits were believed either to dwell permanently or to appear in the course of ceremonial acts.

The typical Mycenaean tomb's tripartite division and the remains of ritual activity imply the interaction of architecture, ritual and symbolism, dictated by temporal developments in ceremonial connected with social identity and status, religious beliefs and attitudes towards the treatment of the body[164]. Each section of the tomb seems to incorporate a transitional stage that could be taken to symbolically correspond to the three stages of the rites of passage connected with death; the *dromos* (associated with the living and the rites of separation), the *stomion* (serving as the boundary zone between the human sphere and the plane of the ancestors) and the *chamber* (symbolic of the reintegration stage, intended as the permanent shelter of the ancestral spirits).

Applying Renfrew's ritual indicator 2, i.e. *special aspects of the liminal zone*, the tomb with its tripartite plan and special facilities would have served the observances of funerary cult and would have reinforced the antinomy of life and death, permanence and impermanence, liveliness and transcendence *via* an interplay of light and darkness, hidden mystery and conspicuous display.

[164] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 117-118, 124-125; Voutsaki 1998: 45.

Table VI. I. Side chambers, benches and grooves in the LH III A-B tombs of the central parts of the Mycenaean dominion

SITE *(for all categories)*	***SIDE-CHAMBERS***		***BENCHES***				***GROOVES*** *(tomb no)*
	Tomb no	No of side-chambers	Tomb no	Dimensions			
				H (meters)	W (meters)	L (meters)	
Mycenae	Atreus Treasury	1	10	±0.50m	1.00	?	-
Mycenae	5	1	33	0.60	1.10	?	-
Mycenae	6	1	42	0.25	0.70	2.00	-
Mycenae	7	1	81	0.55/0.60 1.10	0.70 0.97	?	-
Mycenae	27	1	85	?	?	?	-
Mycenae	49	1	100	?	?	?	-
Mycenae	79	1	505	0.40	1.00	6.00	-
Mycenae	515	1	518	0.60	0.70	ca. 2.50	-
Mycenae	518	1	529	0.40fun	0.70	ca. 2.50	-
Mycenae	-	-	530	0.20/0.25	0.70?	ca. 2.60	-

SITE (for all categories)	SIDE-CHAMBERS		BENCHES				GROOVES (tomb no)
	Tomb no	No of side-chambers	Tomb no	Dimensions			
				H (meters)	W (meters)	L (meters)	
Mycenae	-	-	(*ArchDelt*. 1980: 110)	?	?	5.50	-
Nauplion	Reported in *Αθήναιον* 1878: 186-187	1					
Berbati	-	-	1 (E.A. Necropolis)	1.10	1.10	4.20	-
Asine	-	-	I:1	0.25	?	?	-
Prosymna	XXV	3	L	0.12	0.74/1.04	?	XLIV
Prosymna	XXVI	1	XXVI	0.40	0.86	2.72	II
Prosymna	XXXIII	1	X	0.12	0.65	2.15	XXXVII
Prosymna	XXXVI	1	-	-	-	-	-
Prosymna	-	-	XI	?	?	?	-
Prosymna	III	1	XIII	0.50?	?	?	-
Prosymna	-	-	VI	?	?	?	-

SITE (for all categories)	SIDE-CHAMBERS		BENCHES				GROOVES (tomb no)
	Tomb no	No of side-chambers	Tomb no	Dimensions			
				H (meters)	W (meters)	L (meters)	
Tiryns	-	-	VIII	0.20-0.25	?	3.25	-
Tiryns	-	-	XIX	?	?	?	-
Dendra	6	1	2	0.23	0.80	1.40	9
Dendra	8	1	8	0.60 0.30	? 1	? ?	8
Deiras	-	-	XXVIII	0.15	0.85	ca. 2.00	-
Deiras	-	-	XXXIV	0.22	0.92	?	-
Kokla	-	-	tholos tomb	0.45	1.00	2.25	-
Magoula, Galatas	-	-	Tholos Tomb 1	?	?	?	-
Aidonia	3?	1?	(Krystalli-Votsi 1998:23)	?	?	?	(Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 23)
Aidonia	6?	3?	(Krystalli-Votsi 1998:23)	?	?	?	(Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 23)

SITE (for all categories)	SIDE-CHAMBERS		BENCHES				GROOVES (tomb no)
	Tomb no	No of side-chambers	Tomb no	Dimensions			
				H (meters)	W (meters)	L (meters)	
Aidonia	7?	1?	(Krystalli-Votsi 1998:23)	?	?	?	(Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 23)
Kato Almyri	-	-	XIV	0.05/0.22	0.75	1.80	-
Spata	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
Athens	-	-	Agora, Tomb of the Ivory Pyxides	0.60 0.60	0.75 0.75	4.30 4.30	-
Athens	-	-	25, Garibaldi Str.	0.40	0.75-0.88	2.45	-
Athens	-	-	106, Dimitrakopoulou Str.	0.35-0.38	0.90	1.45	-
Brauron	-	-	5	?	?	?	-
Menidi			tholos	0.70	3.00	7.70	-
Orchomenos	Minyas Treasury	1	-	-	-	-	-
Thebes	-	-	Royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli, Thebes	?	0.90	?	-

SITE (for all categories)	SIDE-CHAMBERS		BENCHES				GROOVES (tomb no)
	Tomb no	No of side-chambers	Tomb no	Dimensions			
				H (meters)	W (meters)	L (meters)	
Thebes	-	-	Ismenion 3	0.48	1.40	ca. 3.00	Kolonaki 15
Thebes	Papadakis 1919	1	Meg. Kastelli (Keramopoullos's excavation)	0.22 0.22 0.18	1.00 0.92 0.83	1.40 3.75 3.75	Kolonaki 26
Thebes	Kolonaki 4	1	Kolonaki 9	0.60	1.70	3.35	Kolonaki 4
Thebes	-	-	Kolonaki 28	0.11-0.16 0.11-0.16	0.82 0.97	?	-
Thebes	-	-	Meg. Kastelli (Pharaklas's excavation)	1.10 1.00	0.70-0.80 0.85-1.10	4.80? 4.60?	-
Thebes	-	-	Mikro Kastelli, Tb III	?	ca. 1.00	ca. 4.00	-
Tanagra	-	-	77	?	?	?	-
Tanagra	-	-	107	?	?	?	-
Tanagra	-	-	111	?	?	?	-

Table IV. II. Catalogue of benches in LH IIIA-B tombs in the Argolid, Korinthia, Attica and Boeotia

Site/Tomb no	*Use*	*Construction mode*	*Dimensions*			*References*
			H (m)	*W (m)*	*L (m)*	
Mycenae 10	empty	rock-cut	±0.50	1.00	?	Tsountas 1888: 140
Mycenae 33	empty	stone-built	0.60	1.10	?	Tsountas 1888: 149
Mycenae 42	empty	rock-cut	0.25	0.70	2.00	Tsountas 1888: 151
Mycenae 81	empty	stone-built	0.55/0.60 1.10	0.70 0.97	? ?	Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 225
Mycenae 85	?	rock-cut	?	?	?	Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 242
Mycenae 100	?	rock-cut	?	?	?	Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 277
Mycenae 505	empty	rock-cut	0.40	1.00	6.00	Wace 1932: 12
Mycenae 518	offerings repository	rock-cut	0.60	0.70	ca. 2.50	Wace 1932: 75
Mycenae 529	primary burials	rock-cut	0.40	0.70	ca. 2.50	Wace 1932: 100
Mycenae 530	*disiecta membra*	loose-earth or powdered rock	0.20/0.25	0.70?	ca. 2.60	Wace 1932: 108
Mycenae	?	rock-cut	?	?	5.50	*ArchDelt*. 35 (1980) *Chr*. 110

Site/Tomb no	*Use*	*Construction mode*	*Dimensions*			*References*
			H (m)	*W (m)*	*L (m)*	
Tiryns VIII	-	rock-cut	0.20-0.25	?	3.25	Rudolph 1973: 55, 89
Tiryns XIX	primary burials	rock-cut	?	?	?	Rudolph 1973: 82, 89
Berbati 1	vessels leaning on its sides	stone-built	1.10	?	4.20	Holmberg 1983: 11
Asine I:1	primary burials	one of natural stone and the other of sun-dried bricks	0.25	?	?	Frödin and Persson 1938: 358
Prosymna L	*disiecta membra*	rock-cut	0.12	0.74/1.04	?	Blegen 1937: 141
Prosymna XXVI	primary burials	built, covered with slabs	0.40	0.86	2.72	Blegen 1937: 94
Prosymna X	kylix sherds	rock-cut	0.12	0.65	2.15	Blegen 1937: 198
Prosymna XI	skull +obsidian fragment	formed of unworked stones	?	?	?	Blegen 1937: 201
Prosymna XIII	*disiecta membra* +vases	formed of unworked stones	?	?	?	Blegen 1937: 194
Prosymna VI	large jug	rock-cut	?	?	?	Blegen 1937: 155

Site/Tomb no	*Use*	*Construction mode*	*Dimensions*			*References*
			H (m)	*W (m)*	*L (m)*	
Prosymna V	Offering repository	formed of a double row of small flat slabs	?	?	?	Blegen 1937: 153
Dendra 2	Charcoal	built of small stones and plastered	0.23	0.80	1.40	Persson 1931: 78-79
Dendra 8	- -	rock-cut Built-up stone	0.60 0.30	? 1	?	Persson 1942a: 38-39
Deiras XXVIII	*disiecta membra*	rock-cut	0.15	0.85	ca. 2.00	Deshayes 1966: 87
Deiras XXXIV	-	rock-cut	0.22	0.92	?	Deshayes 1966: 102
Kokla Tholos tomb	silver vessels	stone-built +plastered	0.45	1.00	2.25	Demakopoulou 1990a: 119
Galatas, Magoula Tholos 1	?	formed of a few thin stone slabs	?	?	?	Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 218
Aidonia	?	?	?	?	?	Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 23
Kato Almyri XIV	primary burial	rock-cut	0.05/0.22	0.75	1.80	*ArchDelt*. 35 (1980) *Chr*. 104

Site/Tomb no	*Use*	*Construction mode*	*Dimensions*			*References*
			H (m)	*W (m)*	*L (m)*	
Agora, Tomb of the Ivory Pyxides	offering repository	rock-cut rock-cut	0.60 0.60	0.75 0.75	4.30 4.30	Immerwahr 1971: 159
Athens, 25, Garibaldi Str.	-	rock-cut	0.40	0.75-0.88	2.45	Pantelidou 1975: 56
Athens, 106 Dimitrakopoulou Str.	offering repository	formed of small slabs +plastred	0.35-0.38	0.90	1.45	Onasoglou 1979: 23ff.
Brauron 5	offering repository	rock-cut	?	?	?	Papadimitriou 1956: 86
Menidi tholos	-	stone-built and plastered	0.70	3.00	7.70	Lolling *et al.* 1880: 18
Royal tomb at Meg. Kastelli, Thebes	LH IIIB amphora filled with ashes and animal bones	rock-cut, plastered and frescoed	?	0.90	?	Spyropoulos 1972a: 310-311
Thebes Ismenion 3	*disiecta membra* +offerings	rock-cut	0.48	1.40	ca. 3.00	Keramopoullos 1917: 87
Megalo Kastelli, Thebes	*disiecta membra* + offerings	rock-cut	0.22 0.22 0.22	1 0.92 0.83	1.40 3.75 3.75	Keramopoullos 1917: 109
Kolonaki 9, Thebes	?	rock-cut	0.60	1.70	3.35	Keramopoullos 1917: 141

Site/Tomb no	*Use*	*Construction mode*	*Dimensions*			*References*
			H (m)	*W (m)*	*L (m)*	
Kolonaki 28, Thebes	?	rock-cut	0.11-0.16 0.11-0.16	0.82 0.97	?	Keramopoullos 1917: 205
Megalo Kastelli, Thebes	?	rock-cut rock-cut	1.00 1.00	0.70-0.80 0.85-1.10	4.80? 4.60?	*ArchDelt*. 22 (1967) *Chr*. 228; Pharaklas 1996: 216
Thebes, Mikro Kastelli, Tb III	?	rock-cut	?	ca. 1.00	ca. 4.00	Pharaklas 1996: 209
Tanagra 77	*disiecta membra*	rock-cut	?	?	?	Spyropoulos 1974: 10
Tanagra 94	offering repository	rock-cut	?	?	?	Spyropoulos 1975a: 421, pl. 299b
Tanagra 107	practical	rock-cut	?	?	?	Spyropoulos 1977a: 24
Tanagra 111	practical	rock-cut	?	?	?	Spyropoulos 1977a: 24

CHAPTER V

Ritual Action and the Mycenaean Cult of the Dead

No-one who studies the original documents of any religion can fail to be amazed at the power of the dead. There are peoples whose existence is almost wholly dominated by rites connected with them[1].

RITUAL ACTIVITY AS PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF MYCENAEAN RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

The recognition and study of sacred ritual is indisputably a complex matter subject to a nexus of definitions and interpretations[2]. As a rule, ritual actions of sacred character are performed in specific places and in specific sequences with the purpose to invoke the presence of the supernatural and enable the interaction between the sphere of the humans and the plane of the divine[3]. In his discussion of Minoan rituals, Warren subdivided ritual activity into two main classes: *rituals of invocation* and *rituals of offering*[4]. Through dance, other ritual movements and music, invocation rituals aim to summon the divine and allow worshippers to express their reverence[5]. On the other hand, offering rituals aim to invoke the beneficence of the

[1] Canetti 1962: 262.
[2] Bremmer 1998: 14ff. *Supra Chapter II.*
[3] Burkert 1987; Warren 1988: 12-13, 34; Peatfield 1995: 219.
[4] Warren 1988: 35, fig. 19.
[5] See also Hägg's discussion on Minoan divine epiphany (Hägg 1983, 1986).

supernatural, thus to ensure the well-being of the human community. Offering rituals are mostly connected with sacrifice, animal and human, followed by the offering of votive objects, food and drink and other 'gifts', e.g. cloth, offering tables or metalwork[6].

Since Lydia Baumbach's pessimist view on the state of research on Bronze Age religion, there has been a remarkable increase in excavated sacred sites and the publication of archaeological material of religious nature[7]. The Linear B recordings of divine names and offerings[8], the excavation of official places of cult[9] and depictions of cult activity in the minor arts and large-scale painting[10] suggest that Mycenaean religion was institutionalised, connected with festivals and offerings, and serviced by specialised cult personnel[11]. Moreover, permanent cultic installations, ritual objects *in corpore*, ceremonial remains, artistic representations and written documentation indicate that libation and sacrificial ceremonies, communal

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[6] Warren 1988: fig. 19.

[7] Baumbach 1979: 158. Renfrew's fundamental work on the *Archaeology of Cult* and his ritual indicators provide a valuable guide for the study of prehistoric religion (Renfrew 1985; *idem* 1994b). Following Nilsson 1950[2], Persson 1942b, Vermeule 1974, Mylonas 1977, Brelich 1968 and many others, Robin Hägg's studies have formed the forefront of new research and interpretation of Mycenaean religion and ritual. For a full list of Hägg's publications, see Hägg Niklasson (2000-2001).

[8] The bibliography on Mycenaean religion and religious texts is vast, thus inevitably only a brief selection of scholarly work is cited here, e.g. the studies of Gèrard-Rousseau (1968), Ventris and Chadwick (1973[2]), Murray (1979), Chadwick (1985). See also the individual papers by Rousioti, Trümpy, Killen, Bendall, Gulizio, Pluta and Palaima, Sacconi in the *POTNIA* Conference (2001).

[9] Albers (1994) and Whittaker (1997) have individually produced important studies on Mycenaean cult buildings, summarising all the available data. The final publication of the *Temple* at Mycenae by Moore and Taylour appeared in 1999. Information on the ongoing excavations at the Mycenaean sanctuary at Haghios Konstantinos (Methana) is obtained from Konsolaki-Yannopoulou (1995, 2001b).

[10] Kontorli-Papadopoulou's study on *Aegean Frescoes of Religious Character* summarises the available evidence on large-scale religious iconography in prehistoric Greece. The *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* (*CMS*) is the most valuable guide for the study of LH minor arts.

[11] On cult personnel see Lejeune 1960 and Hooker 1990.

feasting and offerings formed the nucleus of LH religious activity. Representations of prayer, ritual gesture, processions and depictions of music players serve as visualisations of Warren's *δεικνύμενα* and *λεγόμενα*.

The objective of this chapter, which is subdivided into three parts, is to investigate the ritual act of 'giving' honours and offerings to the dead by drawing parallels from contemporary religious observances. The first section deals with the performance of libation and sacrifice in honour of the sacred dead. Possible Linear B recordings of names, festivals and offerings for the dead are also placed in perspective. The second part explores the religious significance of secondary burial treatment (*ανακομιδή*) and suggests that it signalled the starting point in Mycenaean ancestor cult. The third section investigates the existence of places especially designed as cult places intended for the veneration of the ancestors, with focus placed on the so-called 'Cenotaph' at Dendra. Answers to the aforementioned matters are sought through the investigation of three main categories of material, viz. the archaeological evidence, artistic representations and the Linear B documents.

FEASTING WITH THE ANCESTORS: LIBATION AND SACRIFICE IN MYCENAEAN TOMBS[12]

The essence of the sacred act which is hence often simply termed *ιερά ρέζειν* -doing or working sacred things- is the ritual slaughter and consumption of an animal for a divine or supernatural recipient[13]. In *Homo Necans*, Burkert argued that sacrifice is inextricably linked with the biological heritage of human beings and that sacrificial practice lurks behind religious rituals and symbols exhibited in most religions[14]. On the other hand, the irretrievability that characterises libation rites, i.e. the outpouring of liquids in honour of the sacred, renders this particular act as 'the purest and highest form of renunciation'[15]. Moreover, in peoples' cosmologies it is not uncommon for food and drink to be regarded as a means of communion with the sphere of the sacred.

In Mycenaean religious practice, libation and sacrifice followed by communal feasting, played an important role in the encounters between the mortals and the sphere of the sacred. These festive occasions may reflect the Mycenaean belief that the divine spirits were present during ritual meals and capable of partaking of the food and drink offered to them by the cult celebrants. Following an account of sacrifice, libation and ritual banqueting in honour of the Mycenaean gods, the aim of the following section is to draw attention to a parallel set of ideas concerning communion

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[12] An abbreviated version of this section has been presented by the author of this thesis in the 6th Round Table on *Food, Cuisine and Society in Prehistoric Greece*, organised by the Sheffield Centre for Aegean Archaeology, 20-21 January 2001.
[13] Burkert 1985: 55.
[14] Burkert 1983.
[15] Burkert 1985: 72.

with the dead or with the ancestors through libation, sacrifice and feasting in the Mycenaean world.

Feasting with the gods in Mycenaean Greece

Scholars have invested a considerable amount of work on the celebration of religious festivals at fixed times with public participation in Mycenaean times. Palmer and Bennett discussed the evidence for festivals in Linear B tablets and especially in connection with the Pylos Fr series, documents dealing with olive oil[16]. Palmer, in particular, has projected a festival associated with the Preparation of the Couch, *re-ke-to-ro-te-ri-jo*; the Festival of the New Wine, *me-tu-wo ne-wo*; the Raising of the Lamentation, *to-no-e-ke-te-ri-jo*; the Festival of Wanassa, *wa-na-se-wi-jo* and the festival of the Dipsioi, *di-pi-si-je-wi-jo*[17]. Another Mycenaean festive occasion, termed *po-re-no-zo-te-ri-ja* recorded on PY Un 443.2, has attracted the interest of archaeologists[18].

Not surprisingly, the pouring of libations and the performance of sacrifice followed by feasting would have constituted central rites in these festive celebrations. Pictorial sources, textual references and the archaeological material suggest that they were performed on various occasions and in different ways.

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[16] Palmer 1963: 250ff.; Bennett 1958; Palmer 1979: 317ff.
[17] Palmer 1963: 250ff.
[18] *Infra* pp. 318ff.

Libation rituals and drinking ceremonies

The central role of drinking and pouring ceremonies in Mycenaean ritual has been emphasised by Hägg, who demonstrated that such rites would have been performed on a variety of instances, 'from the everyday family cult at the house-altar to the funerary ceremony at the closing of the tomb'[19]. The frequent presence of kylikes, of normal sizes and miniature versions, in well established Mycenaean sanctuaries and mortuary contexts led him to suggest that 'the *kylix* may in fact be the most common Mycenaean libation vessel, thus used in both divine and funerary ritual'[20].

The same scholar has argued that the movable equipment employed for the performance of libations could be classified in two categories, namely pouring vessels and receptacles[21]. Valuable information on the equipment employed for the ritual pouring of liquids is provided by a flat cylinder seal from Naxos that depicts a krater, a jug and a funnel-shaped rhyton placed on a low offering table in front of which a male figure is standing facing a palm tree with a staff or spear in his hand[22].

Large numbers of kylikes have been reported from Room 93, a room of sacred character, at Pylos and the open area in front of it, sharing similarities with the evidence from the Room with the Fresco Complex at Mycenae[23]. The abundance of drinking vessels and containers

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[19] Hägg 1990: 183.
[20] Hägg 1990:183.
[21] Hägg 1998: 104-105.
[22] Kardara 1977: 6, pl. 6; *CMS* V 608; Sakellarakis 1970: 172; Marinatos 1984: 117ff.
[23] Blegen and Rawson 1966: 303. Säflund (1980) discussed in detail the vast concentration of kylikes from the palace at Pylos and associated them with sacrificial banquets.

corresponding to all phases of the temple at Haghia Irini (Keos) may underline the importance of wine consumption in cultic performance[24]; equally interesting is the predominance of kylikes in the Tsoungiza deposit[25]. Kylikes, some associated with the bench in Room A, have recently been uncovered in the Mycenaean sanctuary on the Methana peninsula[26].

Of great significance is the presence of service sets of vessels and of rhyta for they provide vital information on the liquids employed during the ceremonial acts and on the manner of performance[27]. Actual rhyta have been unearthed in the sanctuaries at Tiryns (Rooms 117 and 110), Methana (Room A), Phylakopi and in the 'Rhyton Well' in the vicinity of the Cult Centre at Mycenae[28]. In Room XXXII at Asine an intentionally broken jug was placed upside down in such a position that it may have well been employed as a receptacle through which the libation liquid would have been channelled into the earth, a feature reminiscent of the LH IIIB house-altars at Berbati[29].

Next to the hearth of the megaron at Pylos a tripod table of offerings had received the liquid poured from miniature kylikes, all discovered *in situ*[30]. Another set comprising a tripod offering table and miniature vases was

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[24] Caskey 1981: 127.
[25] Wright *et al.*1990: 635-636; *idem* 1994: 69
[26] Yannopoulou-Konsolaki 2001b: 213ff.
[27] Hägg 1990: 18; Koehl 1981.
[28] Kilian 1978: 390; Yannopoulou-Konsolaki 2001b: 213, 215; Renfrew 1985: 239, 275, 324; Koehl 1981: 186.
[29] Frödin and Persson 1938: 74-76; Hägg 1981b: 93; *idem* 1990: 180-181; Åkeström 1988: 201-202.
[30] Blegen and Lawson 1966: 89, 91.

found in Corridor 18, Pylos[31]. Correspondingly, from Room Gamma 1 in Tsountas' House Shrine, three miniature vases and a shallow dish have been reported from near the bench[32]. In the Temple Complex a tripod table of offerings was placed in front of a terracotta figure which was found embedded in a bench **(fig. 65)**, a combination of sacred apparatuses and installations implying, according to Moore, an act of perpetual offering[33]. I would prefer to see the figure as the symbolic icon of a deity receiving the libations poured into the tripod table of offerings.

Clear proof for libation rituals performed in Mycenaean sanctuaries is provided by a wide range of permanent installations and portable equipment, such as benches, platforms with incorporated pots as receptacles, bolster-shaped altars, runnels and tripod offering tables. Room Gamma 1 in Tsountas' House Shrine was equipped with a bolster-shaped installation with an extension featuring a round depression, in all probability a receptacle for libations or a 'sinking to accommodate the pointed end of a rhyton or libation vessel'[34]. In the courtyard of the same shrine another peculiar installation was reported, which might have served a similar purpose[35]. A close connection between libation ceremonies and the hearth of the Mycenaean palace has recently been proposed by J. Wright[36].

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[31] Hägg 1990: 183 note 52.
[32] Wace 1951: 254.
[33] Moore and Taylour 1999: 115. Moore 1988: 228.
[34] Mylonas 1981: 313; Wace 1951: 254; Hägg 1990: 178.
[35] Hägg 1990: 178.
[36] Wright 1995a: 346.

Next to the throne of the megaron at Ano Englianos two basins formed in the plaster floor and connected by a channel have been associated with libation ceremonies[37]; their ritualistic nature is supported by the presence of miniature kylikes found scattered on the floor of the megaron[38]. Of similar function must have been an alabaster slab with a shallow oval depression in the floor of the porch of the Mycenae megaron, which Papadimitriou incorrectly identified as the base for a throne[39], as well as the bench and the deep conical depression in Room G at the sanctuary at Haghios Konstantinos, Methana[40].

The iconographical references to ceremonial drinking and libation rites contribute significantly to the understanding and interpretation of the archaeological material. Depictions of the kind include the 'Campstool Fresco' at Knossos and the rather fragmentary wall paintings from the Pylos megaron depicting seated men possibly engaged in a drinking or toasting ceremony[41]. Undoubtedly, the scenes on the rings from Tiryns and Room Z2 at Thebes and the depictions of Genii pouring libations from a conical rhyton, jug, ewer or chalice stress the sacred value of the custom[42]. Moreover, ritual vessels are depicted in the procession frescoes from Thebes, Tiryns and Knossos[43].

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[37] Blegen and Rawson 1966: 85-88; Hägg 1968: 41ff.
[38] Blegen and Rawson 1966: 85-88.
[39] Papadimitriou 1955a: 230ff. Hägg, Kilian and Rehak attributed cultic significance to this feature (Hägg 1990: 180-181, notes 28 and 29; Rehak 1995: 100).
[40] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 216- 217.
[41] Lang 1969: 80-81, pls. 28, 125-126A; Immerwahr 1990: 95, pls. 45-46.
[42] Mylonas 1966: 166-168; Kontorli-papadopoulou 1996: 139-140; *CMS* I, 179. The ring discovered in Room Z2 at Thebes (D. Liagas' plot, Oidipodos Str.,) depicts a female figure, most probably a goddess, being flanked by two griffins and receiving offerings from a pair of Genii [*ArchDelt* 38 (1983) 132].
[43] Mantzourani 1995: 130ff.

Cameron has correctly suggested that the act of carrying vessels in the processional frescoes may imply libations to the deity on her arrival or epiphany at the destination of the procession, i.e. the palace itself, a shrine, a temple or an altar[44]. Moreover, N. Marinatos has connected the typological variability of the depicted vessels with different libation rituals performed on a variety of occasions[45]. To the aforementioned examples one should add the fragment of a large terracotta figure from Amyklaion in Laconia, which preserves a hand holding the stem of a goblet or kylix [46].

The religious significance of liquids -especially wine- and of pouring and drinking vessels is reflected in their documentation as offerings to gods and religious festivals in the Linear B texts[47]. According to Palmer, *wine (wo-no)*, which was not produced directly by the palace, enjoyed high status in the Mycenaean world and never formed part of rations for lower-level personnel[48]. Moreover, there are indications that wine might have been distributed by the palace on the occasion of ceremonies and feasts. In this connection, PY Tn 316, a record of vessels and liquids offered to deities and heroes during ceremonies in their shrines, is the most important written testimony of the practice[49].

Correspondingly, PY Un 718 co-lists food and wine and may document a special obligation for designated landholders to provide food, drink and

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[44] Cited in Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996: 137.
[45] Marinatos 1986: 25-26.
[46] Demakopoulou 1982: 54-56, pl. 26.68
[47] Murray 1978: 178ff.
[48] Palmer 1994: 188ff.; *idem* 1995: 277ff.; Hamilakis 1996b: 20ff. Note, though, Cavanagh's dissent opinion (1998: 111).
[49] Ventris and Chadwick 1973^2: 286-289.

gifts at a major festival of Poseidon[50]. PY Vn 20 records a remarkable quantity of 410 units of wine sent by the palace to the nine towns of the Nearer Province possibly for the purposes of a religious festival. Smaller amounts of wine listed in PY Gn 720 and 428 were disbursed to individuals in different destinations and to important religious officials respectively[51].

Sacrificial rituals and banqueting in Mycenaean sanctuaries

The co-listing of meat and wine in Linear B documents of ceremonial and/or offering context reveal the ritual connection between food and drink consumption. Hägg, followed by Konsolaki-Yannopoulou, has pointed to the association between libation and sacrifice as this is mirrored in the establishment of libation installations in close proximity to sacrificial altars, as in Tsountas' House Shrine at Mycenae and Room A at Haghios Konstantinos[52]. The connection between libation and sacrifice may also be implied by the use of animal-head or –shape rhyta, interesting being the pig-head rhyton from Methana on account of its association with a platform and juvenile pigs' bones[53].

The presence of animal remains has been taken as a clear *indicium* of sacrificial rites, e.g. Phylakopi and Methana[54]. Unfortunately, the recognition and study of sacrifice in Late Helladic sacred contexts is trivial;

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[50] Palmer 1995: 278ff.
[51] Palmer 1995: 277ff.
[52] Hägg 1990: 183; *idem* 1998: 104.
[53] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 216.
[54] Kilian 1981b: 49ff.; Renfrew 1985: 388, 479-483; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 215-217.

despite the fact that excavators often deal with the same material evidence, yet diversity is observed in terms of interpretation, e.g. the animal bones from Tiryns have been explained as the remains of sacred meals consumed outside the cult buildings and not as evidence for actual sacrifice[55], whereas consistent with feasting is the early LH IIIA2 deposit of figurines, kylikes, bowls and discarded animal bones at Tsoungiza[56].

Unfortunately, only a few examples of permanent installations that could safely be connected with sacrifice have survived in the archaeological record. According to Mylonas, the bolster-shaped altar in Tsountas's House Shrine was used for slaughtering animals and was later replaced by the rectangular structure in the courtyard of the same building[57]. The animal bones found mixed with ash, potsherds and figurines in a pit in the courtyard to the south of the Temple could have been the remains of sacrifices performed on the round altar nearby[58]. On certain occasions, benches or low platforms would have functioned as altars. On no account should the fact be excluded that altars or tables made of perishable material, e.g. wood, would have been used although not preserved to-date.

Exceptional is the example of the high platform formed by the east wall of the Room with the Fresco (Room 31) at Mycenae[59]. At the western end of its upper surface a ledge was roughly shaped into three coalescing discs, in

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[55] Kilian 1988a: 148; Albers 1994: 106-110, 132-134; Hägg 1998: 101.
[56] Wright 1994: 69; Shelmerdine 1999: 20.
[57] Mylonas 1975c: 246ff.; *idem* 1981: 313. Note, though, the objections raised by Wace 1951: 254ff., French 1981a: 44ff. and Albers 1994: 24.
[58] Mylonas 1975c: 248-249; *idem* 1981: 316; *idem* 1983: 142.
[59] Taylour 1969: 94-95; Marinatos 1988: 245; Rehak 1992. See also *pp.* 101ff. of the present thesis.

the form of miniature hearths, filled with ashes. The ash in the discs must have been the remnants of incense burnt for purification. Corroborating evidence for the characterisation of the bench as an altar is provided by the iconographical programme of the wall connected with the bench. Apart from a row of beam-ends crowned by horns of consecration on its north face, little has survived of the original decoration of the bench itself **(fig. 11)**[60]. To the left, a female figure accompanied by an animal proceeds towards the 'shrine' raising her hands to display bunches of grain in a hieratic pose.

Seemingly, there is no consistency in the choice of sacrificial animals as indicated by the presence of bone remains belonging to bulls, goats, sheep and pigs and their invariable recording as sacrificial animals in Linear B documents, e.g. KN C 941, KN Ch 7100, PY Un 718, PY Cn 3. On the other hand, the requirements of sacrificial observances might have necessitated the choice of animals of a particular species and age in specific contexts as suggested in the case of the Methana complex[61]. Such a hypothesis is strengthened by KN Ch 896, a document of sacrificial context, in which the ideogram for oxen is followed by the syllabogram *ne.*, read as 'jeunes taureaux nés dans l' année'[62].

The association of large bovid figures and figurines with outdoor altars at Phylakopi, Methana, Tiryns, Kynortion and Keos has resulted in their

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[60] Taylour 1983: 55.
[61] Whittaker 1997: 148.
[62] Godart 1999: 250. The possibility that this tablet may be linked to sacrifices in the context of funerary ceremonies proposed by the same scholar will be discussed below.

interpretation as substitutes for actual animal sacrifices[63]. The scene of a sacrificial bull led by a male procession decorated the Vestibule of the megaron at Ano Englianos [64], whereas a sacrificial function has been suggested for the bull on a fresco from Tiryns[65].

Although, we possess evidence for the performance of sacrifice, little information exists on the sacrificial instrument itself. A long series of bronze double axes, certainly a Minoan element, with a handle for hanging has been reported from Kynortion and associated with sacrificial rites[66]. Stone mace-heads would have been used in connection to sacrifice to stun the victim[67]. Appealing is the fact that a number of figures from Mycenae hold axe-hammers in their raised hands.

The sword or dagger has been classified as an implement of sacrifice, as suggested by the discovery of an ivory pommel and the mace-head found along with vessels and figurines on the high bench along the south wall of Room 31 at Mycenae, although one should not exclude the possibility of them being votive offerings or both[68]. The presence of these sacrificial instruments is consistent with the fresco decoration of the room, the permanent installations and the archaeological evidence, as described

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[63] Peppa-Papaioannou 1985: 209; Whittaker 1997: 153. Recently, a large wheel-made bovid figure has been reported from Kato Phana, Chios (The Newsletter of the British School at Athens, 2000-2001).
[64] Lang 1969: 193, pl. 119; Immerwahr 1990: 117-118, 197; McCallum 1987: 260.
[65] Rodenwaldt 1976: 155-156, no 224, fig. 65; Immerwahr 1990: 135, 203 (Ti No 8). Note, though, Kontorli-Papadopoulou's scepticism on the suggested interpretation (Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996: 150).
[66] Lambrinoudakis 1981: 62, figs. 10, 12. However, the fragility of several of these bronze axes would have dictated their function as display items during the sacrificial rituals (Hägg 1985: 207, 210; *idem* 1997: 17).
[67] Platonos-Manti 1981; Hägg 1998: 102.
[68] Kilian-Dirlmeier 1990: 158.

above. In other cases, the implement of sacrifice would not have been different from the utensils used in everyday life, e.g. a knife.

Depictions in the minor arts provide information not only on the species of the sacrificial animals but also on the appearance of the altars and the implements used, e.g. the Montigny gem from Mycenae depicts a large bovid laid on a three-legged table with a large knife or dagger on the back of its neck, whereas on the cylinder seal from Naxos a dagger is also included to the ritual equipment[69].

It has been argued above that excavators very often find themselves in an awkward position trying to distinguish between the remains of animal sacrifice and the structured deposits of food refuse as the result of ceremonial consumption or *post festum* cleaning. Burnt animal bones have been reported from Methana, Mycenae, Pylos, Kynortion and Keos[70]. The subject was treated by Yavis, who denied the existence of any sort of burnt animal sacrifices in Mycenaean times[71]. *Pace* Yavis, Şahin maintained that the black earth, thick ashes, animal bones and votives attested in a number of sanctuaries on the mainland indicate the performance of burnt sacrifices on completely perishable pyre- or ash- heaps or on natural heights[72].

Bergquist has warned archaeologists against the universal, but often oversimplified interpretation of ashes and animal bones as derivatives of

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[69] Rutkowski 1981: 40ff., fig. 11(7); Mylonas 1983: 201.
[70] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 215-216; Whittaker 1997: 147; Isaakidou *et. al.* 2002: 87ff.; Lambrinoudakis 1981: 59-62; Caskey 1981: 127.
[71] Yavis 1949: 32, 41.
[72] Şahin, M.C., 1972. *Die Entwicklung der griechischen Monumentaltäre* [Diss. Bonn]. Bonn (non vidi. Quoted in Bergquist 1988: 22, note 5).

actual burnt animal sacrifice and, alternatively, suggested that they may constitute human litter[73]. Along this line of argument, she and Hägg proposed that the ash layers from Kynortion should be connected with the preparation of sacrificial meals and the *post festum* cleaning of the sacred area, rather than with strata of actual burnt sacrifices[74].

Up to-date, actual proof for the performance of burnt animal sacrifices has been exclusively provided by the sanctuary at Methana, where the hearth in the south-eastern corner of Room A preserved a spit-rest of andesite still *in situ* and was filled with a thick layer of ash mixed with a considerable amount of burnt animal bones, identified as belonging to juvenile pigs[75]. According to the excavator, the deposit is noticeably different from the bone waste from communal feasting retrieved in other areas of the sanctuary, whereas the preparation of sacrificial meals, as indicated by sheep/goat unburnt bones, would have taken place in Room B[76].

Hamilakis has recently stressed the lack of attention paid to food and drink consumption proportionally to the rate and the volume of archaeological research in the Aegean[77]. Although there is a vast bibliography on religious feasting associated with sacrifice in Classical Greece[78], only recently have similar customs begun to be discussed. In this respect, of great significance are the papers by J. Killen, Ch. Piteros *et al.* and A. Sacconi[79].

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[73] Bergquist 1988: 30.
[74] Bergquist 1988: 30; Hägg 1998: 101.
[75] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 215.
[76] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 215-216.
[77] Hamilakis 1999: 60.
[78] Detienne 1979; Gernet 1981; Schimtt-Pantel 1992.
[79] Killen 1994; Piteros *et al.* 1990; Sacconi 2001.

The preparation of food and sacred meals connected with sacrifice is indicated not only by the discovery of animal bones but also by the presence of hearths, cooking ware and stone tools[80]. Cooking ware has been found in the Room with the Fresco at Mycenae, the sanctuary at Methana in connection with the hearth and at Phylakopi, whereas the excavations in the same sanctuaries have produced stone tools, namely querns, mortars, grinders and pounders[81].

The limited space within the sacred buildings and the restricted access to them would have prevented to a certain degree mass participation in the rites and the performance of communal feasting. Thus, open spaces in the citadels would have served the needs of ritual communal feasting connected with food consumption and drinking parties, as indicated by the case of Tiryns, where feasting must have taken place outside the small sanctuaries. Cavanagh, who discussed in detail the case of courts and squares in Mycenaean towns, proposed that apart from their practical function, the great courts at Mycenae, Tiryns and Pylos would have served congregational purposes judging from the presence of altars in these areas[82].

The *plethora* of kylikes retrieved in various areas of the palatial complexes could be connected with liquid libations and at the same time with religious ceremonies during which quantities of wine were consumed by the

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[80] Whittaker 1997: 147. The religious function of hearths in prehistoric Greece, in particular the EBA, has been assessed by M. Caskey (1990).
[81] Whittaker 1997: 147.
[82] Cavanagh 2001: 123ff.

participants. Interestingly, Theban and Knossian Linear B documents have preserved the titles of those charged with the organisation of religious banquets. On TH Fq 254 the *de-po-no* (=**deik^{u}nos *δειπνός*) is responsible for the preparation of a sacred meal made of barley, whereas on KN F 51 the *po-ro-de-po-no* (**πρόδειπνος*, 'le vice-banquetier') is charged with a similar task[83].

To reiterate, it is evident that the Mycenaeans had established a set of religious acts connected with food and drink through which they attempted to propitiate the divine and gain communion with the sphere of the gods. Through the ritual performance of libation and sacrifice, intercourse with the sacred was conducted and the power and presence of the gods were experienced and acknowledged. The act of eating and drinking as embodied experiences would have involved emotions and sensual reactions, whereas the consumption of alcoholic drinks, e.g. wine, would have contributed to additional psychological effects resulting from the intoxicating properties of the liquids[84].

Using the evidence for food and drink consumption in Mycenaean religious acts and festivals as comparative material, the theme of the next section is the ceremonial surrounding the performance of libation and sacrifice in Mycenaean funerary record. Therefore, it aims to draw attention to a set of ideas concerning the communion with the dead in LH IIIA-B times via the

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[83] Sacconi 2001: 467-468. According to Ventris and Chadwick (1973^{2}: 573), *po-ro-de-qo-no* is a recipient of barley and signifies a divine or a masculine name.

[84] Hamilakis 1999: 57-58. On the consumption of drugs and intoxicants and their contribution to the reinforcement of psychological effects in public feasting see Schivelbusch 1992, Rudgley 1993 and Goodman *et al.* 1995.

performance of invocation and offering rituals associated with the consumption of food and drink.

'The souls are nourished by libations' [85]**: Libation rituals and drinking ceremonies in Mycenaean tombs**

The earliest documentation of *χοαί*, i.e. the ceremonial pouring of liquids in honour of the dead, with the aim to invoke the presence of the souls, is recorded in the Homeric Poems. In the *Odyssey* (λ. 26-28), Odysseus summons the souls of the dead by performing libations followed by sacrifice

...ἀμφ' αὐτῷ δὲ ***χοὴν χεόμην πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι,***
πρῶτα μελικρίτῳ, μετέπειτα δὲ ἡδέϊ οἴνῳ,
τό τρίτον αὖθ' ὕδατι...

whereas in the *Iliad* (Ψ. 218ff), Achilles pours wine to the earth and invokes Patroclus' soul

ὁ δε πάννυχος ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς χρυσέου ἐκ κρητῆρος, ἑλών δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον,
οἶνον ἀφυσσόμενος χαμάδις χέε, *δεῦε δὲ γαῖαν, ψυχήν κικλήσκων Πατροκλέϊος δειλοῖο*

The Mycenaean custom of pouring libations in honour of the dead is attested from the Shaft Grave period onwards. During the exploration of GCB, Papadimitriou noticed cavities in the shape of small cups in the rock surface of some of the graves as well as grooves leading towards the edge,

[85] Lucianus, *De Luctu* 9.

features that he associated with funerary feasting[86]. Furthermore, the excavations to the west of Shaft Grave K in GCB revealed an enigmatic horseshoe-shaped structure (2.25x1.32m) that contained nothing but a small number of unburnt animal bones, a few pottery fragments and a layer of black earth and ashes[87]. The structure was originally associated with the buildings and the kiln situated to the north[88] but was later identified as a cenotaph intended for a person who had perished abroad[89].

On the other hand, Protonotariou-Deilaki and Hielte-Stavropoulou attributed ritualistic character to the structure and associated it with the practice of funerary rituals after the deposition of the corpse in the tumulus[90]. In an earlier study, I have argued that this bolster-shaped structure may be ritualistic in nature and could be interpreted as a receptacle for the libations and the offerings given to the dead in the context of funerary cult, using as comparative material corresponding installations in 'Tumuli A and C' at Argos, the *bothros* at Drachmani and the circular pit in the Grave Enclosure at Phourni[91].

Apart from their function as precious goods incorporated into the ceremonial or prestige exchange with the Minoan ruling élites, several of the beaked jugs, cups, goblets, hybrid vessels and elaborate rhyta from the

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[86] Cited in Åkeström 1988: 203. Mylonas (1973: 16-17) argued that these cavities were the result of the action of caper roots.
[87] Mylonas 1973: 124-126, pls. 107a,b.
[88] Papadimitriou 1953: 220-221.
[89] Mylonas 1973: 126.
[90] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990b: 90 note 44; Hielte-Stavropoulou 2001.
[91] Gallou 1998: 18-19.

Shaft Graves of GCA could have served ceremonial purposes[92]. More importantly, Schliemann's altar and Keramopoullos's hollow must have received the liquid offerings and other gifts in honour of the ancestors from EMyc times to the collapse of the palaces[93].

The custom of pouring libation, performing drinking ceremonials and offering drinking vessels to the dead continued into the LH IIIA-B period. However, the complexity of Mycenaean funerary ritual and the disturbance observed in the stratification of the tombs as a result of successive burials, ceremonial interference with the skeletal remains and, unfortunately, looting render the reading of the available data extremely difficult. Thus, in most cases the distinction between the remains of rites performed at the time of the burial and post-funerary visits to the tombs is difficult. To overcome such an obstacle, it has been resolved to divide this section in three broad themes: a. 'farewell' rites connected with the liminal stage of the rites of passage, b. *χοαί* and the invocation of the dead and c. the offering of drinking vessels and liquids to the dead as part of Mycenaean eschatology.

The significance of drinking vessels in the dromos and the stomion of Mycenaean tombs

Since the first excavations of Mycenaean tombs excavators have noted the presence of fragments of drinking vessels in the *dromos* and/or the *stomion*

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[92] Wright 1995b: 291; Vermeule 1964: 87; Mylonas 1966: 165.
[93] See discussion in pp. 52ff of present thesis.

of tholos and chamber tombs and, in the case of simple graves, in the fill of the shaft, 'as belonging to vases, which were either broken and thrown out during the cleaning of the tombs, or used and scattered during or after a final libation and some form of ritual ceremony'[94]. Wace gave a more vivid description of the custom; 'when the doorway was walled up and the filling of the dromos with earth had already begun, the members of the family may have gathered together in the dromos before the doorway and poured a last libation or drunk a farewell toast to the dead and then shattered the cups they used'[95].

The large numbers of drinking vessels -the kylix being the predominant type in most cases- suggest that the custom reached a climax in LH IIIA-B times. The evidence from simple graves and built tombs is sporadic, e.g. Deiras and Argos, but conclusions can be drawn on the basis of corresponding evidence from tholos and chamber tombs[96]. The number of kylikes or other drinking vessels reported from the fill of the *dromos* or the stratification of the *stomion* varies from one, e.g. Berbati tomb 1, to as many as seventy, e.g. Panaghitsa tomb 1 at Mycenae, where the fragments were recovered within a rather limited area 1.65m below the surface and 1.30m from the doorway[97]. From the *dromos* of tomb 14 at Dendra Åström reported ca. 330 sherds of LH IIIA2-B plain ware of which 90 belonged to

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[94] Papavasileiou 1910: 26-27; Blegen 1937: 237; Mylonas 1948: 72; *idem* 1961-62: 294; Vermeule 1964: 299; Andronikos 1968: 93; Iakovides 1969: 124, 130; Niklasson 1981-82: 14; Laffineur 1986: 82ff.; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995: 118; Cavanagh 1998: 106; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 114-115.
[95] Wace 1932: 131.
[96] Deshayes 1966; Lewartowski 2000: 59; Papadimitriou 2001: 183.
[97] Mylonas 1972: 115; Shelton 2000: 51.

stemmed cups[98]. From tomb 13 at the same necropolis more than 400 fragments belonging to ca. 40 stemmed goblets were uncovered in the *epichosis* of the *dromos* and in front or above the *stomion*[99].

Wace stressed the fact that the fragments of the kylikes found in front of the actual entrance to the chamber *do not* join onto other fragments reported from the chamber[100]. On the other hand, both Tsountas and Wace noticed the comparative frequency with which miscellaneous potsherds belonging to various vessel types found in the *dromoi* joined onto others from the chamber and associated them with the removal of earlier interments from the chamber to the *dromos*[101]. We shall return to this aspect of the custom in the section where the performance of secondary rites is treated.

Interestingly, regional and cultural variations are detected in the performance of the rite. Cavanagh, for example, has noted that the custom is not attested in the Attic simple graves[102], whereas regionalism and cultural differentiation must have dictated the relative absence of drinking vessels in the *dromoi* and *stomia* of the Mycenaean tombs in Achaea and Elis[103]. The total absence of kylikes or goblets in the *dromoi* of tombs

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[98] Åström 1977: 106, 112ff.
[99] Åström 1977: 72-73.
[100] Wace 1932: 131.
[101] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 147; Wace 1932: 130-131. A similar phenomenon has been observed by Keramopoullos with respect to the chamber tombs at Thebes (Keramopoullos 1917: 145). Note also the case of tomb IV at Nauplion where at the outer end of the *dromos* a pit was uncovered filled with potsherds that could be joined onto other potsherds left in the chamber (Dragona-Latsoudi 1977: 88).
[102] Cavanagh 1977: 169 note 65.
[103] Yalouris 1960; Papadopoulos 1979: 53, 57; *idem* 1990: 51; Cavanagh 1998: 107; Vikatou 1999: 250-251 (she also pointed to the absolute absence of rhyta, skyphoi and figurines from the cemetery at Haghia Triadha, Elis). The pottery assemblage from the

before LH IIIA and the chronological discontinuity of the custom in LH IIIC times has been explained by Cavanagh as the result of 'a very specific complex of religious and social associations bound up with wine drinking, centred in particular on the palace and palace society, which fell into disuse, may even have been consciously rejected, with the fall of the palaces'[104].

The performance of libations is also implied by the presence of service sets of vessels associated with the pouring, serving and consumption of liquid, most probably wine. Thus, apart from the drinking vessels (kylikes, goblets, cups, etc), jugs, jars, bowls, *kraters*, *alabastra* and stirrup jars are frequently uncovered in the *dromos* and the *stomion*. The religious importance that local communities attached to libations is confirmed by the observation that rhyta are more commonly deposited in tombs than in cultic or domestic contexts[105]. The presence of fragments of rhyta in the *dromos*, e.g. Deiras XXVI and XXXV[106], strengthens the significant role of the *dromos* in the performance of such sacred acts.

Characteristic 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

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tholos tomb at Petrotos Patron, Achaea, included a large concentration of *alabastra*, amphoroid vessels, *pyxides*, etc., but only a limited number of drinking vessels (L. Papazoglou, 'Ο θολωτός τάφος του Πετρωτού Πατρών', lecture organised by the 'Friends of the National Museum at Athens', 4 April 2001).

[104] Cavanagh 1998: 111.

[105] Koehl 1981: 186; Laffineur 1986. A typological development of Minoan and Mycenaean rhyta is given in Koehl 1981: 180, fig. 1. Undoubtedly, the number of rhyta in tombs will definitely rise following the final publication of many excavated but yet unpublished Mycenaean tombs.

[106] Deshayes 1966: 75, 105, 162, pls. LXXV(1,2), XCIV(6).

top of the right doorjamb[107], possibly an indication of the continuous and repeated performance of libation rituals after the burial and the post-funerary offerings to the dead. This is further supported by the fact that the tomb contained exclusively the remains of secondary burials.

Of equal significance is the case reported from Berbati tomb XII; 'near the surface, 4.75 and 5.80m from the opening of the chamber on the longitudinal axis of the dromos, were four stones in a row beneath which, under a protective covering of earth, lay vase no. 23' (i.e. a hydria)[108]. Interestingly, all pottery reported from the tomb is dated to LH IIIA1-IIIA2*e* apart from this hydria which is datable to LH IIIA2*l*[109], thus a later offering *not* associated with any of the interments in the chamber.

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 any objects, appeared a large slab of *poros* lying partly on its side and beneath it an intact jug of LH III date[110]. Although, originally the excavator interpreted it as a vase in which one of the workmen might have carried his water supply, the jug's similarities with its unpainted counterparts from tombs XXXIII and XXXV led to the re-interpretation of the vessel as a sepulchral offering[111].

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[107] Wace 1932: 35, 131, fig. 18 (the recess is indicated with the letter *c* on the plan). Noteworthy is the case of the 2m deep walled antechamber which preceded the door of tomb Kontogenadha Γ on Kephallenia and has been linked to funerary rites and, in particular, wine-drinking ceremonies (Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999: 57).
[108] Säflund 1965: 71, 78, figs. 49, 59-60.
[109] Säflund 1965: 72 (Table 5).
[110] Blegen 1928: 65.
[111] Blegen 1928: 65.

The religious importance of libations and ceremonial drinking for the dead is stressed in the Mycenaean iconography of death. A reference to the pouring of a libation in honour of the deceased is illustrated on a larnax from tomb 36 at Tanagra[112]. The decorative scene depicts two female figures separated by a checkerboard panel; a mourner occupies the left part, while at the right a female figure is portrayed holding aloft in her left hand a dark stemmed kylix **(fig. 76a)**. A similar scene of an individual raising a kylix is depicted on the Episkopi sarcophagus **(fig. 38)**[113]. Another instance of ceremonial drinking in honour of the dead, as defined by its funerary context, is provided by the decorative panel of a small jug from Alyki, which illustrates a female figure between two palm trees drinking from a cup **(fig. 76b)**[114]. The decoration of a fragmentary *krater* from Tiryns has preserved an enthroned figure, a deity or a priest(ess), holding up a goblet, and, before him/her, chariots participating in the funeral games **(fig. 76c)**[115].

The most instructive scene of libation performed in honour of the dead during prehistoric times is depicted on side A of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, which illustrates two priestesses, dressed dissimilarly and accompanied by a lyre-player, performing pouring rites **(fig. 31)**. The officiating priestess pours the contents of a bucket into a large *krater*, which is standing between double axes on which birds are perching. Paribeni pointed to a red line running from the bucket into the *krater* and

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[112] Spyropoulos 1973a: 21, pl. 10b.
[113] Kanta 1979: 150.
[114] Papadimitriou 1954: 79-80, figs. 5-6.
[115] Kilian 1980; Wright 1995b: 304.

suggested that the bucket contained blood, an interpretation also accepted by N. Marinatos[116]. Long has argued that if this pouring scene takes place outside a tomb, it would most probably represent a combination of Late Minoan and Mycenaean practices, honouring the goddess(es) of the double axe, who would be considered to have power both over the living and the dead and at the same time, bidding farewell to the deceased[117].

In 1986 Laffineur suggested that the scene on the sarcophagus is a mixture of the Minoan tradition of addressing the divine and of the Mycenaean custom of toasting the dead[118]. However, in 1991, based on the Homeric tradition and the excavations at the Mycenaean cemetery of Palaiokastro (Arcadia), Laffineur advanced an alternative interpretation, i.e. that the scene illustrates an act of necromancy[119]. Although Laffineur's interpretation is interesting and consistent with the archaeological evidence from Palaiokastro, for lack of further evidence as regards rites of necromancy in prehistoric Greece, it would be sensible to suggest that the scene serves as visualisation of the combination of offering and invocation rites connected with funerary cult.

According to N. Marinatos, on side B another type of libation is depicted[120]. To the right of the decorative panel, a priestess is standing in front of a low altar on top of which a bowl has been placed. Above the altar

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[116] Marinatos 1986: 26. Long (1974: 36) suggests the employment of a mixture of water and wine.
[117] Long 1974: 40, 73.
[118] Laffineur 1986: 84.
[119] Laffineur 1991a. The excavation of the Mycenaean 'Death-oracle' at Palaiokastro (Arcadia) will be discussed in connection to the Dendra 'Cenotaph'.
[120] Marinatos 1986: 26.

a libation jug is depicted and on a higher level a basket with what seems to be fruit. According to her interpretation of the scene, a libation is to be performed and fruit is to be deposited in the bowl. Thus, the libation ritual on side A signifies the death aspect connected with funerary cult; on the other side (side B) there is animal sacrifice connected with renewal symbolised by the tree-shrine and the bowl of fruit[121].

For Cavanagh, the performance of funerary libations 'is a liminal rite, at the blocking of the tomb, it is a classical rite of separation involving the smashing of vessels, and evidently a collective rite involving more than one mourner'[122]. In modern Greece the container holding the wine for the ablutions of the dead is shattered immediately after the funerary procession leaves the house and the deceased is transferred to the final resting place; this is definitely a rite of separation. Nevertheless, the smashing of the drinking vessels employed during the ritual acts supports the *stomion*'s symbolic and eschatological connotations in the context of Mycenaean rites of passage.

This ritual act is illustrative of the blurring of the boundaries between the living and the dead whereas, at the same time, its association with the blocking of the *stomion* may be suggestive of the severing of the bonds between the two worlds. Could such tie-breaking acts be taken to signify not only the separation between life and death, but also between mundanity and sanctity? The deliberate destruction of grave furnishings, an aspect of

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[121] Marinatos 1986: 27.
[122] Cavanagh 1998: 106.

which is the smashing of vessels, has attracted scholarly interest[123]. The destruction of funerary goods 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'[124]. The eschatology of these reversal procedures is that a world of the dead inverted to that of the living[125].

Wiesner cited several examples of the practice from the Middle and Late Bronze Age and assumed that the item, e.g. a dagger, was considered to be the personal property of the deceased and thus the survivors were not allowed to use it[126]; nevertheless, the fear that the dead person would be capable of using it against the living would have necessitated the destruction of the object[127]. Åström, who also treated the matter without reaching definite conclusions, accepted Wiesner's suggestion and argued that the repeated occurrences of the practice may suggest a final funerary rite[128]. Grinsell examined the phenomenon over a wide range of examples in chronological and regional terms and provided eleven explanations[129].

Soles drew a line between ritual *'killing'*, i.e. the destruction of a vessel that belonged to the deceased, and ritual *'breakage' of pottery*, i.e. an act that terminates a larger ceremony in which the particular vase was used; the ritual killing of a vessel denotes ownership on behalf of the deceased, whereas ritual breakage may be connected with superstition or the

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[123] Among others, Andronikos (1968: 100), Desborough (1972: 312), Fossey (1985), Wilkie (1987: 132-133), Wells (1990: 136), Cavanagh and Mee (1998: 122).
[124] Goody 1962: 72ff. Anthropologically, the issue has been treated by, among others, by Ucko (1969) with respect to corresponding rites among the Zulu.
[125] Parker Pearson 1999: 26.
[126] Wiesner 1938: 141, 152, 170, 180.
[127] Wiesner 1938: 170, 180.

emotional state of those who perform the rite as well as an expression of surplus wealth and status[130].

According to Leach, the 'killing' of artefacts associated with the dead 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[131]. Along the same line of argument, the smashing of the drinking vessels would have entailed the pouring of the appropriate liquids to the dead 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, i.e. the hiding of precious objects in pits in front or under the *stomion* of several Mycenaean tombs, e.g. Dendra 2[132].

The continual offering of the appropriate honours and gifts to the dead would have been facilitated by the presence of single grooves or pairs in the *stomion* of a number of Mycenaean tombs, as has been discussed in *Chapter IV*. In Prosymna tomb II, several arrowheads and a bead of amethyst were placed in one of the two shallow grooves cut into the rock along the north-eastern doorjamb[133], an offering to those buried in the chamber. Interestingly, Prosymna II, one of the largest tombs in the necropolis, is the only tomb that also features a decorated façade, thus providing the appropriate focus and locus for ritual activity.

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[128] Åström 1987: 213-217, esp. 216.
[129] Grinsell 1961; *idem* 1973.
[130] Soles 1999: 787.
[131] Leach 1976; Parker Pearson 1999: 26.
[132] Persson 1931: 75ff., figs. 49-51. See also page 201 of present thesis.

The suggestion that grooves were channels intended to facilitate the communication -by means of pouring libations- between the mourners and the deceased after the *stomion* had been blocked has been advanced by Åkeström[134] followed by Cavanagh and Mee who also understood the *stomion* as a passage and at the same time as a barrier in literal and spiritual terms, and suggested that grooves should be interpreted from this perspective[135]. Although, the feature was not regionally widespread, it is suggestive of the local tradition and expression of ancestor respect and reverence in individual Mycenaean communities. Associated with the presence of serving, pouring and drinking vessels in the *dromos* filling and the *stomion* packing, these grooves provide strong and positive evidence *à propos* the post-liminal ceremonies connected with the dead in Mycenaean times[136].

Drinking and pouring ceremonies within the burial chamber: the archaeological evidence

The disturbance noted in the chamber of Mycenaean tombs as result of looting, multiple burials and secondary treatment rites could be extremely restrictive as regards the study of libation and drinking ceremonies in

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[133] Blegen 1937: 175.
[134] Åkeström 1988: 203-205.
[135] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 49.
[136] One should not exclude the possibility that pits serving as receptacles for libations might have been situated in close proximity to the graves as in the case of the cemetery at Kamini, Naxos, where a number of vessels were found intact in the south slope, a place where no burials had taken place (Mastrapas 1996: 799 with relevant bibliography).

honour of the dead[137]. Moreover, the bias observed towards the interpretation of all pottery -intact or fragmentary- as being part of the funerary furnishings, has prevented the thorough examination of the data and subsequently the suggestion that the chamber was the focus of a series of post-funerary ceremonies connected with the ancestral spirits. Additionally, one should take into account the variations observed in the performance of the custom, e.g. the apparatuses used, the combination of ritual vessels, their positioning within the chamber and the use of permanent installations for the facilitation of the rites.

In three out of the seven excavated chamber tombs at Apatheia/Galatas, namely B1, A1 and A5, a small pouring vessel was deposited near their inner entrance, a feature that was associated with libation rituals[138]. The small jug from tomb B1 was carefully pierced, after firing, not at the bottom -as is the norm- but in the area of the belly opposite the handle so that the pouring of the liquid was achieved only by slightly lowering the hand holding the vessel[139]. Interestingly, both in chamber tombs B1 and A1 at Apatheia/Galatas the easternmost part of the chamber was left empty to serve, according to the excavator, as 'the standing place of the persons who performed the ceremony'[140].

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[137] Given the fact that most of the pottery retrieved from tombs is fragmentary, Cavanagh and Mee have stressed the archaeologist's difficulty in identifying deliberate smashing of pottery and other offerings (1998: 112).
[138] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 217-218, fig. LXXd.
[139] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 217, pls. LXIXd, LXXa. Reservations have been expressed as regards the ritualistic function of another pierced jug from the same tomb, swept aside with other material into the northwest corner of the chamber (*ibid,* note 30).
[140] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 217-218.

The occurrence of a juglet and a small rounded *alabastron* to the right of the inner entrance to tomb A5 in the same cemetery has also been linked to pouring rites in which honey and water or wine were employed[141]. A similar pattern has been reported from Tanagra tomb 97, where a jug and a *pyxis* were placed to the left of the inner entrance, whereas on the opposite side two more groups of vessels associated with liquids were placed, namely an *alabastron*, a *lekanis* and a cup in the first group, and a beaked jug and a *lekanis* in the second[142].

Significant is the presence of rhyta for they provide ample evidence on the liquids and method employed **(fig. 77a)**. A connection with pouring ceremonies has been suggested for the conical fillers from tombs XLIV, III and XXXIV, and the bird-shaped vessels from tombs XXXVIII, XVIII and XXXIII at Prosymna[143]. Excavations have unearthed LH IIIA-B rhyta in the cemetery at Aidonia, but only one LH IIB example has been illustrated in the preliminary publication of the finds[144]. The importance of rhyta at the necropolis of Deiras is stressed by the presence of numerous fragments belonging to this category of vessels, dated to LH IIIA2/B, in the *dromos* and in the chamber, e.g. tomb XII[145].

Attic and Boeotian cemeteries have also produced evidence for the use of ritual fillers, e.g. Varkiza/Vari, Spata, Alyki and Tanagra[146]. According to

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[141] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 218, pl. LXXIa.
[142] Spyropoulos 1976a: 61-62.
[143] Blegen 1937: 454-455.
[144] Kaza-Papageorgiou 1998: 38, 40 no 3.
[145] Stubbings 1947: 55; Deshayes 1966: 36, 162, pl. XLVI(3).
[146] Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1988: 96-97; Stubbings 1947: 55-58; Furtwängler and Löschke 1886: pl. XVIII, 137; Demakopoulou and Konsola 1981: 85.

Immerwahr, a ritual usage could not be claimed for all cited examples of rhyta and ritual vessels from the Agora tombs; thus one could identify them either as copies of a prototype of a ritual shape or as possessing certain peculiarities suggestive of a ritual interpretation, without ruling out their association with liquid offerings in honour of the dead[147]. The abundance of rhyta in the necropolises of Vourvatsi (Attica)[148] and Kallithea (Boeotia)[149] may stress the regionalism observed in the adoption of diverse customs and traditions with which local communities perceived themselves as different from their neighbours, judging by the fact that analogous numbers are not attested in any of the neighbouring cemeteries.

Apart from the funnel-shaped fillers, a pierced jug decorated with a zone of figure-of-eight shields **(fig. 77b)** and a bucket-shaped pot with a pierced base were also deposited in the tombs at Vourvatsi[150]. The class of vessels perforated either at the bottom or in the body include specimens from Kopreza[151], Salamis (Chalioti)[152], Prosymna XLIV[153], Deiras VIII and XII[154], tholos 2 at Magoula/Galatas[155] and Kokla tomb II[156], and were used for the performance of libations in a way similar to cultic contexts, e.g. Asine.

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[147] Immerwahr 1971: 137-138.
[148] Kyparissis 1927-28: 9-10, figs. 26 and 27; Stubbings 1947: 55-56.
[149] Spyropoulos 1970d: 329-330, fig. 4; *ArchDelt.* 26 (1971) 214, pl. 185e.
[150] Stubbings 1947: 57-58. Stubbings was willing to accept that the figure-of-eight shield-pattern was associated with some sort of cultic activity. Note, though, Nilsson's dissent opinion (1950[2]: 352).
[151] Stubbings 1947: 56, fig. 25C.
[152] Cavanagh 1977: 80.
[153] Blegen 1937: 213-214.
[154] Deshayes 1953: 80, fig, 22(2); *idem* 1966: 163.
[155] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 219.
[156] Demakopoulou 1993: 70.

Closely linked to the performance of libations are the so-called tripod tables of offerings. Despite the complete absence of traces of burning, this ritual apparatus has frequently been identified as a portable hearth, although its purpose was to serve as a receptacle for the liquids poured from a libation vessel or for bloodless offerings, e.g. barley, flour, fruit, or weapons, jewellery and/or vases, as in the depiction from Naxos[157]. Unfortunately, up to the present only a few examples of this type have survived in the Mycenaean funerary record in the areas under discussion; however, one should take into account the fact that a simple slab or a large boulder could have served the purpose as, for example, the slab with a central depression from Metaxata tomb ΣΤ, Kephallenia[158].

Interesting is the case of tomb XLIV at Prosymna, where a set of ritual objects, namely a table of offerings -consisting of a circular disc-like upper portion supported by a hollow cylindrical stem and containing a shallow central basin surrounded by a flat rim with 12 small sinkings-, a cup, three jugs pierced at the bottom (one decorated with double axes) and a conical rhyton accompanied the earliest occupant of the tomb (LH I)[159]. The rather specialised character of the vases led Blegen to classify them as insignia of priestly office, rejecting his original hypothesis that they might have been 'the accessories by the aid of which worship of the dead was conducted'[160].

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[157] Nilsson 1950[2]: 123; Mylonas 1966: 163-164; Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1982: 20ff.; Hägg 1990: 183.
[158] Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999: 57.
[159] Blegen 1937: 408-409. References and detailed description of the tripod table of offerings are given in Blegen (1937: 211ff., 408-409), Higgins (1956: 40), Andronikos (1968: 91), Polychronakou-Sgouritsa (1982: 21, note 2). Moreover, Blegen detected in this type of object the link between the libation tables and the large group of composite vessels or *kernoi*.
[160] Blegen 1937: 213-214.

Substantial evidence for the identification of the tomb as the sepulchre of a priestly family was considered to be the presence of a later (LH III) burial in the same tomb furnished with a gold signet ring and a small triple *kernos*, a vessel universally accepted as sacral[161].

Upon the authority of Blegen, Immerwahr suggested that tomb XXVI in the Athenian Agora, which contained a pierced hydria and a ritual vase of pomegranate shape, belonged to 'a person of some religious stature'[162]. Although this may seem appealing, her hypothesis runs up against the fact that the recognition of priest burials is far from conclusive in Mycenaean funerary record.

A small clay tripod table of offerings was deposited in the chamber of Mycenae 46, but no description or any other detail is given[163]. A similar instance has been reported from the Tanagra cemetery[164]; unfortunately, the conditions of discovery or even the tomb in which it was uncovered are not specified. A miniature painted terracotta table of offerings has been discovered in tomb XXXV at Deiras and is dated to early LH IIIB **(fig 78a)**[165]. This is a unique example consisting of a disc featuring a conical shallow *phiale* supported by three legs protruding obliquely from the bottom of the disc[166]. A small shallow dish on three legs of LH III date was discovered mixed with skeletal remains, vessels (liquid containers,

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[161] Blegen 1937: 214.
[162] Immerwahr 1971: 228.
[163] Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 119.
[164] Spyropoulos 1971a: 14.
[165] Deshayes 1966: 108, 163, pl. XCVI(10).
[166] Of the same type but of larger dimensions is the tripod table of offerings unearthed in Tholos 2 at Myrsinochori (Routsi), Messenia (Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1982: 24, 28).

drinking and serving vases) and other offerings (figurine, pendant and two buttons of steatite) in the chamber of Prosymna XLV **(fig. 78b)**[167].

The relative absence of tripod tables of offerings from the LH funerary record on the one hand and the use of grooves and benches on the other may imply a deliberate choice of alternative media through which the living community would have repeatedly performed the customary rites to the dead. At this point, it is worth mentioning the existence of a wooden table used for the deposition of a group of bronze vessels as suggested by the stain of decayed wood, traces of blue pigment and ivory inlays in the chamber of tomb III at the Athenian Agora[168]. A rectangular slab, most probably part of a table as indicated by its association with four holes in the floor of the chamber of a tomb at Megalo Kastelli (Thebes) was found next to a bench[169]. Nevertheless, the architectural arrangement of the typical Mycenaean tombs and the nature of LH IIIA-B mortuary customs might have rendered the function of benches as altars or tables of offerings more appropriate in these terms.

Ritual significance should be attributed to the presence of service sets of vessels carefully placed on or near low platforms or benches inside the burial chamber, as in the case of Tanagra 94, Mycenae 518, Prosymna V, VI and X, Berbati 1, and the *Tomb with the Ivory Pyxides* in the Athenian Agora. In tomb 94 at Tanagra, the deposition of a *skyphos* on a low platform was part of the religious ceremonies performed during the

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[167] Blegen 1937: 219, 221 no 312, fig. 557 (632).
[168] Immerwahr 1971: 171.
[169] *ArchDelt.* 22 (1967) 228.

secondary treatment of the dead and the subsequent removal of all skeletal remains away from the tomb

The example of the *Tomb with the Ivory Pyxides* in the Athenian Agora, a sepulchre that was found virtually empty of human remains with the blocking wall of the *stomion* intact, is particularly enlightening since it produced a set of vessels comprising of three three-handled jars, an amphoroid beaked jug and two squat alabastra placed on the east rock-cut bench of the chamber[170]. Considering the fact that similar patterns are also attested in other tombs, it would be feasible to argue that the bench in this case as in other cases recorded in *Chapter IV* served as a receptacle for libations or as a table for the deposition of offerings.

The predominance of kylikes, both of normal and miniature versions, from Tholoi 1 and 2 at Magoula/Galatas is appealing and their co-occurrence with an altar-bench, situated to the right of the inner entrance of Tholos 1, and animal bones reveals the interaction of movable equipment and permanent installations in pouring and feasting ceremonies[171].

The most intriguing case of pouring ceremonies and offerings to the sacred ancestral spirits is represented in the tholos tomb at Kokla[172]. At the base of the wall blocking the tholos' entrance two shattered kylikes were uncovered. Inside the chamber, four silver drinking vessels (two kylikes and two conical cups, both of small sizes) as well as two kylikes and one

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[170] Immerwahr 1971: 159ff.
[171] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 218-218.
[172] Demakopoulou 1990: 119-122.

cup, also of silver, had been deposited on and beneath a low bench respectively. The excavator argued that the precious objects comprised a service set most likely employed in burial rituals, whereas the two kylikes in the *stomion* were the remains of a farewell drink after the burial ceremony[173]. However, the burial chamber produced *no* evidence for primary interments and the blocking wall of the *stomion* was found intact.

The excavator herself has suggested that the tholos might have been re-opened and re-entered before the final removal of the skeletal remains. The position of the precious drinking vessels on the bench associated with the double sacrifice of sheep/goats unearthed in front of the *stomion*, reject the hypothesis of their use and display in a funerary ceremony, and, instead, support the suggestion that they constitute the material evidence of an act of offering, respect and propitiation towards the ancestral spirits, and at the same time of a nexus of religious activities in which the symbolic connotations of the tholos' tripartite division were employed[174].

'...ἀμφ' αὐτῷ δέ χοήν χεόμην πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι...': concluding remarks on the significance and purpose of libation rituals and drinking ceremonies in the Mycenaean cult of the dead

Χέειν the dead constituted a central rite during the burial and the post-funerary ceremonies of Mycenaean times. Although scepticism can be

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[173] Demakopoulou 1990: 119, 122.

[174] N. Marinatos has argued that it may be possible that the position of the ritual vessels may be suggestive of ritual acts that took place not at the time of the funeral but on the occasion of secondary burial (see discussion in *Celebrations* 123).

expressed on the extent to which archaeologists are able to distinguish between funerary rites and the cult of the dead given the presence of shattered pots in Mycenaean sepulchres, it is possible, as has been demonstrated above, to mark certain occasions. The purposes of funerary cult, that is the invocation of the presence of the ancestral spirits and the communication with the dead, would have been achieved, among other rites, by pouring liquids through the grooves, performing drinking ceremonies and depositing vessels associated with liquids on various parts of the tomb, e.g. niches in the *stomion*, pits under the entrance, low platforms or benches in the chamber, or directly on the floor.

One though may wonder whether there existed in Mycenaean times a matrix of eschatological beliefs and traditions requiring the living to propitiate the departed with liquid offerings and vessels and, more importantly, presupposing the belief that the soul was present and capable of participating in these ceremonies.

The occurrence of drinking vessels and pottery associated with liquids in the funerary contexts of the central areas of the Mycenaean dominion

In her analysis of the pottery unearthed in the tombs of the Athenian Agora, Immerwahr suggested that the large vases contained wine for consumption by the funerary party and for symbolic refreshment of the dead[175]. In 1979 Vermeule pointed to the popularity of the pilgrim flask in

[175] Immerwahr 1971: 105.

Mycenaean tombs and assumed that this type of vessel may have served the need of the dead for liquids[176]. Sourvinou-Inwood's suggestion that 'there is no evidence for any marked thirst of the dead in the Aegean area until the 4th century Orphic texts' could be overruled by the careful examination of pottery assemblages from Mycenaean burials[177].

The placement of a drinking vessel by the hand or the face of the deceased in a number of MH/EMyc graves at Lerna led Zerner to wonder 'whether cups were given to the dead so that they could share in a symbolic drink with friends and family, or that they might have serviceable containers for refreshment on a journey to the afterworld'[178]. Quite remarkably, a dark burnished jug was placed in the hands of a woman buried in grave MH 98 from the Lower Town of Asine, an indication that even in MH times the belief existed that the spirit required food and drink[179]. The latest occupant of pit κ in the chamber of Diakata tomb 1 (Kephallenia) was found with the lip of a kylix by his mouth and a *krater* beside his head[180]. For Lewartowski, such finds provide clear proof of the deceased's participation in the customary rites[181].

Based on the examination of six groups of vessels (jars and similar containers, jugs and pouring vessels, open shapes, unguent vessels, oil containers and ritual vases), Cavanagh has demonstrated that open types

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[176] Vermeule 1979: 57-58
[177] Sourvinou-Inwood 1973: 566.
[178] Zerner 1990: 23.
[179] Nordquist 1990: 40, fig. 9. She also noted that 'the spirit could have been fed in other manners, with food- and drink- offerings that have left no trace' (*ibid.*).
[180] *ArchDelt.* 5 (1919) 99ff.; Souyoudgoglou-Haywood 1999: 56.
[181] Lewartowski 2001: 59.

(kylikes, deep bowls, etc) consistently formed almost 40% of the pottery unearthed in the cemeteries of Prosymna, Asine and Tiryns[182]. The relatively high percentage of oil containers at Asine and Tiryns (ca. 25% and 20% respectively) and, specifically, of flat *alabastra* at the Kalkani cemetery is suggestive of the preference of these local communities for closed type vessels[183].

The LH III shift from *alabastra* to stirrup jars observed at Prosymna has been explained either as literally cosmetic or as promoted by palatial involvement in the perfumed oil industry[184]. The use of tin on a number of vessels from Asine, Nauplion, Berbati, Mycenae, Dendra and Prosymna, a pattern also observed at Athens (Veikou 123-125 & Aglauron Str. and Agora tomb III), Tanagra, Ialysos and Knossos could classify them as special status vessels[185], synchronously, however, it could be an indication of conscious regional differentiation as regards the deliberate choice of elaborate vessels for the dead.

A preference for closed type vessels is evident in the necropolis at Kokla, the closest parallel being the material from Mycenae, Prosymna and Deiras[186]; piriform jars, rounded and straight-sided *alabastra*, jugs with cutaway necks, shallow cups and small handless jars of LH IIIA1 date are

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[182] Cavanagh 1998: 108.
[183] Wace 1932: 143. He characteristically mentioned that eight flat alabastra were uncovered in tombs 515 and 518, whereas fourteen in tomb 518.
[184] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 72, fig. 6.20; Shelmerdine 1985.
[185] Immerwahr 1966: 381ff.; *eadem* 1971: 170ff.; Pantelidou 1971: esp. 437-438; Demakopoulou and Konsola 1981: 84, 86; Wright 1995b: 300; Gillis 1996: 1197ff.
[186] Demakopoulou 1993: 70-71.

present in chamber tombs II, VI, VIIA and VII B[187], whereas stirrup jars, *alabastra,* piriform jars and cups of several types continue into LH IIIA2 as indicated by their presence in tombs II, VI, VII A, VII B, VIII, IX and X[188]. The commonest vessels of LH IIIB date include stirrup and piriform jars, jugs, pilgrim flasks and *hydriai* and they occur in tombs II, IV, VI and VIII[189].

At Dendra the stemmed cup or kylix predominates with an overall percentage of 40.3%, whereas a total of 20.6% is equally divided between the pithoid jar and the squat jug[190]. At Deiras stirrup jars, cups and kylikes, bowls and *kraters* are the favourite vessel types[191]. The apparent preference for closed vessels, namely amphorae, *alabastra*, pyxides and feeding bottles, in the cemetery at Aidonia is consistent with the rest of the Korinthian tomb material, e.g. Zygouries tombs XXXIII and XXXV[192]. Customarily, a tendency is observed towards closed vessels deposited with the dead in the cemeteries of the north-eastern Peloponnese[193].

From LH IIIA2 onwards an astonishingly large number of open vessels such as *kraters*, kylikes, spouted cups, one-handled bowls and deep cups with nipples or horizontal side handles, has been reported from Attic cemeteries, possibly another indication of the diversity observed in

[187] Demakopoulou 1993: 67-68.
[188] Demakopoulou 1993: 68-69.
[189] Demakopoulou 1993: 69-70.
[190] Niklasson 1981-82: 213, fig. 1.
[191] Deshayes 1966: 142ff.
[192]Kaza-Papagergiou 1998: 38ff.; Mountjoy 1999: 200; Blegen 1928: 57-65.
[193] Mountjoy 1999: 71ff.

Mycenaean mortuary traditions[194]. Following an assessment of pottery groups in Central Greece, Cavanagh concluded that although the overall trends are similar, certain outliers or unexpected values could be detected[195].

At Vourvatsi open vessels, in particular kylikes, form nearly 50% of the pottery assemblage, a high percentage that could account for the virtual absence of *alabastra* -only three examples of LH IIIA-B date have been reported[196]. Their co-occurrence with rhyta and other pouring vessels is by no means accidental and may be suggestive of the explicit symbolic connotations the performance of pouring ceremonies held for the local community. The vases employed at the necropolis at Eleusis are 'in the main such that contain liquid or are used for drinking', an observation based on the abundance of false-necked amphorae, jugs, *alabastra*, *stamnoi*, cups and saucers, kylikes, *skyphoi* and other types[197]. All tombs at Brauron were equipped with *alabastra*, kylikes, cups, *askoi*, bowls, jugs, amphorae and stirrup jars. The pottery analysis of Varkiza demonstrates similar patterns and close relations to Vourvatsi, Kopreza, Pikermi, Thorikos, Brauron, Velanideza, Alyki, Phaleron and other neighbouring cemeteries[198].

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[194] Mountjoy 1999: 493-494. Niklasson's analysis of Attic pottery demonstrated that false-necked jars formed 20.4% of the pottery assemblage followed by the stemmed cup with a percentage of 8.5% (Niklasson 1981-82: 217, fig. 6).
[195] Cavanagh 1998: 108-109.
[196] Cavanagh 1998: 108-109; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 74 note 176. This could also be applied in the cases of Kopreza and Pikermi.
[197] Mylonas 1975b: 229ff., 320-321.
[198] Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1988.

On the other hand, notable is the absence of oil-containers and, in particular stirrup jars, from the Athenian tombs. Open shapes are not popular; instead, the local Athenian Red Wash Ware predominates[199]. The omission and/or preference of various types may be suggestive of the conscious choice of the Athenians not to present their dead with vases similar to those from other Attic cemeteries[200]. This may be indicative of the close relations between Athens, Salamis and Aigina, areas that present similar distributional patterns, but not with the rest of Attica during this period[201].

Interesting is the assemblage of pottery types in Boeotian burial contexts chronologically and regionally. Open shapes are relatively absent in LH IIIA1; instead, small piriform jars, *alabastra* and beaked jugs seem to be the favourite vessel types during this period[202]. It is noteworthy that unguent vessels comprise almost one-third (30%) of the pottery unearthed in Theban burials[203]. Beaked jugs are decorated in the Ephyrean style with argonaut patterns at Thebes and palm or papyrus at Tanagra.

In LH IIIA2 open shapes appear, especially in the Tanagra necropolises where the stemmed bowl seems to be replacing the kylix. Mugs, carinated conical cups, spouted bowls FS 249, high-handled bowls FS 253 and kylikes are also present. In LH IIIB, the stirrup jar, the deep bowl and the kylix become more popular than other vessel types; conversely, the

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[199] Mountjoy 1999: 494.
[200] Cavanagh 1998: 109.
[201] Mountjoy 1999: 494.
[202] Mountjoy 1999: 645.
[203] Cavanagh 1998: fig. 7.2.

piriform jar and the *alabastron* are underrepresented. Characteristic is the case of Kallithea near Thebes, where, like Vourvatsi, a number of rhyta appear in the tombs.

Euboea appears to follow the prototypes set by Boeotia[204]. In LH IIIA1, the rounded *alabastron*, the piriform jar and the beaked jug are the commonest vessel types deposited with the dead. Moreover, a local hybrid shape comprising a cross between an *alabastron* and a piriform jar is introduced. During the subsequent period, closed vessels form the majority of pottery offered to the departed, with stirrup jars, *alabastra* and piriform jars being the predominant types.

Despite the diversity observed in the adoption and display of certain pottery types, in regional and temporal terms, the shared choice of several Mycenaean communities to present their dead with vessels associated with liquids is appealing. Corroborating is the evidence from the religious Linear B text, PY Tn 316, which specifies a number of deities and heroes as recipients of three types of drinking vessels, notably bowls (*213^{vas}), goblets (*215^{vas}) and chalices (*216^{vas}), all made of gold[205]

[1]po-ro-wi-to-jo

PU-RO { [2]i-ke-to-qe pa-ki-ja-si do-ra-qe pe-re po-re-na-qe
[3]a-ke po-ti-ni-ja AUR*215^{VAS} MUL 1

[4]ma-na-sa AUR*213^{VAS} 1 MUL 1 po-si-da-e-ja AUR*213^{VAS} 1 MUL 1

[5]**ti-ri-se-ro-e** AUR*216^{VAS} 1 do-po-ta AUR*215^{VAS} 1

[6]vacat

PU-RO [7-10] vacant

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[204] Mountjoy 1999: 695-696.
[205] Ventris and Chadwick 1973^2: 286-287; Murray 1979: 234.

The entry *ti-ri-se-ro-e* (the *Trice-hero*), the recipient of a golden chalice, has raised intense debate. The name appears again in PY Fr 1204 as the recipient of rose-scented oil[206]

ti-ri-se-ro-e wo-do-we OLEUM Z 1.

Hemberg connected the name with a Mycenaean cult of a deified ancestor and drew a parallel between the Linear B mention and the Attic *τρι(το)πάτορες*, 'great-grandfathers', who functioned as *θυρωροί* and *φύλακες των ανέμων*[207]. Palmer understood *ti-ri-se-ro-e* as the *Clan Ancestor* and Doria as the divine name of a great hero[208]. Interestingly, KN Sc 244 records the mention *e-ro-e*, which may correspond to the Greek *ηρως* and could refer to a deified hero who receives a chariot (**240*) as a votive offering[209]. However, on the basis that the Homeric *ἥρως* does not always denote divine or semi-divine status but appears to be rather an epithet of respect, Gérard-Rousseau rejected the previous interpretations and compared the name with the Christian use of the latin *dominus*, which signifies both a secular and a divine title[210].

L.R. Palmer correctly remarked that the meaning of *Clan Ancestor* is compatible with what has been suggested for the adjacent entry *do-po-ta*[211]. The recording has been connected with the Greek *δεσπότης* (**dems-*, with

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[206] Palmer 1963: 241.
[207] Hemberg 1954; Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 289. The *τριτοπάτορες* were divinities worshipped at Athens to whom prayers were offered for childbirths; cf. *τριτοπατρης*, divinities worshipped by clans, *γένη* (Palmer 1963: 263).
[208] Palmer 1963: 263; Doria 1965: 239. Palaima (1999: 454) also accepts that the *ti-ri-se-ro-e* has associations with the term *hero* and the ancestral cult of clans.
[209] Interpretation put forward by Hošek in 1958 (*non vidi,* cited in Gérard-Rousseau 1968: 223).
[210] Gérard-Rousseau 1968: 222-224.
[211] Palmer 1963: 263.

variant **doms-* or **dm̥s-*) and hence deciphered as the 'Lord of the House' or 'the patron divinity of the palace or of the royal dynasty'[212]. Ruipérez and Melena have suggested that *ti-ri-se-ro-e* and *do-po-ta* may be '*λατρευτικές μορφές ηρώων προγόνων*'[213]. Interestingly, Ventris and Chadwick noted that unlike the other divine recipients in PY Tn 316, neither of the two entries under discussion receives a man or a woman, most probably cup-bearers[214].

If the ideograms of MAN and WOMAN, designated as *po-re-na* to the gods, signify religious functionaries or 'slaves' for corresponding sanctuaries, it may be possible to explain why *ti-ri-se-ro-e* and *do-po-ta* do not receive any[215]. The scenes of *prothesis* and presentation of the dead on the mainland sarcophagi suggest that those concerned with the preparation of the corpse were not of priestly office but rather the female members of the deceased's family or even professional mourners[216]. On the other hand, the female figures dressed in the Minoan festal garment with *poloi* on a number of larnakes have been interpreted as priestesses participating in the rites, an indication that 'at a minimum the scenes imply that ideally the religious hierarchy should join in the obsequies'[217]. Moreover, the ritual

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[212] Hemberg 1954; Georgiev 1960: 69; Palmer 1963: 263; Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 541; Palaima 1999: 454. Note, however, the dissenting views by Murray (1979: 147) and Gérard-Rousseau (1968: 79).
[213] Ruipérez and Melena 1996: 190.
[214] Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 289.
[215] The entries have created much room for debate and will be discussed in detail in the section on human sacrifice in the present thesis.
[216] This may be reminiscent of the later Greek tradition that priests were not supposed to come in contact with the dead (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 106; Parker 1983: 36, 43). In modern Greece the priest enters the house of the dead person to give his blessing to and lead the funerary procession to the church. Even after the end of the funeral ceremony, the dearest relative assumes the task of untying the hands of the deceased and not the priest.
[217] Cavanagh and Mee 1995: 46; *idem* 1998: 107-108.

scenes on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus and the Tanagra larnakes suggest that, at least during post-funerary ritual, religious specialists were instructing the ceremonies, e.g. libations, sacrifice, *theophoria*.

Priestly stature could also be attributed to the members of the male processions depicted on the larnakes from Tanagra tombs 6 and 60[218]. On the long side of a larnax from tomb 6, two pairs of men separated by a checkerboard panel are performing ritual gestures **(fig. 79a)**. N. Marinatos has suggested that the architectural setting of the scene, implied by the checker divider, might be the tomb or some unspecified and deliberately vague focal point connected with funerary rites[219]. The first male figure on the left panel could be identified as *exarchos* judging by the fact that he is the only person holding a ritual flame-shaped instrument. The fact that a deliberate differentiation is observed in the presentation of the 'helmets' or the *πίλοι* they wear may indicate a distinction of priestly or political status or office, or even both, the same differentiation is attested on the scene of larnax 1 from tomb 60 **(fig. 79b)**[220].

Thus, although there is evidence that at least on certain occasions religious personnel attended and performed ceremonies connected with death rituals, there is definitely no indication of the existence of a class of priests charged *exclusively* with the performance of funerary ritual in Mycenaean

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[218] Spyropoulos 1969a: pl. 4b, 6a; *idem* 1971a: pl. 17a-b
[219] Marinatos 1997: 284.
[220] A variety of cloth for officials is recorded on Linear B tablets, e.g. e-ke-si-jo/-ja, (KN Lc 525, TH Of 36), or *wa-na-ka-te-ra* (KN Ld 571, PY Ed 845). Differentiation is also observed in the depiction of male heads bearing different types of head coverings on glass plaques, e.g. glass artefacts from the tholos at Menidi (Lolling *et al.* 1880: pl. V).

times. Alternatively, since funerary cult appears as part of the Mycenaean official religious institutions, the personnel of local sanctuaries might have been charged with the performance of the appropriate rites in honour of the dead either at the graveside or during festivals associated with the ancestors. This may adequately explain why the ancestral figures on Tn 316 do not receive any humans as personnel but only drinking vessels. On the other hand, the association between liquids and ceremonies related to the dead could be reflected in the Linear B mention of a class of recipients, the *dipsioi* or the *Thirsty Ones,* as shall be discussed below.

To sum up. Given that Linear B tablets are official state documents, the co-listing of divine names and heroes/dead as recipients of offerings is remarkable. The fact that the *do-po-ta* and the *ti-ri-se-ro-e* are offered gold chalices, vessels exclusively associated with liquids, is consistent with the LH IIIA-B pottery analysis from the cemeteries under assessment in this thesis. The offering of rose-scented oil to the *tiriseroe* (PY Fr 1204) could and should be associated with a rather obscure entry attributed to the dead, that of *dipsioi.*

The Linear B 'dipsioi' and the offering of oil to the dead[221]

The Linear B mention *Di-pi-si-jo(i)* has become the subject of debate and speculation since 1954. *Di-pi-si-jo* is recorded once, whereas the form *di-pi-si-jo-i* occurs four times[222]

[221] The previous argumentation on *di-pi-si-jo(i)* will be presented thematically and not chronologically.
[222] Palmer 1963: 242-245; Gérard-Rousseau 1968: 61-62; Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 540.

PY Fr 1240	e-ra$_3$-wo pa-ko-[we	
	di-pi-si-jo e-qo-me-[	
	OLEUM + A CT 1	
PY Fr 1220	ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro pa-ko-we	OLEUM + PA CT 4
	di-pi-si-jo-i wa-na-ka-te	OLEUM +PA CLS 1
PY Fr 1231	po-ti-ni-ja **di-pi-[si]-jo-i** [	
	ke-se-ni-wi-jo[ ]	OLEUM CLS 1
PY Fr 1232	**di-pi-si-jo-i** po-ro-wi-to pa-ko-we	OLEUM + PA CLS 1
PY Xb 1338	e-[ ]-me [	
	di-pi-si-jo-i [	

Furthermore, there is mention of *Di-pi-si-je-wi-jo,* possibly a festival connected to the *Dispsioi,* in PY Fr 1218

e-ra$_3$-wo we-ja-re-pe po-ro-[wi-to
di-pi-si-je-wi-jo OLEUM + A CSL 1

The interpretation of *Dipsioi* as *the Thirsty Ones* and, subsequently, as the dead was originally proposed by Guthrie who adduced evidence from the archaeological record, notably the Minoan bottomless vessels, and the later epigraphical references (the Orphic gold-leaf guides for the dead and testimonies in other ancient texts, e.g. Galen's *De temperamentis*)[223]. The same scholar understood *dipisijewijo* as a shrine dedicated to chthonian deities, ancestors or heroes[224].

[223] Guthrie 1959: 45.
[224] Guthrie 1959: 46.

Luria, Petruševski and Shelmerdine suggested that it signifies a place name[225], whereas Gérard-Rousseau interpreted it in terms of **δεψιοις* (<*δέψω, δεψέω*), therefore, as 'un endroit où se faisaient les massages après le bain'[226]. The recorded association between oil offerings and religious practices or ceremonies, led scholars to suggest that *dipsioi* could denote a class of divinities or, alternatively, their religious attendants[227]. Gallavotti suggested that they were members of the personnel entitled to carry oil during the ceremonies, without whatsoever ascribing religious status to them[228].

Based on Mycenaean artistic references, Egyptian parallels and ancient Greek festivals, Sp. Marinatos argued that the Linear B *dipsioi* were the Minoan Genii who were charged with the protection of the vegetation and possessed the power to provoke rain[229]. Rejecting the theory that the dead might have been propitiated with oil, the same scholar dissociated the *Dipsioi* from the dead, 'who were honoured with other offerings'[230].

On the other hand, Adrados drew attention to the Thessalian month *Δίψιος* and suspected that the Linear B mention could denote a title associated with the cult functionaries of a goddess **Διψία*, perhaps a name for

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[225] Luria 1960: 258; Petruševski cited in Gérard-Rousseau 1968: 62 and note 7; Shelmerdine 1985: 73ff., 127-128.
[226] Gérard-Rousseau 1968: 62-63.
[227] Bennett 1955: 44, 50, 52; Shelmerdine 1985: 73-74, note 130; Stavrianopoulou 1995: 428-429. Hiller (1981: 111-112) accepted them as recipients of oil offerings. For S. Morris, the Minoan Genii on the Tiryns Ring could be the *Dipsioi*, the attendants of a chthonic deity (Morris 1992: 209). See also p. 148 of present thesis.
[228] Gallavotti 1959: 101-102.
[229] Marinatos 1966: 265-274.
[230] Marinatos 1966: 267.

Earth[231]. Conversely, Ventris and Chadwick rejected the probability that the spelling *-jo-i* may stand for a nominative plural and proposed that the recording may refer to a place or festival connected with **Διψία*[232]. L.R. Palmer examined the question at length and explained *di-pi-si-jo-i* as 'representatives of parched nature'[233]. Upon the authority of Guthrie, though, he re-interpreted the recording as 'the thirsty ones', i.e. the dead, and connected '*διψιηία*' with the festival *Χύτροι*[234].

The Mycenaean belief that the *post-mortem* condition of the soul required liquids and drink offerings is mirrored in the predominance of drinking vessels and pottery associated with liquids deposited in tombs as well as in the employment of grooves through which communication with the departed was achieved and libations were channelled into the chamber. Moreover, the recording of the golden chalices as offerings to the ancestors may be indicative of the above remarks. Consequently, this could sufficiently explain why the dead were addressed as the *Thirsty Ones* on the Pylian Linear B documents.

The *communis opinio* on the matter, though, is that the thirst of the dead could not be possibly quenched with oil and one wonders *how can oil which is not a drink be a drink offering*[235]. Clearly, oil is not offered exclusively to the *Dipsioi* since it is also offered to the Thrice-hero in PY Fr 1204. Regardless of that, what is important for the present argument is

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[231] Adrados 1968.
[232] Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 479.
[233] Palmer 1963: 252.
[234] Palmer 1963: 252-254.
[235] To quote Burkert's question (1985: 72).

not to consider the identity of the *Dipsioi* but rather to investigate the purpose of oil offering and its potential use in the rites of death.

The provision of *alabastra*, stirrup jars and other oil containers in tombs is indicative of oil's significance in Mycenaean mortuary performance. According to Cavanagh, the unction of the corpse with oil played an important role in the propriety of funerary ritual[236]. Thus, in a manner similar to later Greek customs, oil was also most probably used for glistering the funerary *stelai,* which may be taken as symbols of the dead who, like the living, are wreathed for the festival[237]. Certainly, the oil recorded on the Linear B tablets as offering to the dead was not intended as funerary provision for obvious reasons.

Shelmerdine has demonstrated that unguents and perfumed oil comprised significant industries under Mycenaean palatial control[238]. In religious terms, it was not uncommon for oil to be employed in sacred activities; in PY Fr 1225 oil is offered to the *u-po-jo Potnia*, with the specification *we-a$_2$-no-i a-ro-pa,* 'for (the pieces) of *wehanos* cloth, as ointment', a sign that the unctuous preparation of *Potnia*'s cloth and the treatment with scented oil was part of the cult ceremony[239]. The festival of *to-no-e-ke-te-ri-jo* was probably associated with the pouring of libations and it has been suggested that oil was used for the unction of the throne[240].

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[236] Cavanagh 1998: 106.
[237] Burkert 1985: 72.
[238] Shelmerdine 1985.
[239] Nosch and Perna 2001: 475, 477.
[240] See pp. 166-167 of present thesis.

In a manner comparable to the use of oil during ritual acts in sanctuaries or festivals, cloth and oil were employed in the sacred ceremonies performed in the tombs. According to Cavanagh's reconstruction of the performance of secondary burial treatment, the skeletal remains were taken from the chamber to the *dromos* and after their ceremonial cleansing and display they were wrapped into a new shroud and returned into the chamber[241]. Noteworthy is that *alabastra* and oil containers are frequently included in the pottery accompanying the remains of this rite. Thus, it would be plausible to suggest that oil was used for the cleansing of the bones, possibly along with water and wine, and for the unction of the cloth in which the remains of the ancestors were wrapped.

In *Chapter III,* the symbolic function of terracotta throne models, empty or with occupant, in LH tombs has been assessed in terms of the perpetual presence of the dead in the tomb and their participation in the ceremonies performed in their honour[242]. The depiction on the larnax from Klima Mesaras provides positive evidence on the prominent role these thrones must have held during sacred rites in the tomb and, in particular, on their connection with special ceremonies, as in the case of *to-no-e-ke-te-ri-jo*, whereby the employment of oil for libations and unction would have been requisite.

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[241] Cavanagh 1978: 171-172. The issue will be thoroughly discussed below.
[242] *Supra* p. 166 of present thesis.

'Ιερά δέζειν for the dead': animal sacrifice and banqueting in Mycenaean funerary contexts

Cultic installations and actual remains of sacrificial rituals in funerary locales indicate that animals were ritually killed in honour of the dead from MBA onwards, e.g. Lerna grave 172, Boidokoilia, pit Δπ18 at the West Cemetery (Eleusis)[243]. The skeleton of a whole calf was found on an altar in front of the *stomion* of the Kazarma tholos and was interpreted as a later offering (LH IIIC) to the dead buried in the tholos; *μετά πάροδον πολλῶν γενεῶν, τό αὐτό σημεῖον τοῦ τάφου ἐχρησιμοποιήθη, προφανῶς ὑπό τῶν ἀπογόνων τῶν πρώτων ταφέντων, διὰ τήν ἐκ νέου προσφοράν θυσίας μικροῦ μόσχου*[244].

Altars and permanent installations associated with sacrifice were not uncommon in EMyc times. Despite the ongoing controversy, the most striking evidence for repeated sacrifices in honour of the sacred ancestors is the altar and hollow complex in GCA, which would have received the blood of the sacrificed animals, *αἱματοκουρίαι*, and/or whole burnt offerings, *ὁλοκαυτώματα*. The horseshoe-shaped installation at the centre of 'Tumulus A' at Argos has been interpreted in terms of the cult of the dead[245]. A similar function has been suggested for Building 24 in 'Tumulus C' at Argos, which contained a number of small cists interpreted as *bothroi*, whereas intriguing is the case of the large *bothros* in the northern

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[243] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 32, 53, 115. Note that sacrificial remains have been reported from Lerna, Orchomenos and Eutresis.
[244] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1969: 3.
[245] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 13-15; *eadem* 1990a: 82, figs. 29a-c.

part of the same 'tumulus'[246]. This *bothros* was filled with ashes mixed with libation vessels, votive offerings, a fragmentary terracotta table of offerings and a large number of animal bones[247]. The finds covered a long chronological span from the EMyc times onwards, thus the continuous use of the area and the repeated character of the offerings is confirmed.

A locus for cult would have been provided by a number of tumuli as in the case of Drachmani where Soteriades unearthed a sacrificial *bothros* at the top of the tumulus[248]. Blegen and Wace took it as firm proof of an established funerary cult in the context of which burnt sacrifices were made and offerings were deposited over the mound[249]. Cavanagh and Mee have used the large *pithoi* uncovered on the top of the graves at Marathon Vrana Tumulus I and on the two small tumuli at Pharae in Achaea as comparative material to the Drachmani pit[250]. Similarly, a circular heap of stones surrounded by a *peribolos* between Marathon Tumuli I and II has been interpreted as an altar, although Pelon has expressed objections as regards the validity of this interpretation[251]. Likewise, at Asine four enclosures were unearthed, which the excavator construed as grave-altars, 'direct predecessors of the tomb-altar found by Schliemann over the Fourth Shaft-grave at Mycenae', that could 'unhesitatingly and unmistakably' support the existence of burial cult at Asine since MH times[252]. With reference to

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[246] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 88, 143-144; *eadem* 1990a: 82, fig. 30.
[247] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 88, 143-144. See also discussion in *Celebrations*: 83.
[248] Soteriades 1908: 93-94. An *εσχάρα* and a sacrificial *bothros* containing ashes, animal bones and EH II sauceboats have recently been reported from the tumulus cemetery at Pellana, Laconia (personal communication with Dr Th. Spyropoulos).
[249] Blegen and Wace 1930: 34.
[250] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 115 note 104.
[251] Marinatos 1970b-c; Nordquist 1990: 40; Pelon 1976: 114.
[252] Persson 1938: 347. Note, however, the objections raised by Mylonas 1951: 77-79.

funerary altars, noteworthy are the two structures from grave XI in Tumulus 2 at Samikon as well as the circular construction located ca. 40m north of Tholos 1 at Psari Triphylias, that contained ashes, charcoal, bones, a few undatable potsherds and flint[253].

The excavation of a number of LH IIIA-B funerary locales indicate that animal sacrifice was, at least in certain areas, customary and inextricably linked with funerary rites and the cult of the dead. The following section aims to present the material evidence and the previous argumentation on the matter and to propose new approaches to the identification of sacrificial occasions in the late Mycenaean funerary record.

Animal sacrifice in LH IIIA-B funerary contexts

Introduction

The evidence for the performance of animal and, according to a few scholars, human sacrifice in LH III funerary record may bestow clear proof of the participation of the human dead in the divine sphere. Unfortunately, the nature of Mycenaean mortuary customs and the long period covered by the life span of most tombs render the recognition and interpretation of animal remains extremely difficult and controversial.

Interestingly, Godart has argued that the oxen recorded on the tablets of the KN Ch series could have been intended as sacrificial animals during

[253] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 44; *ArchDelt.* 38 (1983) 112-113; *ArchDelt.* 39 (1984) 79.

funerary ceremonies[254]. His suggestion has been based on the observation that the words associated with the pairs of oxen in this series were not *boonymes* but rather adjectives signifying the colour of the animals' skin, which is described in surprisingly great detail, e.g KN Ch 7100[255]. Moreover, the reading of KN Ch 896 suggests that oxen offered for sacrifice were not labour animals, as previously suggested by Ventris and Chadwick[256], but rather young animals, νέϝω ϝετάλω (=born in the year) intended for funerary ceremonies[257].

Apart from the epigraphical evidence, myceneologists possess two further sets of evidence available for the identification of sacrificial rituals in LH mortuary contexts, namely the archaeological material (animal skeletons or bones, permanent sacrificial installations, pottery, etc.) and the funerary art.

Animal sacrifice and the iconography of death

Valuable information about the performance of sacrifice in Mycenaean tombs is provided by the artistic representations in the iconography of death. The lower register of the front panel of a larnax from tomb 16 at Tanagra refers to a sacrificial ritual[258]. The Tanagran artist illustrated two bulls on either side of a flower, an *anthemion,* one of which is held on

[254] Godart 1999: 249-254.
[255] Godart 1999: 249-250.
[256] Ventris and Chadwick (1973[2]: 213) read the syllabograms *ne* and *we* as νέϝω ϝεργάται, *newos we-ka-ta*=young animals for labour.
[257] Godart 1999: 250.
[258] Spyropoulos 1973a: 21, pl. 11b.

leashes by a male figure dressed in a short tunic **(fig. 80)**[259]. Another reference is provided by the scene on larnax 6 from tomb 22. The background of one of the long sides is occupied by a flock of goats, whereas in the centre a helmeted male figure stands between a pair of oversized goats one of which he stabs with a sword **(fig. 47)**[260]. My alternative explanation would be that the sacrificial animal is being held on leashes like the bull on the larnax from tomb 6.

Demakopoulou and Konsola have suggested that the scene refers to a sacrifice in honour of the dead analogously to the Homeric description of the sacrifice in honour of Patroclus[261]. Vasilikou assumes that the whole flock of goats is to be sacrificed in honour of the dead[262]. N. Marinatos has construed the scene from tomb 22 as a hunting act rather than sacrifice[263]. On the grounds that a bull-leaping scene occupies the lower register of the same decorative panel and a combating scene the lower register of the other long side, she suggested that the scenes on this larnax 'cluster around the theme of «contests»: a duel between men, a contest between man and animals'[264].

If the interrelation of the scenes is a question of interpretation, it is feasible to suggest that the iconographical programme of larnax 6 suggests that sacrifice was performed on festive occasions during which games of

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[259] Spyropoulos (1973a: 210) wonders whether the bull is led for sacrifice, whereas Cavanagh and Mee understood the bulls as sacrificial victims (1995: 50).
[260] Spyropoulos 1969a: 14, pl. 13a; *idem* 1969b: 10, fig. 6; *idem* 1974: 22.
[261] Demakopoulou and Konsola 1981: 83.
[262] Vasilikou 1995: 342.
[263] Marinatos 1997: 286.
[264] Marinatos 1997: 286.

commemorative character, e.g. bull-leaping, chariot races and/or fencing competition duels, were taking place. We shall return to this aspect below with the evidence on the importance of athletic contests in funerary cult and the establishment of permanent installations for the facilitation of such activities and events.

It has to be stressed, though, that on the aforementioned Tanagra larnakes animal sacrifice is suggested but not illustrated as a *fait accompli*. The exaggeration of the animals' size may be taken to disclose the artist's intention and desire to emphasise the importance of the sacrificial animal and, consequently, of the sacrificial act *per se*. An association between sacrifice and ritual hunt has been proposed by Watrous based on the iconographical programme of a larnax from Armenoi tomb 11 and another one from Maroulas, both of LM IIIB date[265]. Dramatised versions of the traditional bull sacrifice have been identified in similar scenes on sarcophagi from Armenoi (larnax 1 from tomb 24 and larnax 2 from tomb 10), Kavrochori and Episkopi Ierapetras[266].

The scene on a pictorial *krater* from the *dromos* of chamber tomb 5 in the cemetery of Haghia Triadha, Elis, is appealing **(fig. 81)**[267]. This has been interpreted as an abbreviated scene of *prothesis* and burial ceremonies[268]; the deceased, who surprisingly has his eyes open(!) and is dressed only in a fringed 'kilt' wrapped around his waist, is depicted lying on a bier with his

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[265] Watrous 1991: 300; Tzedakis 1971: 218, fig. 4; Kanta 1973: 318ff., fig. 3.
[266] Watrous 1991: 299-301.
[267] Schoinas 1999; Vikatou 2001.
[268] Schoinas 1999: 261.

right hand resting on his head. Underneath the bier an animal is depicted, possibly a dog, a scene reminiscent of side B of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, where under the sacrificial table a pair of goats is depicted. To the right of the bier, a diminutive figure (a child?) raises his left hand in a gesture of respect and touches the bier with the other hand. The most appealing figure of this part of the panel is a male figure who is dressed in a manner identical to the male on the bier and holds what appears to be a double axe. The figure is depicted in a dancing motion with his feet not touching the ground. The individual elements that characterise this figure have resulted in his identification as a Sorcerer-Priest who is officiating the ceremonies[269].

To the left of the bier a female figure, most probably a priestess, with an elaborate coiffure and a dress that features an oversized sacral knot is depicted in a posture similar to that of the small figure to the right. She is followed by another female figure that appears to be dancing. The left end of the decorative panel is occupied by an animal, most probably a he-goat, which is being held on leashes by a human figure, and could be identified as a sacrificial victim, judging by the double axe held by the priest as well as the archaeological evidence for the sacrifice of sheep/goats in LH tombs.

The most detailed portrayal of a sacrifice in honour of the dead is given on side B of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus **(fig. 63)**[270]. A young bull or calf tied on a table is being bled, his blood being collected in a vessel

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[269] Schoinas 1999.
[270] Long 1974: 61ff.

underneath. Two goats under the table await their turn for sacrifice. The right side of the decorative panel is occupied by a tree-shrine and a table in front of which stands a female figure. On top of the table a bowl or *lekanis* is depicted and on higher levels an ewer and a basket containing what seems to be fruit or cakes. The left side of the scene is occupied by a procession of which only a female figure in festal robe, who is facing the sacrificed animal, a flute-player and the lower parts of at least three figures have survived.

N. Marinatos has suggested that side B illustrates two ritual acts, an animal sacrifice and the pouring of a libation, performed separately by two priestesses, one dressed in a garb of actual or imitated animal hide and another one in a typical Minoan festal dress[271]. Interestingly, though, there seems to be a deliberate differentiation in the costume, i.e. the garb of animal hide, worn by only two of the female figures on both sides of the sarcophagus, both presiding over the appropriate rites[272]. This could be considered an indication that *only one* priestess is officiating the rituals on each decorative panel.

On the other hand, the scene in front of the altar has been taken as a libation scene. At this point, it is worth citing Rutkowski's observation that '*das Opfertier wurde auf einem niedrigen Tisch neben dem Altar oder nahe dem Altarturm getötet, der von dem Symbol der Ansehenheit des Gottes*

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[271] Marinatos 1986: 26.

[272] Davis (1995: 14) has already suggested that the two priestesses in hide skirts officiate, assisted by women bearing long robes. See also Rehak 1995: 111.

gekrönt war, nämlich den Külthörnern'[273]. An alternative suggestion may be that this is not a pouring scene but rather a case of ritual cleansing. Having completed the bull sacrifice, the priestess reaches the altar, which might have also been used as a table for the deposition of the sacrificial implements and paraphernalia, in order to cleanse her hands from the *miasma* of death with water poured from the ewer into the *lekanis* on top of the altar.

Blood rituals and the connection between libation and sacrifice

The association between libation and sacrifice in Mycenaean religious contexts has been emphasised by Hägg, but also in Mycenaean grave cult a close connection between libation and sacrifice is observed. According to Cavanagh and Mee, the notion that the blood of the sacrificed animal 'feeds' or gives power to the dead, powerfully evoked in the *Odyssey*, is not incompatible with the archaeological record, not least the scene on side B of the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus[274]. Proof for the performance of blood libations in honour of the dead is obtained by the occurrence of animal-shaped rhyta in a number of tombs and the connection between the two sacred acts is verified by the discovery of pits containing drinking vessels and unburnt animal remains.

The performance of *αιματοκουρία*, i.e. the ritual pouring of blood in honour of the dead, is supported by the occurrence of animal-shaped rhyta in

[273] Rutkowski 1981: 50.
[274] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 115.

funerary contexts from the EMyc period onwards, e.g. the bull-head rhyton and the vessel in the form of an antlered stag from GCA[275], the two, almost identical, pig-shaped rhyta of LH III date from Prosymna tombs XI and XXI **(fig. 82)**[276], and the rhyton in the shape of a hedgedog(?) from Tanagra, now on display in the Archaeological Museum at Thebes[277]. The placement of clay animal models and of zoomorphic rhyta in tombs could have been symbolic substitutes for an actual sacrifice[278] or eternal symbols of libation rituals and rebirth[279].

Laffineur has demonstrated that libations and animal sacrifices are connected to fertility cults and notions on regeneration; 'l'écoulement d'un liquide semble de nature à évoquer et à susciter l'action d'une force régénératrice et l'efficacité du processus se trouve assurément renforcée quand le récipient prend la forme d' un animal, le plus fréquemment réduit à la seule tête, et peut-être davantage encore quand il s'agit de l'image du taureau, dont la puissance fécondante peut aisément passer pour une garantie supplémentaire du suivre ou de nouvelle naissance. Les documents archéologiques incitent même à envisager la possibilité d'une libation de sang, le liquide de vie par excellence, qui conférerait à la terre et au défunt qui y est déposé sa propre substance vitale'[280].

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[275] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 103-104.
[276] Blegen 1937: 453-454, fig. 725. He identified them as 'hedgedogs' and suggested that they were playthings).
[277] Demakopoulou and Konsola 1981: 85.
[278] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 103; Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1997: 265.
[279] Lewartowski 2001: 59.
[280] Laffineur 1986: 84.

While excavating Trench F at Lerna, archaeologists came upon a gravel pavement on which lay most of the skeleton of a horse in disorder and the fragments of at least thirty-seven kylikes and other vessels of LH III date[281]. Vermeule suggested that thirty-seven admirers offered a funerary toast to a dearly loved horse when he died[282]. However, this horse burial and the large occurrence of drinking vessels is in harmony with the finds from shaft grave 12 at Aidonia, where the excavations revealed the remains of a decapitated horse and numerous sherds of kylikes not associated with any interments[283].

The ritual significance of horse sacrifices not associated with particular burials in the cemetery at Aidonia is also stressed in the case of tomb 14, a *dromos* without a chamber, where in a carelessly constructed dromos in front of a false entrance the skeleton of a horse was found *in situ*[284]. Beneath the horse skeleton the jawbones of fourteen slaughtered horses were unearthed[285]. The total absence of human remains emphasises the assemblage's ritualistic character and the burial of slaughtered animals (or parts of the animals) in successive layers hints at the repeated character of sacrificial ceremonies associated with the chthonic deities or the worship of the dead buried in this ancestral ground. Krystalli-Votsi has sought the counterparts of the Aidonia practice to the material evidence from Tholos A at Phourni where Sakellarakis unearthed the remains of a sacrificed

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[281] Caskey 1954: 11-12.
[282] Vermeule 1964: 299, 349.
[283] Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 24-25, fig. 25.
[284] Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 25.
[285] Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 25.

horse and a bull identified as offerings intended for the female occupant of the tholos[286].

Animal sacrifice in the Mycenaean funerary agenda: An account of the material evidence and of the previous arguments on the issue[287]

The remains of actual sacrificial rites in Mycenaean tholos and chamber tombs have attracted scholarly interest[288]. The *communis opinio* on the matter is that animal sacrifice formed part of the LH mortuary customs and was inextricably linked to the elite status of the deceased. Wace suggested that favourite animals, e.g. a favourite hound as indicated by dog bones, were slain at the funeral so that they would accompany their master in his sport or hunting activities in the Underworld[289].

Wace's suggestion was later shared by Mylonas, Andronikos and Vermeule who maintained that the animals were meant to accompany the dead in their journey[290]. The theory that sacrificed animals might be closely identified with their dead owner has also been accepted by Cavanagh and Mee especially in the general case of bull/ox sacrifices as well as in the case of the cat from Dendra 2[291]. They did not, however, exclude the

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[286] Sakellarakis 1967; *idem* 1970.

[287] Apart from the evidence from the cemeteries of the areas under discussion in this thesis, the citation of relevant examples from other parts of the Mycenaean world seems inevitable.

[288] E.g. Kosmetatou and Reese have summarised the evidence for equid sacrifices in Greece and Cyprus, whereas dog burials have been discussed by Day. Also Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1975 and 1995.

[289] Wace 1932: 14, 116 and note 1, 145. This suggestion was accepted by Iakovidis (1970: B77-80) who also argued that bird bones were the remains of the provisions given to the dead for their journey to the other world.

[290] Mylonas 1966: 116; Andronikos 1968: 87; Vermeule 1979: 61.

[291] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 115 and note 101. See also Kurtz and Boardman 1971: 66.

possibility that in addition to their dedicatory character, the horse and the ox may well have borne symbolic meaning[292].

With special reference to dog burials and sacrifices, Scholz put forth the suggestion that the dogs were buried with their masters to serve as guardians or watchdogs for the dead[293]. He also maintained that when a dog was not actually buried with the deceased, a representation of the animal might have fulfilled the same function as suggested by the evidence from ShGr V at Mycenae and the dog-shaped funerary markers on later graves[294].

Pointing to the existence of Minoan and Mycenaean rhyta in the shape of the head of a dog, Day suggested that the dogs were appreciated not only for their usefulness, but also for their ability to possess special properties connected with religion[295]. For lack of written evidence, the same scholar argued that one could not possibly determine the exact reasons behind dog sacrifices in Mycenaean times, although possible explanations could involve reasons of purification, their role as guardians or as company for the dead to the journey to the Underworld[296].

In connection to the bull and horse sacrifices in Tholos A at the cemetery of Phourni, Sakellarakis has listed the evidence from eleven Mycenaean

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[292] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 115.
[293] Scholz 1937: 37. The role of dog bones in the archaeological record has recently been discussed by Dr J. Roy in a paper with the title ' Daddy wouldn' t buy me a bowwow: Did ancient Greeks eat dogs?', presented in the Classics Seminar, Department of Classics, University of Nottingham, 12 March 2002.
[294] Scholz 1937: 37.
[295] Day 1984: 30.
[296] Day 1984: 31.

sites on the mainland and three from Crete[297]. Interestingly, the dismembering of the horse in Tholos A has been construed as the expression of a primitive custom involving *destructive mania* after the loss of a loved one[298]. The bull sacrifice uncovered in the same tholos was taken as proof that animal sacrifices were intended not only for the gods but also for members of the living community, though only to those who enjoyed divine honours during their lifetime[299].

According to Kontorli-Papadopoulou, the connection between animal sacrifice and the cult of the dead should not be ruled out, not least in the case of the Kephallenian chamber tombs whose construction mode as well as the arrangement and maintenance of areas especially reserved for sacrifice would have permitted the performance of such rites[300]. Marinatos himself believed that the animal bones from tombs Lakkithra A and B, Kontogenadha A, Metaxata A, B and Γ, and Diakata 1 indicated animal sacrifice and suggested that the level areas and the footpaths in the tombs may have served the performance of such acts[301].

Based on the previous argumentation on animal sacrifice in LH tombs, Kontorli-Papadopoulou has summarised the reasons behind the custom as follows[302]

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[297] Sakellarakis 1967; *idem* 1970.
[298] Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1997: 264.
[299] Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1997: 265.
[300] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1975: 496-497.
[301] Marinatos 1933b: 97. Souyoudzoglou-Haywood (1999: 56-57) has recently summarised the evidence for sacrifices in Kephallenian tombs and has attributed élite character to the custom.
[302] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1975: 495.

a. the slaughtering of a favourite animal (horse or dog) would have provided company for the deceased in his hunting activities in the other world.

b. the sacrificed animal would have furnished the appropriate food provisions for the journey of the soul to the underworld as well as the meat required for consumption by the living relatives during the funeral feast, *νεκρόδειπνον*, in honour of the departed.

c. the animal sacrifice and the ceremonial pouring of the blood of the sacrificed animal could have formed part of invocation rituals during which the ancestral spirit would have been called by the mourning relatives with the aim of communication.

The horse skeleton from a chamber tomb at Nauplion[303] and the dog skull from the bench in Asine tomb I:1, possibly a sacrifice *pars pro toto*[304], could be classified as sacrifices of favourite animals or as *indicium* of high status judging by their association with primary burials. From the tholos tomb at Oxylithos, Papavasileiou reported animal bones, horns and teeth belonging to oxen, sheep/goats, boar, pigs and dogs, all associated with primary interments[305].

The purpose of the dog burial uncovered immediately in front of the *stomion* of Kolonaki tomb 6 at Thebes[306] is not easy to determine, mainly

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[303] Stais 1892: 53.
[304] Frödin and Persson 1938: 358. Interestingly, in the tholos tomb at Koukounara, a headless skeleton was unearthed partially covered with a plaque upon which the skull of a dog had been deposited (Marinatos 1961: 174).
[305] Papavasileiou 1910: 25-26.
[306] Keramopoullos 1917: 137.

due to the disturbance observed in the burial chamber. However, the placement of the dog skeleton before the *stomion* may suggest an offering at the closing of the tomb during burial rites or a later offering associated with the performance of secondary treatment. For lack of adequate information, though, it would be preferable to leave the question open.

The view that a close connection is observed between the ritual performance of animal sacrifice in tombs and the artistic reproduction of the rite on the Tanagran larnakes, in other words that the sarcophagi depict actual sacrificial *δρώμενα* that had once taken place in the *necropolis*, is supported by the scene on larnax 6 from tomb 22 and the presence of skulls and bones belonging to she-goats and, at least on one occasion, to a he-goat in the chamber of several tombs in the cemetery[307].

It has been proposed in *Chapter III* that at least in the cases of the dual horse burials in the *dromos* of the Marathon tholos and the two EMyc horse burials from 'Tumuli B and C' at Dendra, the choice of this particular animal species could claim eschatological connotations associated with the Mycenaean belief in the journey of the soul to the underworld and the use of the horse as a means of transport to the land of the dead; a suggestion based on the presence of terracotta chariot models in LH tombs and the observation that the horses were buried in such a position so as to give the impression of being yoked to a chariot[308].

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[307] Spyropoulos 1974: 22.
[308] *Supra* p. 131.

With reference to the funeral gear uncovered in the chamber tomb 2 at Dendra, Mylonas pointed to the similarities shared between the archaeological material from the tomb and the Homeric description of Odysseus' ritual acts and offerings to the dead[309]. From the sacrificial pit (pit no. 2) dug into the floor of the chamber of the Midea tholos tomb, Persson reported the well-preserved skull of a dog mixed with animal and human bones and interpreted the bone assemblage in the pit as 'the sacrificial remains of a servant and a dog who had to accompany their master in death', drawing inferences from the Homeric description of Patroclus's funerary rites (*Il.* Ψ.173ff)[310]

ἐννέα τῷ γε ἄνακτι τραπεζῆες κύνες ἦσαν·

καί μὲν τῶν ἐνέβαλλε πυρῇ δύο δειροτομήσας.

On the other hand, Mylonas cogently argued that the contents of the pit in the Dendra tholos should be associated with an occasion of secondary burial treatment[311]. On other occasions, animals were sacrificed during the rites performed in the course of secondary burial treatment and evidence for this suggestion is their co-occurrence with broken pottery and *disiecta membra* or in certain cases with the absolute absence of skeletal remains or other finds from the tomb, thus a classic case of removal.

The most instructive case of animal sacrifice in the context of secondary burial and funerary cult is presented in the tholos at Kokla, where at a depth of three metres in the *dromos* fill before the entrance were found two

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[309] Mylonas 1966: 117.
[310] Persson 1931: 69.
[311] Mylonas 1966: 129.

well-preserved skeletons of sheep or goats[312]. The excavator argued that 'two animals are likely to have been sacrificed in honour of the dead, shortly before the dromos was covered over with earth. This was the last time, apparently, that the tomb was opened and when, perhaps the dead were removed elsewhere'[313]. In this class of ritual acts one could include the LH IIIB headless horse skeleton from shaft grave 8 at Deiras[314], the skeleton of a dog from the chamber of tomb 505 at Mycenae[315] and the skeletons of a dog and four horses in Kokla tomb II[316].

The presence of the skulls of a dog, a pig and a horse(?) mixed with *disiecta membra* and broken pottery in a stratum of soft black earth 6m above the floor of the *dromos* of tomb 505 at Mycenae[317] is indicative of the significance of animal sacrifice in this class of ritual activity, especially since the chamber of the tomb was found virtually empty of skeletal remains and an operation of complete clearance had apparently taken place. Similarly, the presence of animal bones mixed with human remains, '*ὀστᾶ ζώων ἀνάμικτα ἀνθρωπίνοις*', e.g. the tholos tomb at Vellousia or Mycenae 78[318], may signify the ritual deposition of parts of the sacrificed animal in the tomb in a way similar to offerings to the gods and the performance of ritual dining rites associated with sacrifice and secondary burial treatment.

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[312] Demakopoulou 1990: 122, fig. 21.
[313] Demakopoulou 1990: 122.
[314] Deshayes 1966: 69-70, pl. LXX(3).
[315] Wace 1932: 116.
[316] *ArchDelt.* 37 (1982) 83.
[317] Wace 1932: 14, fig. 7.
[318] Papavasileiou 1910: 42; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 215.

The ritual deposition of at least two dog carcasses or at least part of them that had been skinned in the chamber of tomb A5 at Apatheia/Galatas has been connected to the social and ideological role of hunting in Mycenaean society[319]. The evidence for cutmarks and the presence of other animal bones belonging to hare and birds suggest the performance of a funerary dining ritual during which liquids were offered to the deceased as part of the funerary ritual (as indicated by the juglet and the small rounded *alabastron* from the same stratum)[320]. It should be noted, though, that the *epichosis* of the tomb indicates that, apart from the pit in the western part of the chamber that contained a primary burial, the rest of the chamber functioned as an ossuary where in a single episode the *disiecta membra* of the nearby tombs were transferred[321]. Thus, it would be possible to assume that the animal remains constitute part of this celebration of the post-liminal stage of the rites of passage.

Nevertheless, the sacrifice of an animal in Mycenaean Greece would have been associated with the status of the dead, especially in the case of burial sacrifices and in the sacrifice of a horse, a bull or an ox. On the other hand, the offering of a whole animal would have been affordable and appropriate in the case of secondary burial treatment and especially in the case during which the whole community would participate. The fact that animals, and in particular horses and oxen, are not frequently attested may be because

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[319] Hamilakis 1996: 161ff.
[320] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 218.
[321] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 218.

the Mycenaeans found another cheaper way of attributing the appropriate sacrifices, that of animal figurines.

Animal figurines, altars and sacrificial tables in Mycenaean tombs

Animal figurines are attested in a number of tombs in the cemeteries under discussion in this thesis **(fig. 83)**. As indicated in *Table V.1*, animal figurines, especially bovine models, are relatively common in the LH IIIA-B tombs of the Argolid, especially Mycenae and Prosymna, fewer in Boeotia (with the exception of Tanagra where animal figurines are abundant) and Korinthia, and totally absent in Attica and Euboea.

The distributional pattern of animal figurines in the areas under discussion may be suggestive of the preference and choice of local communities to present their dead with substitutes of actual sacrificial victims and the establishment of a local custom associated with the deposition of animal figurines. This could also be linked to the socio-political and economic situation of the people in particular communities. Not surprisingly, animal models occur in cemeteries where actual animal sacrifices are also attested.

On the other hand, in the case of Asine and the necropolises of eastern Attica (Pikermi, Velanideza, Brauron, Ligori, Kopreza and Vourvatsi) the total absence of any type of terracotta figurines, anthropomorphic and/or zoomorphic, may be suggestive of the choice of these communities not to place animal figurines in their tombs.

In a way the deposition of animal substitutes would have been connected with the eschatology of LH people. Unlike the recent dead that would have required actual supplies for their journey to the underworld, during secondary burial ceremonies and subsequently the performance of ancestral rites, the ancestral spirits were considered as being already incorporated into the realm of the dead. Thus, apart from the exceptional cases when animals were sacrificed and offered to the dead, dining and substitutes of sacrificial victims would have been offered. One could not rule out the possibility that animals might have been sacrificed elsewhere and then brought to the grave.

The presence of altars and other static devices of sacrificial nature, albeit rare, could sanction the performance of sacrifice in LH III funerary locales. Worth citing is the pile of stones forming an altar in front of the *stomion* of the tholos tomb at Kazarma and the possible altar or sacrificial table from the chamber of a tomb excavated by Pharaklas at Megalo Kastelli, Thebes[322].

A large rectangular slaughtering table, ca. 2m long and 0.85m wide, with a raised rim and square sinkings in each corner was discovered in the chamber of tomb 2 (the 'Cenotaph') at Dendra **(fig. 84a)**[323]. Two notches situated on either long side opposite each other towards one end of the table, were connected with the binding of the victim on the stone, whereas

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[322] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1969: 3; Pharaklas 1967: 228; *idem* 1996: 216 (tomb 4). The Kazarma altar could be compared to the stone structures from Boidhokoilia and Peristeria T. 2 and T. 3 (Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995: 199). For a detailed description of the altars mentioned here, *supra* pp. 247-248.
[323] Persson 1931: 77-78.

the square sinkings in the corners had served as receptacles for the blood of the sacrificed animal[324]. This table resembles sacrificial tables and altars depicted in the minor arts and on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, with the difference that the Dendra example rested on stone slabs and not on legs.

A second smaller stone slab, possibly a sacrificial table, one side of which being hewn quite smooth, the other furnished with a great number of similar square sinkings, was also reported from the chamber and was compared to analogous examples from northern Europe, Egypt and the Aegean **(fig. 84b)**[325]. According to the excavator, the slaughtering table served the concept of *αἱματοκουρία*, the satiety of the souls with blood[326]. The animals slain on this table were oxen and sheep/goats as indicated by the bones and teeth preserved in the sacrificial pit in the chamber[327].

Based on a series of particulars, namely the presence of notches near one end only, the concave surface of the table and the anomalies observed in the cutting of the slab, Åkeström raised serious objections on the validity of Persson's interpretation[328]. He maintained that the shape and the measurements of the slab itself as well as the four corner holes suggest that this 'table' served to hold a coffin, with the object of protecting its legs against the action of the moisture of the tomb[329]. *À propos* the sacrificial table, he argued that the great number of cavities on its surface is

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[324] Persson 1931: 77-78.
[325] Persson 1931: 78, 110-111.
[326] Persson 1931: 109.
[327] Persson 1931: 109-110.
[328] Åkeström 1978: 72.
[329] Åkeström 1978: 72-73.

suggestive of its cultic character, although it is admittedly difficult to ascertain its original position within the chamber[330]. He concluded, however, that the evidence from the tomb reveals the special care taken for sacrificial performances honouring the occupant of the tomb who must have been a person of distinction[331].

Although Åkeström's suggestion may be interesting, the unique arrangement of the tomb's permanent installations and movable equipment as well as the archaeological material itself point to the use of this funerary monument as the focus and locus of sacred ritual activity addressed to the ancestral spirits with the aim of invocation and communication, as shall be discussed below. Turning to sacrificial equipment and installations, it has repeatedly been suggested in this thesis that under certain circumstances the benches in a number of LH IIIA-B tombs would have functioned as sacrificial tables or as altars.

Certainly, the establishment of permanent structures associated with sacrificial rites confirms the fixed and repeated ritual action in Mycenaean tombs. Moreover, the analogies observed between these installations and their counterparts from contemporary religious contexts signify their sacred and cultic character and mark them as indispensable in the context of Mycenaean funerary cult.

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[330] Åkeström 1978: 73.
[331] Åkeström 1978: 73.

Dying for the dead: Were the Mycenaeans performing human sacrifice in honour of their ancestors?

Human sacrifice is considered 'as the ultimate in reciprocal exchange or submission by the living to the supernatural, the gift or tribute which is the most precious that people can give to gods –human life itself'[332]. In classical times a strong revulsion is observed against the idea of human sacrifice, although its performance in earlier times, especially during times of emergency, is not ruled out[333], as probably suggested by the presence of child bones with cutmarks at the Unexplored Mansion at Knossos[334] and the probable human sacrifice unearthed in the shrine at Anemospelia, Archanes[335].

The possibility that human sacrifice was performed in Mycenaean times has been connected with the reading of PY Tn 316 and the reported cases of human sacrifices from a number of prehistoric tombs of the mainland. Thus, the objective of the next section is to investigate the validity of the reading of PY Tn 316 -to the extent this operation may be possible- and the assessment of the relevant evidence from Mycenaean tombs.

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[332] Parker Pearson 1999: 17,where he also cites Leach (1976: 81-93) and Hubert and Mauss [1964 (1899)].
[333] Burkert 1984: 46-48; Buck 1989: 131.
[334] Warren 1981: 159-165, fig. 10; *idem* 1988: 8-9. Note also the observations made by J. Murphy in the discussion following the paper (*SCABA*: 167) as well as the general discussion in *SCABA*: 212.
[335] Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1997: 269-311. Palaima has recently expressed doubts on the validity of the finds from Knossos and Archanes (AEGEANET web-site, e-mail sent on 4 February 2001).

po-re-na and the performance of human sacrifice in Mycenaean religious contexts[336]

The reading of the offering tablet PY Tn 316, in particular the mention *po-re-na,* has raised intense debate among scholars with respect to the recording or not of human sacrificial victims. The tablet, which is inscribed on both sides and divided into four sections, records the performance of ritual acts and the offering of precious vessels followed by the ideograms of MAN (VIR) and WOMAN (MUL) to shrines and deities at Pylos

[*Obverse*]

PY-RO { [1]i-je-to-de po-si-da-i-jo a-ke-qe wa-tu
[2]do-ra-qe pe-re **po-re-na-qe** a-ke
[3]AUR *215[VAS] 1 MUL 2 qo-wi-ja [..] ko-ma-we-te-[ja]
[4]i-je-to-qe pe-re-*82*-jo i-pe-me-de-ja-<jo ?>-qe di-u-ja-jo-qe

PY-RO { [5]do-ra-qe pe-re po-re-na-qe a-<ke> pe-re *82 AUR *213[VAS] 1 MUL 1
[6]i-pe-me-de-ja AUR *213[VAS] 1 di-u-ja AUR *213[VAS] 1 MUL 1

PU-RO { [7]e-ma-a_2 / ạ-re-ja AUR *216[VAS] 1 VIR 1
[8]i-je-to-de di-u-jo do-ra-qe pe-re **po-re-na-qe** a-ke
[9]di-we AUR *213[VAS] 1 VIR 1 e-ra AUR *213[VAS] 1 MUL 1
[10]di-ri-mi-jo/di-wo i-je-<re?>-we AUR *213[VAS] 1 [?]

vacat

PU-RO [12-16]vacant

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[336] The various interpretations put forward for the meaning and function of *po-re-na* and the word's compound and variant forms will be presented thematically and not chronologically.

[*Reverse*]

[1]po-ro-wi-to

PU-RO { [2]i-je-t-qe pa-ki-ja-si do-ra-qe pe-re **po-re-na-qe**
[3]a-ke po-ti-ni-ja AUR *213^{VAS}1 MUL 1

[4]ma-na-sa AUR *213^{VAS} 1 MUL 1 po-si-da-e-ja AUR *213^{VAS} 1 MUL 1

[5]ti-ri-si-ro-e AUR *216^{VAS} 1 do-po-ta AUR *215^{VAS} 1

[6]vacat

[7-10]vacant

reliqua pars sine regulis

The brief introductory formula *do-ra-qe pe-re po-re-na-qe a-ke,* translated as 'to bring gifts and to lead (victims)', is a well known formula of the Homeric tradition and classical Greek religion[337]. Whilst there is a general agreement on the syntax of the formula, i.e. *do-ra* is the object of the verb *pe-re* and *po-re-na* the object of *a-ke*, yet diversity is observed at the level of translation. *Exempli gratia,* Ventris and Chadwick read it *as 'PYLOS: perform a certain action at* [the name of the shrine] *and bring the gifts and bring those to carry them*', suggesting that 'the recurring verbs *pe-re* and *a-ke* evidently show a classical distinction of sense between *φέρω* and *άγω*'[338].

Palmer, on the other hand, translated it as '*PYLOS: A ceremony of consecration was held* (*or sacrifice was made*) *in* [the name of the shrine] *and gifts were brought and the po-re-na were purified*', understanding *a-ke* as a derivative of the ancient ritual stem *αγ-* that survived in its root form in

[337] Buck 1989: 133; Nagy 1994-95: 173-175; Willi 1994-95: Palaima 1996-97: 304, 310-311.
[338] Ventris and Chadwick 1973^2: 285ff.

the participle *ἁγνός*[339]. Given the fact that Homeric and Indo-European ritual formulae employ infinitives of purpose, Nagy and Willi have proposed the equation *po-re-na* = *φορῆναι* on Tn 316[340]. Thus, the introductory formula has been interpreted by them as *δῶρά τε φέρει φορῆναί τε ἄγει* and translated as '*and* [person X] *bears gifts and takes along* [person Y] *for bearing* [the gifts]...'[341].

Despite the general acceptance of the character of *do-ra,* the mention *po-re-na* remains to-date problematic and subject to various interpretations. Interestingly, compound and variant forms of the word *po-re-na* are recorded on three other Linear B documents, namely PY Ua 1413, PY Un 443 and TH Of 26[342]. On TH Of 26, a document that deals with allocations of wool to various destinations, a unit of *ku* wool is offered to the *po-re-si* (pl. dat.)[343]

[1]pu$_2$-re-wa *ku* LANA *PA* 1 ka-ka[ ] *ku* LANA *PA* 1
[2]su-me-ra-we-jo *ku* LANA *PA* 1 ko-de-wa-o, do-de *ku* LANA *PA* 1
[3]di-u-ja-wo, do-de[ ] *ku* LANA *PA* 1 **po-re-si** *ku* LANA 1

Compound forms of the key word *po-re-na* are recorded on two further documents from Pylos, namely Ua 1413 and Un 443. In detail, PY Ua 1413 reads

**146* 7 **166+WE* 1[

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[339] Palmer 1963: 262-266. The same translation was adopted by Hooker 1976: 205
[340] Nagy 1994-95: 173-175; Willi 1994-95: 179.
[341] Nagy 1994-95: 173-175; Willi 1994-95: 179; Palaima 1996-97: 310.
[342] Palmer 1963: 260; Spyropoulos and Chadwick 1975: 94, 95, 104-105; Buck 1989: 132ff.; Palaima 1999; Nosch and Perna 2001: 473-474 and note 17.
[343] i.e. three kilos of *kyprion* wool, if we accept Ruipérz and Melena's reading of other Of tablets (Ruipérez and Melena 1996: 255-256). For TH Of 26 see Spyropoulos and Chadwick 1975: 94, 95, 104-105; *TITHEMY* 35. *Pace* Hughes, Palaima has expressed no doubt that *po-re-si* on Of 26 is the same word as *po-re-na* (Hughes 1991: 201; Palaima 1995a: 628 note 22).

ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro, **po-re-no-tu-te[** [344].

According to the content of the document, two types of *wehanos* (**Fεσ-ανος<*ves-*) cloth, possibly oil-treated, are sent to the sanctuary at *ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro*. The key term *po-re-no-tu-te[* is almost universally restored as **po-re-no-tu-te-ri-ja / -jo* and construed as 'sacrifices of victims' or as 'as the name of a festival pertaining to sacrifices' or –isolating the second element- as 'objects belonging to sacrificers'[345]. Perna has alternatively suggested the reading *po-re-no-tu-te[-ri /-re* (dat. sg. from **φορενο-θυ(σ)τήρ*), 'to the sacrificer', this being the title of one of the *po-re-na*[346].

On PY Un 443 (+Un 998 *pars inferior sinistra*), following what seems to be an *o-no* transaction involving alum, wool and **146* wool, the entry ***po-re-no-zo-te-ri-ja*** *LANA 3* is recorded[347]. According to Palaima, the term is composed of the elements *po-re-no* (gen. sg. or pl.) and *zo-te-ri-ja* either a feminine festival name (*Ζωστηρία*) or a neuter plural of items termed *ζωστήρια*[348]. Palaima has argued that the three units of wool recorded after *po-re-no-zo-te-ri-ja* imply a connection with the activity of binding or girdling or wrapping, thus wool may be listed for use either during a ceremonial occasion of the 'Cincturing/Girding' of the *po-re-no* or for items that are termed 'the belts/girdles'[349].

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[344] Buck 1989: 132ff.; Palaima 1999: 454-455; Nosch and Perna 2001: 473.

[345] All suggestions summarised in Palaima 1999: 454ff.

[346] Nosch and Perna 2001: 473. A form **θυτήρ* has also been suggested by Buck 1989: 134.

[347] Palmer 1963: 260; Nosch and Perna 2001: 474 note 17.

[348] Palaima 1999: 455. Palmer (1963: 260) read the term as two different words, *po-re-no-zo* and *te-ri-ja*.

[349] Palaima 1995a: 628 and note 22; *idem* 1996-97: 306-307; *idem* 1999: 455. See also Buck 1989: 134 and Nosch and Perna 2001: 477.

Turning to the interpretations proposed on the character and purpose of the *po-re-na* and the ideograms for men and women, Bennett suggested that they could signify gold figurines dedicated to the divinities along with precious vessels[350]. On the other hand, the suggestion that the ideograms refer to human beings that were cupbearers who carried the sacred vessels in a procession was adopted by Tritsch and Gérard-Rousseau who used **φορην* as an archaic synonym of the Homeric *φορεύς*[351].

In the first edition of the *Documents*, Ventris and Chadwick suggested that the main function of the human beings was to carry the vessels in ceremonial processions in a way analogous to the men and women depicted on the 'Cupbearer' and 'Procession' frescoes from Knossos[352]. However, in later studies, Chadwick promoted the view that the *po-re-na* were human sacrificial victims offered to the gods of Pylos in a desperate attempt to prevent a state of emergency[353]. The theory of human sacrificial victims was also favoured by Carattelli, Baubach and Gérard-Rousseau in her paper on sacrifices published in 1971[354].

Chadwick's analysis of Tn 316 led him to the conclusion that 'not only is it an isolated document, with no similar ones to match it; it is also the most

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[350] Quoted in Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 284. Hughes has argued that one would expect an ideogram indicating the material of the 'figurines', unless the ideogram GOLD might be taken to apply to both vessels and figurines (Hughes 1991: 256 note 6).
[351] Tritsch 1958: 419-420; Gérard-Rousseau 1968: 177. Other interpretations put forward by Gérard-Rousseau were dismissed due to the semantic and linguistic difficulties they present (Murray 1979: 235).
[352] Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 284.
[353] Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 460; Chadwick 1976: 90-92.
[354] Carattelli 1957: 352-354; Baumbach 1983: 33-34; Gérard-Rousseau 1971: 143-144 and note 8. Baubach (1983: 33) alos believed that the tablet was written in a hurry and in the end was left unfinished.

disgraceful piece of handwriting to have come down to us [...]. The easiest explanation of this muddle is that the writer was trying to record the decisions of an unusually stormy meeting. But why did he not make a fair copy for storage in the archives and consign this draft to oblivion? The most likely answer is that he had no time; and that would make sense if the tablet were written within the last few days, perhaps the last few hours, of the existence of the palace. [...], this supposition fits well with what we know about the fall of Pylos'[355]. Furthermore, the reference to the month *po-ro-wi-to*, *πλωϝιστός* (=the navigation month) has been taken as evidence that the palace at Pylos was destroyed in early spring[356].

According to his argument, the discrepancy between the number of precious vessels and human beings invalidates the 'cupbearer hypothesis' and, concurrently, suggests that certain deities 'were not judged important enough' to receive human victims[357]. Chadwick also drew attention to the variant form *po-re-si* (pl. dat., *porensi*) on TH Of 26, suggesting that 'since sacrificial victims in Greek ritual are frequently decked out with wool, this is some slight confirmation of the meaning of word'[358].

Palmer stated that *po-re-na* as the subject of *a-ke* could signify 'defilements', 'pollutions', and connected the word with the family *φορύνω, φορύσσω, φορυτός*, without providing, though, a sufficient

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[355] Chadwick 1976: 90.
[356] Chadwick 1976: 92. Also Palmer 1963: 248, 254ff. Palaima (1995a: 629-632, esp. 632; 1999: 443ff.) has suggested that *po-ro-wi-to* is probably to be placed in July-August or March-April. Mycenaean menologies have recently been discussed by Boulotis 2000, whereas the Pylian month names have been thoroughly studied by Trümpy 1989.
[357] Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 461, 464.
[358] Chadwick 1976: 92.

explanation for the morphological analysis of **φορενα*[359]. In 1983, though, he argued that the *po-re-na* were aniconic cult images[360]. Guthrie, Lejeune, Vermeule, Hooker, Sacconi, Murray, Hughes, Palaima, Nosch and Perna have suggested that the *po-re-na* on Tn 316 were men and women dedicated to serve in some capacity in the sanctuaries[361].

In particular, Lejeune connected the term with the verb *πωλέω* and wondered 'doit-on penser que...ces femmes et ces hommes, peut-être destinés à devenir *θεοῖο δόελαι* et *δόελοι*, faisaient l'objet d'un rite d'achat par le dieu?'[362]. Sacconi has understood them as 'sacerdoti e sacerdotesse addetti al culto particolare di singole divinità', who bring the ritual gold vessels from a palatial treasury to the sanctuaries specified on the tablet[363]. According to Hooker, the dedication of persons to deities is easy to reconcile with the term 'slave of the god' found in the E-series[364].

Murray rejected the hypothesis that *te-o-jo do-e-ro* were the only class of people bound to the service of a god by pointing to the description of Pylian bronzesmiths as *po-ti-ni-ja-we-jo* -in a similar way, the shepherds tend the *po-ti-ni-ja-we-jo* sheep at Pylos and those of *e-ma-a₂-* and to the possibility that at Thebes gods in some sense 'owned' workshops staffed

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[359] Palmer 1963: 266-267.
[360] Palmer 1983: 288-290.
[361] Guthrie 1959: 43-44; Lejeune 1964: 93; Vermeule 1974: 67; Hooker 1976: 206; Murray 1979: 237ff.; Sacconi 1987: 553; Hughes 1991 : 202 ; Palaima 1995a: 628 ; Nosch and Perna 2001 : 473. In an e-mail sent on 02/02/2001 to the *AegeaNet* web-site, Palaima quoted Amanda Krauss' opinion that Tn 316 does not refer to human sacrificial victims.
[362] Lejeune 1964: 93.
[363] Sacconi 1987: 554.
[364] Hooker 1976: 206. It is noteworthy, though, that in a later study Hooker chose to leave the question open (Hooker 1980: 161), like Heubeck 1966: 102.

by craftswomen[365]. Consequently, she suggested that the men and women on Tn 316 might have not been persons of *te-o-jo do-e-ro* standing, but rather craftsmen and craftswomen 'who were dedicated to the shrines and would henceforth practice their skills in the divine service or even act as unskilled or semi-skilled labour around the sanctuary'[366].

Following a thorough analysis of the previous argumentation and of the available evidence, Hughes concluded that the *po-re-na* comprised a group of persons who served in the sanctuaries and who were in some way related to the maintenance of precious vessels as suggested by their co-listing with gold vessels[367]. The fact that in four cases no human beings are associated with gold vessels may imply that 'the dedication of the women and men may have been connected with the sacred treasuries without their role being directly tied to these particular vessels'[368].

In 1989, Buck devoted a rather extensive paper on the issue of Mycenaean human sacrifice. According to his argument, early conjectures such as *phorenai and *pornes* (='one sold') that should have come out as **po-ne*, should be eliminated[369]. Likewise, **polena* as opposed to *dora,* and **polina* (= 'humans in animal skins') were dismissed because neuter plurals are wrong in gender and declension, whereas **phorina*, 'sacrifice, victim' is wrong in gender[370]. Alternatively, he proposed a word like **πορην* from

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[365] Murray 1979: 236-237.
[366] Murray 1979: 237.
[367] Hughes 1991: 202.
[368] Hughes 1991: 202.
[369] Buck 1989: 135.
[370] Buck 1989: 135.

πορος (=passage, means of passage) and so signifying 'one being on passage, a traveller, one 'passing on'', as well as **φορην* from *φορα* (='carrying, contribution') and so signifying 'one brought in, one contributed'[371]. He favoured Chadwick's hypothesis of human sacrificial victims and produced a series of conclusive remarks[372]

a. The recording of the word *poren* on the Pylian and Theban documents suggests that the *porenes* were a widely recognised group with a distinct name used in its peculiar sense throughout the Mycenaean dominion.

b. The relatively large number of *porenes* at Pylos might have necessitated the presence of a particular official, the *po-re-no-tu-te*[, to 'attend' them. At Thebes, the *porenes* were numerous enough to be granted a fairly substantial amount of a special type of wool, even if only for sacrificial fillets.

c. Judging by the fact that they were issued special wool and clothing, one could maintain that there probably existed small squads of *porenes* permanently available for sacrifice. Consequently, human sacrifice was not an exceptional act in Mycenaean times but rather part of the administrative routine.

Pace the 'state of emergency' theorists, Palaima has argued that although Tn 316 is an exceptional text in that it is a *unicum*, the offerings recorded on it were not a last or desperate measure as verified by the Pylian archival,

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[371] Buck 1989: 135-136.
[372] Buck 1989: 136.

pinacological, linguistic and archaeological evidence[373]. His analysis of the term *po-re-na* has demonstrated that occurrences such as *φερνό*, 'the god's portion (of the sacrifice)' in 5th-4th cent. inscriptions from Epidaurus certainly do not support the interpretation of *po-re-na* as 'victims'[374]. For him, no absolute certainty could characterise the interpretation of the term as 'porteur' connected with the Homeric *φορεύς* and/or with compounds in *-φορος* (c.f. *arrhephoros* and *kanephoros*)[375], whereas words such as *πευθήν, ἕρπήν* and *ἅπτήν* seem to employ the suffix *-ην* with the verbal stem and in an active sense[376].

As regards TH Of 26, he maintained that 'it would be more in keeping with the context of the tablet set for wool to be given out to religious functionaries called *po-re-na* 'bearers' than to assume that the wool in this single tablet entry alone is apportioned to victims'[377]. Furthermore, *po-re-no-zo-te-ri-ja*, 'the festival for the girdling [clothing] of the bearers' would be in harmony with the ancient and modern religious practice to offer special clothing to and perform rituals of garbing in honour of sacred officials[378].

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[373] Palaima 1995a: 628ff.; *idem* 1999: 437ff.
[374] Palaima 1999: 454.
[375] Palaima 1996-97; *idem* 1999.
[376] Palaima 1999: 454.
[377] Palaima 1995a: 628 note 22.
[378] Palaima 1995a: 628 note 22; *idem* 1996-97: 306-307; *idem* 1999: 455.

A new proposal on the interpretation of 'porena'

The assessment of the previous arguments on the written documentation of human sacrificial rituals in Mycenaean times and on the interpretation of the ambiguous term *po-re-na* as 'human sacrificial victims' suggests that the main and overriding motivation for the acceptance of such a hypothesis is the presumption of a 'state of emergency' at Pylos that called for dire measures. However, as Palaima has convincingly demonstrated, after the filing of PY Tn 316 in the Archives Complex (Room 8), the palatial administrators recorded further administrative activities, as proven by the documents from Room 7 and specifically the tablet-basket arrival area Grid *52* and the findspot *83* (for Un 718)[379]. Furthermore, the total absence of actual human sacrificial relics from LH citadels and cult places does not seem to support the hypothesis of human sacrifice.

It has been argued above that if the ideograms of MAN and WOMAN on Tn 316 designate religious functionaries or 'slaves' for corresponding sanctuaries, it would be possible to explain why there was no need for recorded ancestral figures, i.e. *ti-ri-se-ro-e* and *do-po-ta,* to receive any[380]. Textual references, artistic representations and the archaeological evidence, though, could support an alternative interpretation, viz. that *po-re-na* could designate *terracotta figures that were dedicated to shrines for cult purposes.*

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[379] Palaima 1995a: 628ff.; *idem* 1999: 437ff.
[380] *Supra* pp. 283-284.

Such a suggestion would ascribe a different meaning to the introductory formula on Tn 316

PYLOS: perform a certain action at [the name of the shrine] *and bring the gifts and carry the images of the gods*

In other words, the introductory formula could announce the performance of a ceremonial procession similar or analogous to the *te-o-po-ri-ja* recorded on KN Ga 1058 and Od 696 (+L 698)[381]. It is noteworthy that the ceremonial transference of religious icons and cult symbols during religious processions is attested in ancient and modern societies[382]. The offering of male and female religious icons as reflected on the ideograms of MAN and WOMAN could be sufficiently explained by the presence of male and female figures in Mycenaean shrines as well as by the fact that both male and female divinities were included in the Mycenaean pantheon[383].

This proposal could also fit well with the allocation of special wool to the *po-re-si* on TH Of 26. In an extensive discussion of Mycenaean *te-o-po-ri-ja,* Hiller has pointed to the significance of the cloth ideogram **146* and its function with reference to the particular ritual act[384]. The offering of special wool and textile products, namely **146* and **166+WE* and exceptionally **164*, TELA+*TE and* TELA+*PA,* to deities and shrines for

[381] A detailed discussion on Mycenaean *theophoria* is provided in pp. 167ff.
[382] E.g. during the Great Dionysia the image of Dionysos is brought to Athens from Eleutherai, whereas in Therai a *kore* statue is transferred from the Marsh to the sanctuary of Demeter Eleusinia for the festival (Burkert 1985: 100-101). Note also that in modern Greece during *λιτανείες* sacred icons and religious symbols are carried in the processions.
[383] A thorough discussion on the sex of the anthropomorhic figures from Mycenae is provided in Moore and Taylour 1999: 89ff. See also Renfrew 1985: 370.
[384] Hiller 1984: 144, 149.

cult or maintenance reasons, is recorded on several Mycenaean administrative documents[385].

Correspondingly, the written documentation of this '*theophoria-cult image-cloth*' connection found its artistic expression on fragment No 103 of the 'Frauenprozession' from Tiryns that has preserved the depiction of a priestess carrying a long piece of pleated cloth and a large female terracotta figure **(fig. 59b)**[386]. Boulotis has convincingly maintained that it might have been customary for both items to be carried by the same religious official in the procession[387].

If Boulotis's reconstruction of the scene is correct, suggestive is the presence of two bands (or ribbons) on either side of the terracotta figure, an element whose counterparts have been sought to the painted decoration of an actual terracotta figure from Mycenae[388]. The cultic and symbolic significance of these bands is strengthened by the depiction of female figures that wear broad bands or streamers on Mycenaean wall paintings and the funerary art. Similar bands would have decorated the heads of several other terracotta figures, e.g. the female model from Tiryns (e.g. figure no 26171 from the Nauplion Archaeological Museum)[389].

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[385] Nosch and Perna 2001: 471ff. (with relevant bibliography). Boulotis (1979: 61) has attributed cultic significance to the cloth being held by a female figure on a fresco from Phylakopi.
[386] The reconstruction of the fragmentary scene has been proposed by Boulotis 1979.
[387] Boulotis 1979: 63. The complexity of the scene may explain why the artist appears insecure in the attribution of the priestess' hands.
[388] Boulotis 1979: 62-63, pl. 2.
[389] *The Mycenaean World*: 99, no 25, pls. 101-102. The band that decorates the head and reaches the hips of the figure does not represent the hair of the figure, which is clearly attributed with broad painted lines. *Supra* pp. 97ff.

The assessment of the artistic, archaeological and textual background of the custom suggests that the dressing and decoration of the cult image formed an essential aspect of Mycenaean cult. Certainly, wool would have been essential for the performance of this ritual act, hence the *po-re-na* are allocated *ku* wool at Thebes. Moreover, this customary practice might have occurred or been part of the *te-o-po-ri-ja* as well as of a festival or sacred performative act termed *po-re-no-zo-te-ri-ja.* During such or similar festive occasions, priests/priestesses and/or members of ceremonial processions would have included bands or streamers to their festal garments as indicated by LH artistic representations.

With respect to the mention of *po-re-no-tu-te*[, it would be plausible to suggest that a religious official or a group of priests or cult servants might have been charged with the attendance of these religious icons and might have been responsible for the performance of religious ceremonies such as *te-o-po-ri-ja* and *po-re-no-zo-te-ri-ja* , as well as for transactions related to the offering of wool specially reserved for the *po-re-na* and the corresponding ceremonial acts. Taking into account the fact that the use of large terracotta figures began to cease after the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces, one could explain why the term *po-re-na* became extinct in later times.

The archaeological evidence for human sacrifice in Mycenaean funerary locales

Not infrequently, excavators have reported the discovery of peculiar burials and skeletal remains in the fill of the *dromos* or the chamber of a number of Mycenaean tombs and have associated them with the performance of human sacrifice in honour of the dead. Theories of this kind have caused intense debate among scholars and a long series of studies has been devoted to this matter.

In his analysis of the burial practices in GCA, Tsountas stated that the human skulls and skeletons found in different parts of the eastern side of the enclosure reported by Stamatakis as well as the human skeletons from the fill of Shaft Grave III must have been 'the bodies of slaves or captives immolated on their master's tomb'[390]. He also maintained that the female burial in the *dromos* of the Tholos of Clytemnestra might have belonged to a highly prized slave, judging by the elaborate furnishings that accompanied her, a slave who was sacrificed in honour of the tholos' occupant[391].

Mylonas convincingly argued that the human bones from the *epichosis* of GCA were in fact EMyc burials that were disturbed during the re-arrangement of the Circle in LH IIIB[392]. *Vis-à-vis* the female burial in the *dromos* of the Clytemnestra tholos, there seems to be no indication of

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[390] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 97, 151.
[391] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 97, 151.
[392] Mylonas 1966: 116-117; *idem* 1983: 31. Objections have also been expressed by Pelon 1976: 295-296. 364 note 1.

human sacrifice; on contrary, it is *de facto* a typical case of secondary burial treatment, as shall be demonstrated below.

From the *dromos* of chamber tomb 15 at Mycenae, Tsountas announced the discovery of six skeletons buried one on top of the other at different depths in the stone fill before the triangle above the door[393]. Influenced by the Homeric description of the sacrifice of twelve Trojans at the pyre of Patroclus, the excavator interpreted these skeletons as slaves or prisoners of war ritually slain in honour of the last occupant of the sepulchre[394]. An alternative explanation may be that the skeletons represent a multiple burial that took place at some time after the final use of the tomb[395], a suggestion also supported by the observation that the skeletons were accompanied by undecorated potsherds and animal bones.

Human skeletal remains were unearthed before the entrance of Deiras tomb VI in the upper stratum of the *dromos* under a pile of stones[396], whereas at least fifteen skeletons were lying in front of the *stomion* of Mycenae tomb 505[397]. In connection to the discovery at Deiras, Vollgraff referred to the evidence from Mycenae tomb 15 and wrote that 'le sacrifice humain accompli alors de la fermeture définite du tombeau, nous était déjà connu par les fouilles de Mycènes'[398]. With reference to the funerary customs in the cemeteries of Mycenae, Wace stated that there is no definite evidence

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[393] Tsountas 1888: 130.
[394] Tsountas 1888: 130. However, as Mylonas reported, in later discussions Tsountas appeared less confident as regards the human sacrifice hypothesis (Mylonas 1948: 72).
[395] Hughes 1991: 31.
[396] Vollgraff 1904: 370.
[397] Wace 1932: 12-15.
[398] Vollgraff 1904: 370.

for or against the view that the Mycenaeans performed human sacrifice except perhaps for the skeletal material from tomb 505, which he assumed belonged to slaves or concubines killed at the burial in order to accompany their master(s) in the Underworld in a way similar to the ritual slaughtering of dogs and horses[399].

The kneeling position of two skeletons unearthed in the tholos tomb at Kazarma, their association with animal bones and with traces of fire, the absolute absence of any burial furnishings and the evidence for the later sacrifice of a calf in the *stomion* of the tholos led Protonotariou-Deilaki to interpret them as slaves sacrificed on the stone platform before the entrance of the tomb[400]. The unusual placement of the skeletons is interesting but the brief description of the finds and the lack of information on the precise position of the skeletons obscure to a significant degree the secure evaluation of the data.

Similarly, in the *dromos* of Prosymna tomb VII and nearly 2m above the floor, a skeleton was found lying directly upon a stone fill partially covered with a large slab that leaned against the wall of the *dromos*[401]. The peculiar position of the skeleton led Blegen to wonder whether there was any connection between the skeletal remains and the dead interred within the chamber of the tomb, and whether this was 'a slave or servitor, the victim of sacrifice or of self destruction, who was laid to rest as the faithful

[399] Wace 1932: 145.
[400] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1969: 3.
[401] Blegen 1937: 157, 235-236.

guardian before the entrance of his master's sepulchre'[402]. Correspondingly, the skeleton in the cist of tholos III at Thorikos has been adjudged a slave mainly due to the lack of burial furnishings, although the likely cause of death has not been specified[403].

A similar theory on human sacrifice for the dead was proposed by Persson when in 1926 his excavation in the tholos tomb at Dendra revealed pit II that contained unburnt human and animal bones, including the well-preserved skull of a dog[404]. The excavator suggested that they were 'the remains of a servant and a dog that had to accompany their master in death'[405]. However, the evidence points to a typical case of secondary burial, as suggested by the presence of various objects, notably faience beads, items of gold and bronze and fragments of a large stirrup jar[406]; interestingly, fragments of the same vessel were unearthed in pits I and IV within the chamber as well as in the *dromos* of the tholos.

Eschatological significance has also been attached to the long narrow pit in the northern side of the tholos' chamber that contained the skeletons of the 'royal' couple. The apparently simultaneous burial led Persson to suspect a case of *suttee*, a custom witnessed in the Indian and Thracian traditions and described in the Greek myths of Polyxena, Euadne and Laodameia[407]. According to his arguments, the remains of the three skeletons that were

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[402] Blegen 1937: 157.
[403] Stais 1893: 14; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 53.
[404] Persson 1931: 69.
[405] Persson 1931: 69.
[406] Mylonas 1966: 127ff.
[407] Persson 1931: 68-69.

displaced by tomb robbers and were found scattered about the chamber floor and in the upper layers of the pits, should be classified as sacrificial victims[408].

Simultaneous burials have been reported to-date from a number of MH and LH funerary sites and various interpretations, human sacrifice included, have been put forward. Two skeletons belonging to a 40-year-old man and a 30/40-year-old woman were unearthed in the MH double grave 52 and 53, lying close together[409]; the upper part of the female skeleton (MH 53) lay on top of the right part of the corresponding portion of the male skeleton (MH 52), whereas her lower part lay straight on top of the male trunk.

In MH grave VII at Gonia two skeletons were placed close together each on his/her left side. Based on their relative size and the presence of three bone hairpins associated with the smaller skeleton, Blegen concluded that this was the case of the simultaneous burial of husband and wife[410]. Similarly, in the lower stratum of tomb XXII at Zygouries two skeletons belonging to an adult and a child 'were buried almost at the same time' facing each other[411].

An analogous instance has been uncovered at pit 2 of the Pylos Grave Circle; part of the skull and bones of an individual were found scattered over the central part of another skeleton, presumably belonging to a male

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[408] Persson 1931: 69.
[409] Frödin and Persson 1938: 122, 342, fig. 100.
[410] Blegen 1928: 55-57, figs. 46b and 47.
[411] Blegen 1928: 55ff.

person. Unfortunately, the ruined state of the skeletal remains prevents any attempt of identifying the part of the anatomy and the sex of the individual, therefore the circumstances of the second interment remains, according to the excavator, a mystery[412]. In a pit dug into the floor of the chamber of a LH IIA tholos tomb at Kaplani Pylias a double intact burial was also unearthed with the head of one skeleton lying on the feet of the other[413]. Inside an undecorated larnax from Tanagra -the number of the tomb is not given in the interim report-, two skeletons were uncovered one on top of the other, '*δύο σκελετοί τοποθετημένοι ὁμορρόπως ὁ εἷς ἐπί τοῦ ἄλλου*', construed as belonging to the simultaneous burial of a couple[414].

Apart from the aforementioned examples, it is worth citing the mass burials uncovered in the wells at Argos (LH IIIC*e*) and Old Korinth (EH) and the multiple burials in the 'Little Circle' at Pylos (LH I/IIA)[415]. Waage argued that there is no evidence that the deposition of the bodies –the proper position of the mandibles suggests that bodies and not skeletons were thrown into the well- was the result of disease, starvation, earthquake or human agency[416]. Alternatively, he attributed the act to 'a severe drought, resulting in the drying of the well and starvation, or some profanation of the well (and so of the community) leading to its abandonment and the expiatory sacrifice of the offending clan and its possessions'[417].

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[412] Blegen *et al.* 1973: 142.
[413] *ArchDelt.* 48 (1993) 106.
[414] Spyropoulos 1970c: 22.
[415] *ArchDelt.* 27 (1972) 200; Kritzas 1976-78: 173-180; Waage 1949: 416, 421-422; Shay 1992.
[416] Waage 1949: 416, 421-422.
[417] Waage 1949: 416, 412-422.

On the other hand, Kritzas ruled out any 'sacrificial' interpretation for the mass burial at Argos on the account of the absence of burial furnishings, the lack of secure parallels and the non-existence of any ancestral or sacred grounds in the vicinity. He also rejected the hypothesis of a severe earthquake, war act or epidemic and favoured the suggestion that these individuals must have drowned when Charadros and Inachos flooded the Argive plain[418].

The assessment of the available material indicates that the evidence for human sacrifice in Mycenaean times is suggestive rather than conclusive[419]. The examination of the Linear B entries seems to be in accordance with the archaeological evidence from Mycenaean settlements and cult places; in other words, *no* human sacrificial victims have been recorded to-date in the archaeological record. Moreover, it should be stressed that all reported cases allegedly associated with human sacrifice come exclusively from the cemeteries of the Argolid. Thus, if one accepts that humans were offered to the ancestors, then this practice might reflect a local custom. The thorough examination, however, of most of these burials and the conditions of their discovery suggests that they were, in all probability, the remains of secondary burial treatment rather than actual human sacrificial victims.

At a first glimpse, the discovery of the six skeletons above the entrance of Mycenae tomb 15 would merit serious consideration and could support the

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[418] *ArchDelt.* 27 (1972) 201; Kritzas 1976-78: 173-180.
[419] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 53. Note also the absence of skeletal analyses in the archaeological reports.

hypothesis of some sort of funerary ritual killing. However, the presence of pottery and animal bones among the *disiecta membra* favours the suggestion of a classic case of secondary burial. Furthermore, the absence of a coherent excavation report prevents the secure evaluation of the data. For the same reasons, one could rule out another interesting case, that of the two 'kneeling' skeletons at the Kazarma tholos, although the fact that on an upper stratum a sacrificed calf was discovered complicates slightly the matter.

Summing up, it is plausible to suggest that the remains of animal sacrifice indicate that the Mycenaean dead certainly enjoyed the privileges of the immortals and shared with them the divine honours offered to them by the living community. On the contrary, by no means did the performance of human sacrifice constitute part of the religious and funerary agenda in LH times.

SECONDARY BURIAL RITES AND THE CULT OF THE DEAD IN MYCENAEAN TIMES

'In most primitive societies the dead bodies are only stored, so to speak, in the tomb where they are first placed. After a time, they are given a new funeral and they receive the final funerary rites which are due to them'[420]. Hertz offered a specifically sociological explanation to the phenomenon suggesting that the separation between the living and the dead is

[420] Lafitaeu's observation quoted in Hertz 1960: 28.

materialised via the transformation of a rotting corpse into clean bones and through the reintegration and redefinition of the community of the mourners that also undergoes three stages of primary rites, mourning and secondary rites[421]. The secondary funeral signals the end of van Gennep's third stage of *rites of passage* during which the deceased is fully incorporated into the realm of the ancestors, an event celebrated with the performance of feasting and of repeated ceremonies in honour of the ancestral spirits[422].

For the Bara of Madagascar reburial ceremonies serve as the mediation between order and vitality taking place only in the period following the annual harvest[423], whereas a similar tradition, the *famadihana,* exists amongst the Merina[424]. Chapman has maintained that living-ancestor relations are often mediated through the use of human bones, typically after phases of exposure burial, defleshing, disarticulation, sorting and re-storage of the remains[425].

With reference to the Mesara tholoi, Branigan has established that the skeletal remains appear to have been interfered with, or manipulated, in at least five different ways[426]

a. clearance of burial remains to dumps either within the tombs or outside them
b. fumigation of the bones or of all tomb contents

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[421] Hertz 1907; *idem* 1960: 78ff.; Parker Pearson 1999: 22, 50.
[422] Van Gennep 1960: 146ff.
[423] Huntington 1973; Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 113-130.
[424] Bloch 1971: 72, 114, 166-170.
[425] Chapman 1994: 46.
[426] Branigan 1987: 44ff.; *idem* 1993: 124ff.; *idem* 1998: 25-26.

c. selected grouping of certain bones and/or skulls
d. complete removal of certain bones or skulls from the tomb
e. breaking, chopping or grinding of specific long bones.

According to his analysis, the evidence for post-funerary interference and manipulation of *disiecta membra* is suggestive of the human willingness to bring the dead among the living and to familiarise the living community with its ancestors[427].

In modern Greece the *ανακομιδή* is elaborately performed either on the occasion of a fresh interment or exactly three years after the burial. The female relatives of the deceased arrive at the cemetery singing dirges and bringing *κόλλυβα* (boiled wheat mixed with pomegranate, raisins, sesame, parsley, almonds, walnuts, etc.), a symbol of fertility, transition and reintegration. The ceremony involves the exhumation of the skeletal remains, their ablution with wine, their display to those who attend the ceremony, their wrapping in a new shroud, their blessing by the priest and, finally, their placement in an ossuary (*οστεοφυλάκειο*), an individual vault or the tomb itself[428].

Following a concise examination of secondary burial treatment in (pre)Mycenaean times, the objective of this section is *a.* to record the deferential attitudes of the living community towards the dead in LH times and *b.* to propose that secondary burial rites signalled the end of burial customs and the beginning of the Mycenaean cult of the dead.

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[427] Branigan 1998: 25.
[428] Danforth 1982; Souliotis 1986.

Secondary burial rites before the Mycenaeans: a brief account

Access to the remains of the ancestors seems to have been important to Mesolithic and Neolithic societies of the mainland as mirrored in the remains of second funerals in graves at Aghiorgitika, Prosymna, Servia, Haghia Sophia and Prodromos as well as from the cave sites of Marathon, Alepotrypa, Kitsos, Franchthi and Rhodochori[429].

In EH times the custom became relatively widespread. According to Mylonas's reconstruction of the rite at Haghios Kosmas, 'the bodies were first temporarily buried in a trench ... and were allowed to remain there until the flesh had decomposed. Then the bones were collected and placed in piles in the corners of the grave'[430]. Cutmarks, holes and sections noticed on a number of skeletons in the EH graves at Manika led Sampson to suggest that 'rituals were made on some individuals after death', and to attribute the practice to beliefs related to an afterlife and/or *terror mortis*[431]. In site 1 he recorded the existence of an ossuary, whereas the case where grave goods did not accompany any burials has been taken as an indication for the presence of a cenotaph[432]. Further evidence for the practice of secondary burial treatment has been provided by Marathon grave 3, where the skulls of two skeletons lying *in situ* in the lower level of the grave had been removed, while the graves at Zygouries, Vouliagmeni and Avlonari have been identified as ossuaries[433].

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[429] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 9, 116; Cullen 1999.
[430] Mylonas 1959: 118-119.
[431] Sampson 1987: 21-22; Fountoulakis 1987: 31-32.
[432] Sampson 1987: 21.
[433] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 18ff.

During MH times the custom seems to decline until the introduction of collective burials at the very end of the period[434]. The absence of skeletal remains in a number of graves, e.g. Kirrha gr. 35 and 51, has led to their classification as cenotaphs[435]. Ritual manipulation of bones during which the *disiecta membra* were displaced or collected together, is attested at Eleusis, Prosymna, Kirrha, Lerna and Asine-Barbouna[436]. Special care was evidently taken for the skulls. In five cases at Haghios Stephanos, the crania had been placed either on the cover slab of the cists or on a paving slab[437].

The evolution of collective burial in Mycenaean times signalled the re-emergence of the custom as traced in the presence of 'swept' inhumations in a number of early tholoi and tumuli, and the use of several sepulchres as ossuaries[438]. The fact that simple graves contained single inhumations that were not later disturbed, could adequately explain why secondary burial treatment was not the standard practice in Mycenaean graves of this type[439]. For Cavanagh and Mee, the evolution of multiple burial would certainly have forced LH people to confront the remains of earlier burials and, subsequently, to feel the need to establish such rituals[440].

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[434] Noteworthy is the evidence for secondary burial treatment in ShGr VI at Mycenae.
[435] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 31.
[436] Nordquist 1990: 40; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 31.
[437] Taylour 1972: 237ff. Analogous examples include Eutresis gr. 23 and Argos Γ II (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 31 note 105).
[438] Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995: 113; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 50ff., 76.
[439] Lewartowski 2000: 60.
[440] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 116.

Secondary burial treatment in LH IIIA-B: a concise description of the practice and the archaeological evidence **(fig. 85)**[441]

The systematic exploration of Mycenaean necropolises has brought to light sepulchres in which the final burials were not found *in situ* -if not at all-, despite the fact that the blocking of the *stomion* is found intact and no signs of looting are attested[442]. Various explanations have been put forward, viz. that the final burial was particularly subject to decay and had totally disintegrated, that the tomb was re-entered and prepared for a new burial that for some reason never took place, or that the bones were removed by animals or other agents[443].

An accumulation of the available data, however, led Cavanagh to conclude that such was not the case and that 'a separate ceremony was meant to be celebrated after each burial, a second funeral custom'[444]. The results of his statistical analysis demonstrated that the second funeral was usually celebrated and that the tombs in which the custom is attested, were finally abandoned some time before or after the second funeral had been performed for the last burial in the tomb[445].

According to his description of the conduct of the custom, which might have involved the living far more than the dead, the relatives of the deceased re-entered the tomb some considerable time after the burial and

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[441] Due to the restrictions imposed on the length of the thesis, it has been resolved to cite only the most instructive cases from the areas under consideration. For the bibliographical references to the sites mentioned in the text, see the Site Catalogue in *Chapter I.*
[442] Cavanagh 1978: 171.
[443] All views summarised by Cavanagh 1978: 171 and Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995: 116.
[444] Cavanagh 1977: 170; *idem* 1978: 171.
[445] Cavanagh 1978: 171-172.

interfered with the physical remains of those buried therein[446]. The skeleton was probably removed from the chamber into the *dromos*; the bones were cleaned and perhaps wrapped in a new shroud and displayed to those who attended the ceremony. In addition to the ritual interference with the bones, various threshold rituals might have been connected to the custom at this stage. The relics were then returned to the chamber to specially prepared niches or pits[447]. With the exception of a niche in Prosymna XVI, pit 20 at Deiras, Mycenae Panaghitsa 1 (niche and pit), Phychtia-Boliari 1 and the pits in Aigina B and Γ that contained exclusively child secondary burials, these pits and niches had been employed as bone repositories for adult burials.

The thorough examination of the available data from the funerary locales under consideration suggests that in single bone pits, the skeletal remains were often arranged peripherally or by the side of the pit in relation to the skull, accompanied by all or part of the burial furnishings. In pit repositories where more than two burials had been deposited, the skulls were arranged along the one long side and the rest of the bones in the centre of the pit. In Berbati I and II the *disiecta membra* were lined up similarly to primary burials, i.e. one bone after the other.

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[446] Cavanagh 1978: 171-172.

[447] *Mycenae* 1, 47, 514, 516, 517, 520, 521, 524, 1-3 (of Philadelpheus's excavations), *Nauplion* 2, 3, *Deiras* XIV, XXVII, XXXIII, XXX, *Prosymna* II, IV, VII, VIII, IX, XIII, XIV, XVI, XVII, XX, XXI, XII, XXIX, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XL, XLV, XLVI, XLIX, L, *Dendra* 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, *Midea/Mazi, Berbati* I, II, X, XII, *Schoinochori* E, *Palaia Epidauros, Athenian Agora* IV, V, XXIII, XXIV, *Voula-Alyki* 8, A, *Thebes* Kolonaki 26, Ismenion 5, Haghia Anna A, B, Γ, *Tanagra* 11 (it should be noted that more tombs at Tanagra have provided corresponding evidence; however, no identification number is given in the interim reports).

Secondary burials were less commonly deposited on benches as in Mycenae 530, Prosymna XIII and L and Thebes Ismenion 3. A secondary child burial was deposited on a bench in Deiras XXVIII accompanied by beads and figurines. The use of burial enclosures as bone repositories is attested twice, notably Mycenae 517 and Prosymna XXVIII. The side chambers in Mycenae 6, 27, 79 and 518 and Prosymna XXV -the west and north side chambers- had been employed as ossuaries. A similar function has been attributed to the annexe rooms in the Atreus and Minyas Tholoi. In the side chamber of Mycenae 27 a niche had received a skull and a jug, whereas the two lateral chambers of Spata tomb 1 contained ashes and charcoal, human bones and various other objects. The side chamber of Mycenae 5 and the eastern annexe chamber of Prosymna XXV had received indiscriminately primary and secondary burials. In the necropolis at Tanagra, the local tradition of clay sarcophagi dictated their use both for primary interments and for the deposition of *disiecta membra.*

On the other hand, a preference is strongly evident towards the collection of disarticulated remains in small or larger heaps and their placement in the chamber's corners, near its rear or side walls or directly on the floor. The available evidence suggests that the collection of relics in heaps must had been the exclusive practice in a number of tombs, e.g. Asine I:1, I:5, I:6, I:7 and Berbati XI, whereas in other instances it could co-exist with other methods such as bone pits, niches or benches. Of significance is also the attention paid for the thorough maintenance of the area where the deposition of the *disiecta membra* was to take place.

In several cases, the skeletons of earlier occupants were covered by layers of earth or argillaceous limestone (clay)[448]. The covering of 72(?) disarticulated skeletons in a layer of lime in the tomb at Tzanatta has been interpreted as a dire measure against some sort of catastrophe or contamination and it has been suggested that the practice cannot be taken as representative of a standard custom[449]. However, the evidence of a similar practice in certain Argive and Attic necropolises seems to overrule such a suggestion and interpretation. Moreover, the Tzanatta example strengthens the suggestion that the presence of large assemblages of skeletons, completely or partially disarticulated, may hint at the exclusive use of specific sepulchres as ossuaries wherein the bones from all tombs of the cemetery would have been moved and stored as in the case of Apatheia/Galatas A5.

On a number of occasions, the *disiecta membra* were deposited in niches and pits or directly on the floor of the *dromos*. Burials swept in pits in the *dromos* are attested in few tombs in the Argolid, e.g. the Tholos of Clytemnestra, Mycenae 514, 517, 530 and Panaghitsa 1 and Prosymna I, XI, XIV and XLV. Whilst in most cases the remains belonged to adult burials, in at least two instances, viz. Prosymna I and XLV, child bones are also attested[450]. Niches hewn in the side walls of the *dromos* were frequently used as ossuaries as proved by the cases of Prosymna VI and

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[448] Wace 1932: 145; Blegen 1937: 250; Renaudin 1923: 214; Immerwahr 1971: 101; Deshayes 1966: 243; *ArchDelt.* 26 (1966) *Chr.* 98-99.
[449] Papadimitriou 2001: 179.
[450] The cist and the niche in Panaghitsa 1 contained the disarticulated remains of child burials, whereas a bone heap consisting exclusively of secondary child burials had been deposited directly on the floor of the same tomb.

XXXVII, Asine I:3, Deiras XXI and Alyki 2 that contained the disarticulated skeletons of two children furnished with jugs.

À propos the placement of *disiecta membra* directly on the floor of the *dromos,* the evidence points to a local tradition attested in the necropolises of the Argolid. This remark is supported by Mycenae 505, 515, 519, 520, 527, Verdelis's tomb Γ at Mycenae, Prosymna I, IV and XIII, Asine I:2. During his excavations at Mycenae, Tsountas noted the discovery of skulls, with or without other human and/or animal bones, above the entrance of tombs 15, 24, 29 and 49. The presence of human remains above the entrance of tomb VI at Deiras is equally worth mentioning.

Tracing the absent dead: removal and 'cenotaphs' in Mycenaean funerary locales

Excavators have occasionally found themselves in an awkward position when investigating sepulchres whose chambers are found completely empty of skeletal remains, even though the *stomion* packing and the burial gifts still lay *in situ.* Characteristic are the cases of Mycenae 528, Mycenae/Kapsala II and III, Nauplion M.T. 23 and Charitonides's pit-cave, Deiras XXIII and *dromos* XXXII, Dendra 2, Prosymna XLVII (a pit bordered by wall), the tholos tomb at Kokla, Agora I (the *Tomb with the Ivory Pyxides*) and Tanagra 56[451].

[451] Wace 1932: 98, 141; Mylonas 1972: 115; Shelton 2000: 43ff.; Charitonides 1953: 196-197, 199-200; Deshayes 1966: 60-61, 86-87; Persson 1931: 73-80, 108-117; *idem* 1942a: 63ff.; Blegen 1937: 224; Demakopoulou 1990; Immerwahr 1971: 159-160; Spyropoulos 1973a: 13. Sakellarakis, who discussed the issue of cenotaphs with reference to the

The phenomenon has been attributed to the fact that the burials once belonged to children, whose skeletons had completely disintegrated leaving no recognisable traces[452]. However, excavators tend to characterise as *child burials* any badly preserved or decayed human remains or their total absence without keeping in mind that the state of preservation of the skeleton depends mostly on the conditions within the burial facility, the exposure of the corpse and its condition at the time of the burial. Other scholars have suggested that these tombs were cenotaphs erected in honour of Mycenaeans that had perished and been interred abroad[453]. But is this the case?

The custom of erecting cenotaphs, viz. funerary monuments intended as symbolic dwelling places for the souls of those perished abroad and whose physical remains were never transferred to their homeland, is originally recorded in the Homeric Poems

Εἰ δέ τε τεθνηῶτος ἀκούσης μηδ' ἔτ' ἐόντος
νοστήσας δή ἔπειτα φιλήν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
σῆμά τέ οἱ χεῦαι καί ἐπί κτέρεα κτερεΐξαι
πολλά μάλ', ὅσσα ἔοικε[454]

and

χεῦ Ἀγαμέμνονι τύμβον, ἵν' ἄσβεστον κλέος εἴη[455].

'Cenotaph' at Archanes, has suggested that the 'Tomb of the Tripod Hearth' might have also been a cenotaph (Sakellarakis 1992: 12).

[452] This suggestion is often verified by the positioning and the nature of burial furnishings as in the case of a chamber tomb at Nauplion (Kastorchis and Kondakis 1879: 520).

[453] A number of pre-Mycenaean sepulchres have been classified as cenotaphs, e.g. Manika, Asine gr. 54, ShGr K1 at GCB, Kirrha gr. 35 and 51 (see pp. 255, 339, 340 of present thesis; Frödin and Persson 1938: 122, 143, 148).

[454] *Od.* α 289-292. See also *Od.* β 220-223. In *Il.* Ψ 245-247, 255-256, Ω 16, 56, 416, 751 a cenotaph is most probably erected in honour of Patroclus.

[455] *Od.* δ 584.

The direction of research on Mycenaean cenotaphs has been shaped by the discovery of chamber tomb 2, the so-called *Cenotaph*, at Dendra in 1927[456]. Influenced by the echo of the Homeric tradition, the total absence of physical remains and the arrangement of the tomb's static and movable equipment, Persson maintained that the sepulchre was a cenotaph erected for the benefit of two persons -equated with two *menhirs*- that had perished away from their homeland[457]. In his view, the large slaughtering table was intended for the *αἱματοκουρία* to the souls of the deceased who supposedly had perished on expedition overseas, whereas the sacrificial table served similar cult purposes. The presence of the hearth and of burial gifts gave him the impression of a Mycenaean desire to provide the soul with a proper household! He also drew parallels from Egypt and the Pharaoh's custom to erect several burial-structures, not only in order to escape tomb robbers, but also to provide his soul with many dwellings and himself with everlasting fame[458].

Nilsson accepted Persson's interpretation of the tomb as a cenotaph and argued that in this monument a cult of the dead was performed in honour of the dead whose corporeal remains did not rest therein but who were represented by the two *menhirs*[459]. For Mylonas, the peculiar arrangement of the funerary gear in the tomb was reminiscent of the Homeric description of cenotaphs and suggestive of its use for the *ἐπίκλησις*, the rite of inducing the wandering spirits of the two persons that had perished

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[456] Persson 1931: 73-80, 91-117.
[457] Persson 1931: 108ff. Note, though, Andronikos's dissenting view (1963: 253,257).
[458] Persson 1931: 108-109.
[459] Nilsson 1950^2: 600.

abroad[460]. The idea of a cenotaph was also applied to the cases of Mycenae 528 and Prosymna XXVIII, which were finally employed as cenotaphs and consequently never again for burials[461].

In a thorough study of the excavation reports and the finds from the 'Cenotaph', Åkeström suggested a LH IIIA2 date for the tomb and argued that 'there are no valid reasons why it should be a cenotaph'[462] basing his conclusive remarks on *a*. the fact that the remains of the burial found in the *stomion* belonged to the occupant of the tomb and were thrown out there by robbers, and *b*. the suggestion that the large slaughtering block was not a sacrificial table but most probably a base and support for a wooden coffin[463]. He accepted, however, that tomb data reveal the special care taken for sacrificial performances honouring the occupant of the tomb who must have been a person of distinction[464].

Before drawing any conclusive remarks on Mycenaean cenotaphs based exclusively on the evidence from Dendra, it is worth examining the evidence from the rest of the reported cases that feature no skeletal remains. The tholos at Kokla was entirely underground and had its façade decorated[465]. At a depth of 3m in the *dromos* fill before the entrance were found two well-preserved skeletons of sheep/goats, whereas two shattered plain kylikes were unearthed at the base of the blocking wall. Three

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[460] Mylonas 1948: 76; *idem*1966: 117; *idem* 1983: 168. Accordingly, the hoard of bronze vessels could have acted as additional inducement (*idem* 1966: 117).
[461] Mylonas 1948: 76; *idem* 1966: 118.
[462] Åkeström 1978: 85.
[463] Åkeström 1978: 69ff.
[464] Åkeström 1978: 73. See also pp. 311-313 of present thesis.
[465] Demakopoulou 1990: 113ff.

skeletons were placed in two niches, one close to the outer end of the *dromos* and a second one on the other side of the *dromos* wall, ca. 1m from the *stomion*[466]. A carefully fashioned bench occupies the left part of the entrance. A set of silver vessels was found on and beneath it. The floor of the burial chamber was strewn with precious objects (gold cup, gold sheet, ivory ornament, two sealstones, bronze pins and ring, bronze arrow heads) and a LH IIIA1 small three-handled pithoid jar. Traces of a large conflagration occupied the centre of the tholos. No human remains were recorded in the chamber.

The striking similarities with chamber tomb 2 at Dendra, notably the exceptionally long *dromos*, the built bench, the set of precious vessels and the abundance of finds found scattered on the burial chamber, should not be overlooked[467]. Demakopoulou rejected the interpretation of the tholos as a cenotaph and, alternatively, suggested that around the end of the 15th cent. BC, certainly before the roof caved in, during a ceremony at the grave in which the two animals were sacrificed and libations were poured, the remains of the tholos' occupants were removed and transferred to another location. The tholos was then carefully closed and all precious objects were left *in situ*, possibly, according to the excavator's view, with the intention of using it for future interments[468].

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[466] The excavator has suggested that the skeletons belonged to primary burials. Note, however, the discussion following her paper in *Celebrations*: 123.
[467] Demakopoulou 1990: 122.
[468] Demakopoulou 1990: 122.

The tholos at Kokla provides of the most instructive examples *à propos* the performance of secondary burial rites and the deferential attitude of the local community towards the dead. Each individual feature of the tomb is incorporated into a ceremonial whole that permits the reconstruction of an elaborate ritual in honour of the dead, namely the complete removal of the ancestral relics, the performance of sacrifices and libations, the practice of fire rites and the offering of precious gifts[469].

The LH IIIA1 *Tomb with the Ivory Pyxides* (Tomb I) is the largest and wealthiest chamber tomb in the Athenian Agora[470]. It features a long *dromos* and the *stomion* blocking was found intact. The large rectangular chamber is equipped with a bench extended along each sidewall. The benches had been used as repositories for offerings. A bronze 'ladle' or lamp was lying on the floor near the entrance. Beside the west bench in the southwest corner of the chamber, a deep cist, originally covered with a slab, contained nothing but a few scraps of gold. By the cist, a pile of offerings consisted of feminine articles of bronze and ivory. A few scraps of bone and canine-looking teeth were found near the pile. Carbonised wood and ash were scattered near the centre and running in part down into the grave cutting. Surprisingly, no human remains were found in the chamber. *Pace* the excavator's hypothesis that the removal of the skeletal remains was 'an act of family piety' before the collapse of the tomb, Immerwahr attributed it to a possible act of avarice[471].

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[469] Each rite will be separately discussed in the following sections.
[470] Immerwahr 1971: 158ff.
[471] Immerwahr 1971: 160.

A fragmentary animal figurine and a LH IIIB jug decorated with a bucranium were the only finds in tomb XXIII at Deiras, a tomb that contained no skeletal remains[472]. Could the combination of a bucranium-decorated jug and an animal figurine be more than mere coincidence? *À propos* tomb XXXIII, Deshayes commented on the fact that although the blocking wall of the *stomion* and the presence of a kylix in front of the entrance indicated that the sepulchre had been used for burials, 'aucune trace d'inhumation n'est apparue', and wondered whether the tomb belonged to a child whose skeleton had completely disintegrated[473].

In 1953 Charitonides reported the discovery of two sepulchres at Nauplia that were totally empty of skeletal remains. Tomb M.T. 23 provided absolutely no evidence for the presence of human remains and funerary furnishings[474]. The pit-cave contained neither *disiecta membra* nor primary burials, whereas the only finds were confined to a bronze mirror and a stone lamp[475]. The fact that no human bones and no burial furnishings were present in the chamber of Tanagra 56, even though the tomb was found unplundered, the *stomion* blocking *in situ* and the roof still in place, led Spyropoulos to the suggestion that the tomb had received an unfurnished interment[476].

To sum up. Romantic and interesting as may be the 'cenotaph' suggestion for Dendra 2, it is obvious that Persson and the other 'cenotaph theorists'

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[472] *BCH* 80 (1956) *Chr*: 362; Deshayes 1966: 61.
[473] Deshayes 1966: 86-87.
[474] Charitonides 1953: 196-197.
[475] Charitonides 1953: 199-200.
[476] Spyropoulos 1973a: 13.

were blinkered by the Homeric tradition. The absence of firm corresponding evidence from contemporary funerary locales inhibits the acceptance of this thesis. Similarly, the suggestion that children or unfurnished interments whose remains had disintegrated leaving no recognisable traces, might have been the last occupants of these tombs, is an *ex silentio* hypothesis. Likewise, as has been remarked above, the fact that the *stomia* of the particular tombs were found intact and the valuable objects untouched overrules cases of looting.

On the other hand, the evidence from the tholos at Kokla and the Athenian chamber tomb points to a rite associated with *removal,* according to which after their ceremonial handling, the relics were transferred not back to the tomb but to another unknown location. Unfortunately, the general disturbance observed in Mycenaean tombs and their re-use long or immediately after the last interment, prevents to a significant degree the documentation of the rite in the wider LH funerary record[477]. However, the two aforementioned examples are instructive and could provide proof for the existence and performance of ritual removal in the funerary record. Moreover, the deficiency of skulls in several contexts could be another indication for the performance of such rites.

For lack of adequate parallels, the reasons behind this act could not be investigated with absolute certainty. According to Demakopoulou and others, for fear of an imminent collapse of the tomb the living relatives

[477] Branigan (1993: 125) has stressed the difficulty of documenting the rite in Minoan communal tombs.

would have ceremoniously removed the remains of their ancestors to a safer location[478]. An alternative explanation could be that this act reflects another facet of Mycenaean secondary burial custom that signified the end of use of the tomb by the family or clan, and the elevation of the ancestors to a status comparable to the divine. The last remark could be justified by the deposition of valuable offerings and the performance of elaborate rites such as sacrifices, libations, fire rituals and ritual destruction whose counterparts could be sought to contemporary religious observances.

The rite might have taken place after the last living member of the family or clan had died and thus no need was there for the family sepulchre to continue in use. If such is the case, then it becomes clear that the treatment of the skeletal remains was not restricted to the family but rather to the wider community that would take on the task to perform the customary rites after his/her death. The removal rites might have taken place either on the occasion of a ceremony exclusively intended for the secondary treatment of the remains of the particular interment or during a communal celebration of the custom during which several tombs in the same necropolis would have been ceremoniously re-opened.

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[478] Demakopoulou 1990: 121-123; *Hesperia* 9 (1940) 274-291.

What may the remains of secondary burial treatment say about the Mycenaean attitude towards death?

The polemic against the existence of a Mycenaean cult of the dead has been based mainly on the fact that the careless deposition of *disiecta membra* in heaps and/or bone repositories and the removal of the burial gifts revealed disrespect towards the dead. Mylonas was the first to state that the Mycenaean cared less for their dead after the flesh had decomposed and the corpse was transformed into an anonymous pile of bones[479]. Consequently, he wondered how a cult of the dead could have existed among people who treated the remains of their ancestors with such impiety[480]. It should be stressed, however, that he had one-sidedly selected the evidence to support his interpretation of the phenomenon, leaving aside substantial information that would definitely have invalidated his theory[481].

Versus Mylonas, Andronikos maintained that the Mycenaean deferential attitude towards the disarticulated remains of their ancestors is proven by *a.* the fact that pits, cists and niches comprised part of the original construction scheme of several LH tombs so that on the occasion of a fresh interment the remains of those reposed therein would not have been subject to any disturbance or removal, *b.* the existence of specially reserved bone repositories (pits, niches, cists, benches, side chambers) in the chamber or

[479] Mylonas 1948: 70; *idem* 1951: 99; *idem* 1961-62: 302ff., 318ff.; *idem* 1966: 133-134. The same view has also been shared, among others, by Iakovidis 1970(B): 75, 425-426, Vermeule 1964: 300, Krystalli-Votsi 1998: 27

[480] Mylonas 1951: 99; *idem* 1961-62: 296.

[481] See the discussion in Andronikos 1963: 262ff.

the *dromos* of a typical Mycenaean tomb, and *c*. the fact that swept burials were frequently neatly arranged[482].

For Nilsson, the disturbance observed in Mycenaean tombs should be construed as an instance of the ambiguous attitude towards the dead, which is characteristic of human nature[483]. Drawing parallels from modern times, he suggested that the graves of the wealthy members of the community would have been well cared for, whereas the poorer graves might have been neglected, forgotten or even re-used after a while, although the idea of afterlife would have been common; 'The question is not of any difference in the conception of after-life', he remarked, 'but when and how this idea is actualized'[484].

In his analysis of the burial customs at Mycenae, Wace wavered between indications of disrespect and evidence for deference for the dead; thus, he noted that 'in addition to the burials removed from the chamber *carefully* reinterred in shallow pits in the dromos, sometimes in clearing the chamber for new occupants the remains of previous interments were quite obviously thrown out *pell-mell* into the dromos'[485]. *Pace* the hypothesis that the disturbance noted in Mycenaean tombs was the result of looting and intrusion, Wace put forward the suggestion that only the later generations of the family would have ventured to reopen and prepare the tomb for

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[482] Andronikos 1962: 48-50; *idem* 1963: 268ff.; *idem* 1968: 78. The same opinion has been shared by Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1975: 412, where she also cites Kyriakidis. Note also the relevant discussion by Wells (1990: 135ff.) and Sjöberg (*Celebrations*: 139).
[483] Nilsson 1950^2: 619.
[484] Nilsson 1950^2: 619. See also Andronikos's remarks (1963: 273).
[485] Wace 1932: 130 (my emphasis in italics).

subsequent burials by the removal or sweeping aside of the earlier occupants, and wondered whether strangers would have cared to carefully pack the bones of the earlier tenants in the pit in the *dromos* of tomb 530[486].

Along a similar line of argumentation, Frödin and Persson rejected the hypothesis that grave robbers forced their way into the chamber of Asine I:7, as they would hardly have re-sealed the *stomion* of the chamber so carefully and they would definitely have left more distinct traces of their activity[487]. According to Wells, the Mycenaeans might have 'retrieved the valuables from the tomb as part of their inheritance or with the sole purpose of rescuing anything still serviceable for recirculation'; such sort of behaviour might have been justifiable in times of metal shortage[488].

Blegen, who also found himself in the same awkward position as Wace, maintained that 'generally speaking the remains found in the cists appeared to have been *carelessly* swept together into a heap without arrangement of any kind, but in not a few instances they had been rather *meticulously* packed and fitted into the space available'[489]. In another instance, 'two *neatly* arranged heaps of arm and leg bones came to light, with no trace of accompanying skull'[490]. Interestingly, in tomb I the bones of each skeleton had been kept fairly well together, despite the fact that at first sight they all

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[486] Wace 1932: 138. Correspondingly, the stratification of specific tombs was taken to adequately prove that 'as each member of the family died his relatives reopened, swept and garnished the family tomb, and piously laid this latest scion of the race and the bones of the ancestors to whom during his life he had paid due rites' (*op.cit.* 138-139).
[487] Frödin and Persson 1938: 188.
[488] Wells 1990: 127.
[489] Blegen 1937: 246 (my emphasis in italics).

appeared as if they had been more or less carelessly swept to the side of the chamber. In the *dromos* of tomb XIII, a heap of bones had been placed at a distance of ca. 0.70 m from the *stomion* consisting exclusively of arm and leg bones neatly arranged side by side in two rows. In the niche of the *dromos* of tomb VI, the long bones had been placed on end in an upright position.

Instructive of the Mycenaean deferential attitude towards the ancestral remains is the evidence from Dendra tomb 10[491]. Pit I at the rear of the burial chamber contained the amassed bones of one individual and pit II the burial gifts. Additional gifts had been placed to the left and to the right of the entrance and by the rear wall several other vessels stood to the left of bone pit I. Wells has suggested that this symmetry had been created, by deliberation or chance, with the human remains as focal point[492]. Although the tomb contained only one burial, the stratification of the *dromos* fill and of the *stomion* packing indicates that the sepulchre had been entered at least twice[493]. In Agora III (the *Tomb with the Bronzes*) a compact group of three pots found in connection with a heap of skeletal remains could perhaps represent a supplementary offering.

In Dendra tomb 6 the neat stacking of the *disiecta membra* of at least three skeletons into a shallow shaft, the positioning of one of the crania in the

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[490] Blegen 1937: 235.
[491] Persson 1942a: 59ff. The tomb was found unplundered but its roof had at some point collapsed.
[492] Wells 1990: 135.
[493] The striking similarities this sepulchre shares with the *Tomb of the Ivory Pyxides* (Tomb I) in the Athenian Agora should not be overlooked.

middle of the pit, the placement of burial furnishings and the pit's careful sealing –through a row of cover-stones with smaller stones filling in the joints, followed by two flat slabs- attest to the performance of a ceremony dictated by the respect of the living towards the dead[494]. Moreover, the offering of supplementary offerings would have been facilitated by the presence of a pair of grooves in its *stomion*.

Undisputable proof for the respect shown by the living communities towards their dead is provided by instances when, in the course of opening a new tomb, the Mycenaean builders came across an earlier grave. Worth quoting is Blegen's remark; 'That the dromoi of the chamber-tombs sometimes did actually encroached upon earlier graves was clearly shown by the discovery of our Middle Helladic Grave IV at the outer end of the dromos of Tomb XV; although in this instance the older burial seems to have been treated with respect and to have been subjected to a minimum of disturbance'[495]. Equally significant evidence has been attested in the necropolis at Eleusis, where several MH graves were re-used in Mycenaean times. With reference to grave Θπ4, Mylonas reported that before the new burials took place, the LH people dug a pit in the floor in which they placed the skeletal remains and the burial furnishings of the MH occupants[496]. The same pattern is also attested in graves Θπ2 and Θπ8 where pits in the floor contained the *disiecta membra* and the burial gifts of

[494] Persson 1942a: 23; Wells 1990: 135. A small piece of cranium and a few potsherds were uncovered in the side chamber of the same tomb (Persson 1942a: 24).
[495] Blegen 1937: 234.
[496] *PAE* 1952: 64.

the MH burials transferred there during LH times[497]. These cases reject Mylonas's tenet that 'the remains of previous burials were treated *summarily* and *unceremoniously*' by the Mycenaeans[498].

Appealing is the importance attached to the retention and display of the skull in Mycenaean funerary contexts[499]. Charles attributed the perforations observed on four skulls from Argos -two Mycenaean and two Geometric- to a *post mortem* rite in the context of a cult of the skull, following the decapitation of the body or the complete decomposition of the corpse [500]. In several cases the skull and the long bones were the only parts of the skeleton to be kept and displayed, whereas in others the total absence of crania among the disarticulated bones is striking[501]. This practice is evocative of the ritual deposition of headless animal carcasses, as in shaft grave 8 at Deiras, or merely of animal skulls, e.g. the dog skull in Asine I:1[502], and could be attributed ritualistic and, possibly, eschatological significance.

More analytically, on the floor of the *dromos*, just outside the entrance to Prosymna IV, two skulls were placed side by side with practically no other traces of bones. In cist II of Prosymna XXIX six skulls had been carefully

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[497] *PAE* 1952: 66.
[498] Mylonas 1951: 99; *idem* 1975b: 228. (my emphasis in italics)
[499] Skulls had received special attention in the Neolithic Levant. Soles has discussed the evidence for the careful retention and veneration of skulls in Early and Middle Minoan tombs (Soles 2001: 233). In Christian religion, the skulls and relics of saints are ascribed sacred and healing power. Worth citing is the case of the Andaman islanders in the Indian Ocean and the Papuans who wear the skull or mandible of a deceased relative on a thong around their neck (Cullen 1999: 165). See also Parker Pearson 1999: 159-161.
[500] Charles 1963: 67ff. Note, though, Cavanagh 1977: 176 note 87.
[501] Quite remarkably, the skull has been removed from a child secondary burial at Mycenae/Kapsala tomb I (Shelton 2000: 45).
[502] *Supra* pp. 305 and 308.

arranged in a row along one side of the shaft, while the other bones had been laid in an orderly manner behind them. In the earth filling of the *dromos* of tomb XIII two neatly arranged heaps of long bones were unearthed, although no trace of the accompanied skulls has been reported[503].

Special care for the skulls is attested in the cemetery at Deiras where the skull was found lying in the centre and around it were neatly packed the rest of the bones, e.g. tomb XVI[504], or all skulls were collected together and beside them the bones were placed, e.g. tomb XXVI. The case of Deiras grave 8 is intriguing since the shaft contained exclusively the headless horse skeleton, two human skulls and a LH IIIA2-B jug.

Four skulls were meticulously arranged in the bottom of a larnax in tomb 115 at Tanagra accompanied by the rest of the remains and the burial gifts. It is noteworthy that the positioning of burial furnishings on the lids of a number of clay sarcophagi at Tanagra led the excavator to convincingly suggest that gifts were deposited not only at the time of the burial but also whenever the tomb was re-entered on the occasion of a fresh interment[505]. Additionally, it is interesting that on certain occasions *disiecta membra* had been deposited in sarcophagi whose painted decoration refers to the Mycenaean Underworld and/or to rites connected, as we shall see below,

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[503] See also *PAE* 1928: 113; *Ergon* 1961: 170.
[504] A similar arrangement is attested in the cemetery at Schoinochori.
[505] Spyropoulos 1969a: 10; *idem* 1971a: 8.

with the third stage of the rites of passage and the cult of the dead[506]. Undoubtedly, the final publication of the cemetery will give a definite answer to the question whether this is mere coincidence or an *indicium* of a conscious choice on behalf of the living community at Tanagra. In a cist in the chamber of the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli a skull was uncovered furnished with an ivory pyxis of excellent craftsmanship.

So what do the remains of Mycenaean post-funerary treatment reveal about the relationship between the living community and its departed members? Nevertheless, if human remains represent the culmination of rites of passage whose purpose is to separate the dead from the living and install them in another dimension of human understanding[507], then the *disiecta membra* in LH tombs could speak volumes about the Mycenaean attitude towards death. The contextual evaluation of the corresponding evidence suggests that in LH times the dead enjoyed a privileged position within the cosmological perceptions of the living communities. Moreover, as Wells has remarked, the practice of multiple burial in LH times 'is in itself a refutation of Mycenaean abhorrence of death and putrification...' and 'it...means that people lived with death as an integral part of their lives in the same manner people have lived with it until quite recently even in the western world'[508].

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[506] E.g. the larnax with the depiction of bull-leaping and animal sacrifice from tomb 22, the sarcophagus from tomb 115 that is decorated with a sphinx and a priestess separated by a sacred column, etc.
[507] Parker Pearson 1999: 71.
[508] Wells 1991: 138.

Whilst there appears to exist a commonly LH shared belief on the importance attached to the ritual interference with the remains of the ancestors -at least in the case of multiple burials-, yet diversity is observed in the adoption of identical patterns of placing of and interference with *disiecta membra.* The desire of local communities to present themselves as part of a Mycenaean cultural *koine* and, concurrently, to declare their cultural individuality was expressed via the adoption of a universal idea and custom, i.e. the ceremonial handling of the remains of the ancestors- and, at the same time, through differentiation in matters of detail, e.g. bone repositories versus bone heaps, display of skulls and/or long bones versus indiscriminate accumulation of *disiecta membra.*

Mylonas's theory that the Mycenaeans held no respect for the relics of their ancestors definitely requires re-examination. The meaning of the word 'sweeping' incorporates a sense of irreverence, which could not in any way be valid in the case of Mycenaean *ανακομιδή*. The respect for the dead is reflected by the care taken for the placement of the disarticulated remains in specially prepared spaces and areas, as well as by the special attention that certain parts of the skeleton had received.

An alternative explanation could be put forward for the heaps of bones that are found piled or 'scattered' (to use the verb frequently employed by excavators when describing these heaps) on the floor and/or pit repositories of the chamber or the *dromos* of the tomb. According to the conduct of the ceremony, after the cleansing of the bones and their display to the attendants, the remains were wrapped in a new shroud or cloth and returned

to specially reserved spaces within the chamber or in the *dromos*. However, in the course of time, the shroud would have rotted away leaving the *disiecta membra* exposed in a 'scattered away' mode. Proof for the shroud's existence and use is provided by the presence of beads and ornaments of various precious and semi-precious materials and of steatite buttons, items that were traditionally connected with Mycenaean clothing and frequently retrieved in or near piles of disarticulated bones. Indirect evidence is also provided by the presence of *alabastra* in the *dromos* or in the chamber, vessels that would have contained the oil used for the ceremonial anointing of the shroud before the wrapping of the bones[509].

Mycenaean funerary art and the mortuary evidence suggest that secondary burial treatment did not involve merely the reverential and ceremonial handling of skeletal remains but, more significantly, it was elaborated with ceremonials that extended beyond family limits and involved the participation of the entire living community. Therefore, the objective of the following section is to present and discuss the evidence for two rites connected with the custom of secondary burial treatment, namely fire and burnt offerings and the performance of feasting (libation and sacrificial acts, athletic contests, etc.).

Fire rituals and burnt offerings

The use and importance of fire in Mycenaean ritual is reflected by the presence of thick ashes and traces of burning in sacred locales. At the west

[509] See also the discussion in p. 291.

end of the platform in the Room with the Fresco at Mycenae a ledge was found roughly shaped into three coalescing discs, in the form of miniature hearths, filled with ashes, possibly the remains of incense burning[510] for purification purposes. The hearth of the megaron at Mycenae was also covered in thick ash mixed with animal bones[511], whereas the flame-patterned decoration of the rim of the hearth at Pylos reinforces the notion of the sacred fire it contained[512].

Traces of burning have been reported from around the platform in the LH IIIC level at the Temple at Haghia Irini on Keos[513]. The consistent use of fire in this sacred locale, as suggested by the presence of traces of burning in all strata, has been construed as an indication of the cultic significance of burnt animal sacrifices in the area of the sanctuary[514]. Lamps, braziers and incense burners, all paraphernalia associated with fire, have been found in the sanctuaries at Mycenae and Phylakopi[515].

In two Pylian Linear B documents, viz. PY An 07+ and An 18, there is mention of *pu-ka-wo* (pl. *pu-ka-wo-i*) that has been read as *πυρκαεύς*, *fire-kindler* or *fire-tender*[516]. Although the name or title may be of secular rather than sacred nature, its recording in An 07, where five male *da-ko-ro* (temple-servants) are also mentioned, may be suggestive of the presence of *pu-ka-wo*(*i*) in sacred places and/or his/their involvement and participation

[510] Taylour 1969: 94-95; Marinatos 1988: 245; Rehak 1984: 539.
[511] Whittaker 1997: 147.
[512] Wright 1994: 57.
[513] Whittaker 1997: 147.
[514] Caskey 1981: 35. Note, though, Whittaker 1997: 148.
[515] Whittaker 1997: 145.
[516] Ventris and Chadwick 1973[2]: 180-181, 575.

in ritual acts associated with fire. Interestingly, the *exarchos* of a male procession depicted on the long side of a larnax from tomb 6 is illustrated bearing a flame-shaped instrument or even carrying sacred fire to the tomb **(fig. 79a)**.

Interestingly, layers of fire, ashes, charcoal and traces of burning are frequently attested in funerary locales from MH times onwards and their presence has been considered purificatory when associated with rites before or during the burial, and sacrificial when traced over the closed grave[517]. During the excavation of GCA, Schliemann reported 'grey ashes of burnt animal matter' at the base of the funerary *stelai*, whereas a handful of grey ashes discovered at the base of *stele* III contained a gold-plated button[518]. The ritualistic use of fire in GCA is further verified by the stratified layers of ashes in the hollow excavated by Keramopoullos[519].

The presence of ashes in GCA is consistent with the discovery of traces of fire, ashes and carbon, as well as of paraphernalia associated with fire (incense burners, lamps and scoops) in the *dromos*, the *stomion* and/or the chamber of over sixty Mycenaean tholos and chamber tombs in the areas under discussion, the bulk of evidence provided by the necropolises of the Argolid[520]. Cavanagh and Mee have argued that the relative rarity of traces

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[517] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 112.
[518] See pp. 51 and 80 of present thesis.
[519] *Supra* pp. 53-54.
[520] *Mycenae* 7, 10, 24, 78, 79, 84, 97, 99, 520, 524, 515, 518, Verdelis A, Papadimitriou tomb (1952 expedition); *Phychtia/Boliari* I; *Nauplion* 2, 5; *Prosymna* II, III, VII, X, XIV, XXIV, XXXIV, XLI, XLII, XLIV; *Dendra/Midea* tholos, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13; *Berbati* tholos, I, III, VIII; *Kokla* tholos; *Asine* I: 1, I:2, I:7; *Deiras* I, VIII, XIV, XXVIII, XXVIII *bis*, XXX, XXXIII, XXXVI; *Kazarma* tholos; *Athenian Agora* I, III, XL; *Menidi* tholos; *Spata* 1; *Marathon* tholos; *Thebes*: Ismenion 5, Megalo Kastelli 4, 9, 14, 26, Tomb of Oedipus's

of burning in Mycenaean funerary record could confirm the suggestion that fire rituals evolved in response to the adoption of collective burial in the chamber tomb and that fire ceremonies were a significant, albeit sporadic, part of Mycenaean funerary ritual[521].

Tsountas reported ashes and charcoal from almost all the chamber tombs he excavated at Mycenae. Interestingly, during the excavation of chamber tomb 10, the excavator noticed that the floor over which the dead were placed, was covered by a thin layer of charcoal and ashes, whereas its eastern part was burnt to a hard brick-like appearance[522]. Large conflagrations have also been reported from other funerary monuments in the Argolid and evidence suggests that in certain instances human skeletal remains and offerings were accidentally blackened, scorched and even calcinated, e.g. Dendra tholos and Dendra tomb 13, Asine I:1 and I:7, Berbati I and III. In Deiras I and Prosymna VII the action of fire was so conspicuous that it was taken as evidence for the practice of cremation[523].

Instances of ash, carbon and/or animal bones and other objects (several with evident traces of burning) mixed together either in cists and pits or in piles in front of the *stomion* or in the chamber of several tombs have been interpreted as the remains of sacrificial rituals and funerary feasting and/or as burnt offerings in honour of the dead. Worth mentioning are the cases

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Sons, Pharaklas 1967, Philios 1, *Tanagra* 76; *Oxylithos* tholos; *Katakalou* tholos; *Bellousia* tholos.

[521] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 112-113. The same explanation has also been put forward by Blegen 1937: 251.

[522] Tsountas 1888: 140. Ash and charcoal were also lying beneath the aforementioned burnt layer (*ibid.*).

[523] Vollgraff 1904: 391; Blegen 1937: 251.

from the tholos tombs at Dendra (pit IV), Kokla, Berbati, Marathon, Menidi, Katakalou, as well as from chamber tombs such as Dendra (2, 6, 7, 9, 10), Nauplion (2 and 5 of 1879 expedition), Tiryns (V), Berbati (VIII), Mycenae (505, 79), Agora (the *Tomb with the Ivory Pyxides*), Spata (1), Megalo Kastelli/Thebes (Keramopoullos's tomb 4 and the chamber tomb reported by Pharaklas in 1967).

Ash, charcoal and/or animal bones constituted the content of vessels uncovered in the chamber or near the *stomion* of a number of tombs. A LH IIIB jar filled with ash and small animal bones had been carefully placed on a bench in the chamber of the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli, whereas in Tanagra tomb 76 a *krater* was found in front of the *stomion* filled with burnt matter. In the entrance of Prosymna XLI a burnt human bone, animal bones, potsherds and ash were placed in a vase. A three-handled jar, a flat *alabastron* and a cup were filled with marl in Deiras XXIV, although this could be the result of the custom of coating the skeletal remains associated with the vessels in a layer of clay. In tombs 3, 5 and 26 at Thebes *alabastra* were unearthed filled with ash. Likewise, a LH IIIA1 jar contained the remains of a sacrificial pyre in Tomb III (the *Tomb with the Bronzes*) at the Athenian Agora.

Many interpretations have been put forward *vis-à-vis* the use of fire in LH funerary locales. Tsountas suggested that the presence of fire in the tombs at Mycenae was the result of customary rites, *ἐναγισμοί*, performed on

behalf of the living in honour of the dead[524]. He suggested that the charcoal came exclusively from the fires whereon victims, clothing -as suggested by the presence of glass ornaments and gold sheet- and other offerings had ceremoniously been burnt[525]. The presence of burnt animal bones in pits led Tsountas to connect them with sacrificial rites in honour of the ancestors and to suggest that the occurrence of animal bones in front of the *stomion* or above the entrance of the tomb resulted from the performance of funeral feasts[526]. He and Keramopoullos attributed the small traces of burning and charcoal to the action of torches lit in order to illuminate the dark interior of the burial chamber[527].

Wace and Blegen expressed the view that burning in tombs might have constituted part of a purificatory rite or of a more practical purification when the tomb was re-opened on the occasion of a fresh interment[528]. The use of incense burners that were most probably filled with glowing charcoal on which an aromatic substance would have been laid, would have purified the atmosphere of the tomb and could have dispelled the stench of putrescence[529].

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[524] Tsountas 1888: 134.
[525] Tsountas 1888; 134; Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 139, 147-148.
[526] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 148-150. A similar interpretation has been initiated by Immerwahr (1971: 101, 159) with respect the corresponding evidence from Agora I and III; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1975: 504ff.
[527] Tsountas 1888: 131; Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 138-139; Keramopoullos 1917: 195. On Mycenaean torch-holders, see Kilian (1986: 152-166), Karageorghis (1986: 22-26) and Karantzali (1999a: 290ff. with further examples and bibliography).
[528] Wace 1932: 140-141; Blegen 1937: 251ff.
[529] Wace 1932: 140; Blegen 1937: 250ff. On many occasions excavators have encountered noxious odours while excavating Mycenaean tombs (Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 113 note 84).

Nilsson argued that in Mycenaean times 'a curious mixture of inhumation and burning of offerings is found in many and important instances' and ventured to construe the practice as the survival of the custom of cremating not only the corpse but also the burial gifts[530]. Upon the authority of Evans, he concluded that 'fire was introduced in the funeral rites and in the cult of the dead, either by burning sacrifices or for a purificatory purpose'[531].

Following an assessment of the available data, Mylonas drew the following conclusions: *a.* fires were kindled to fumigate and purify the burial chamber before additional interments were introduced to it, *b.* the span of time elapsed determined the extent or lack of traces of fire in a grave, *c.* offerings were burnt in honour of the 'disturbed' ancestral spirits, especially on occasions when the need for re-opening the tomb had arisen at short intervals, and *d. pace* Nilsson, fire was not used as part of a Mycenaean cult of the dead[532].

No doubt, small pyres in front of the *stomion* or in the chamber of the tomb could have clearly served purificatory purposes. Purification by fire[533] and the burning of incense would have ameliorated the atmosphere in the tomb and would have protected those coming in contact with decomposed corpses and skeletal remains, from serious health risks. On the other hand.

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[530] Nilsson 1950[2]: 599.

[531] Nilsson 1950[2]: 597; Evans 1929: 3. Nilsson also cited Professor Boethius's suggestion that fires in tombs -with special reference to Mycenae tomb 524- were kindled by shepherds who took shelter in the tomb accidentally (*ibid.*) A similar argument was also expressed by Frödin and Persson (1938: 159) in their discussion of the presence of fire in Asine I:1.

[532] Mylonas 1948: 74; *idem* 1951a: 91ff. (esp. p. 96); *idem* 1966: 181.

[533] At Mycenae, Prosymna and Berbati purification was also achieved by bringing soil into the chamber to cover previous burials and prepare the floor for new interments (Wace

there are indications that in several instances the black marks on the walls, the ceiling and the floor of the chamber were due to the damp conditions in the tomb[534] as well as to decomposed organic matter. Fire would have consumed any remains of flesh on the skeletons, especially when the tomb was re-entered in short intervals after the primary burial. However, blackened bones cannot always be safely employed as indicators of fire use since discolouring may also result of dampness or some other internal agents in the tomb[535].

The co-occurrence of ash, carbon, animal bones and potsherds in secondary burial contexts may refer to the performance of commemorative rites accompanied by sacrificial rites and ceremonial consumption of food and drink[536]. The occurrence of vessels filled with ash, animal bones and offerings could denote the accumulation of ash and animal bones- possibly *post festum* remains of sacrifice and ritual dining and/or food offerings to the ancestral spirits- and their placement in the tomb as an act of perpetual offering.

The ritual destruction of offerings by fire as suggested by the presence of beads, buttons and ornaments of various materials mixed with ashes and charcoal is also appealing. The custom of burning clothing in honour of the dead prevailed throughout antiquity and is illustrated by the story of the

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1932: 141; Blegen 1937: 251ff.; Holmberg 1983: 13, 48). Note also Well's interesting points on the subject (1991: 138).

[534] Note Kondakis's remark on the dampness he experienced in the tombs at Nauplia thousands of years after the construction of the tombs (Kondakis 1878: 199).

[535] Interestingly, chemical analysis conducted on skeletal material from Mycenae tomb 524 'showed no trace of calcination' (Wace 1932: 40 note 2).

[536] For ritual feasting in secondary burial contexts, see *infra* pp. 377ff.

Corinthian tyrant Peisander and his wife Melissa[537] and by Odysseus's promise to the dead that on his return to Ithaka he would sacrifice a barren heifer to them and he would fill the sacrificial pyre *ἔσθλῶν*[538]. *À propos* the Mycenae tombs, Tsountas suggested that ornaments of gold leaf and of glass found mixed with ash and charcoal had been embroidered on garments burnt for the dead, whereas trinkets and toilet accessories could signify the ritual destruction by fire of personal belongings in honour of the ancestors[539]. Persson argued that the burnt objects from pit IV in the Dendra tholos were the remnants of funeral gifts that were burnt in a pyre lit in the tholos and subsequently swept in the pit[540].

Mylonas's suggestion that fire would have been employed to appease the disturbed spirits of the dead on the occasion of a new interment in the tomb is consistent with the deferential attitude of the Mycenaeans towards the departed members of their communities and in harmony with the belief in the *post mortem* survival of the soul as mirrored in the archaeological record and the funerary art.

Certainly, the offering of clothing to the dead would have been necessitated at the time of the burial, as part of the customary funerary gifts, and, more importantly, in the course of secondary burial treatment, where cloth would have been employed for the cleaning and re-wrapping of the skeletal remains in a new shroud. Due to the absence of traces of burning, though,

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[537] Herodotus V. 92.
[538] *Od.* λ. 30-31.
[539] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 134.
[540] Persson 1931: 13ff.

on several of these artefacts and the fact that they frequently occur in layers or piles of 'black earth', which could in fact be decomposed organic matter, it would be plausible to suggest that garments were not always ritually consumed by fire but, on different occasions, they would have been placed in the tomb and would eventually have rotted away[541].

The burning of garments during commemorative ceremonies could be classified in the same category of tie-breaking acts such as ritual breakage of artefacts, discard and hiding, and could be connected with the superstition that the immaterial spirit required the essence of the object offered and not the object *per se*[542]. No doubt, the emotional state of those performing the ceremonies, diverse eschatological tenets and possible expressions of surplus wealth and status would have shaped accordingly the conduct of the rite[543].

Part of the secondary burial rites would have been the anointing of the garments with oil or ointment contained in *alabastra* or oil containers frequently mixed with black earth, beads, ornaments and steatite buttons. The placement of terracotta figurines with the *disiecta membra* would have provided divine protection, but their co-occurrence with beads and steatite buttons hints at an offering similar to that illustrated on fragment No 103 of the 'Frauenprozession' from Tiryns **(fig. 59b)**[544].

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[541] Note also the severe warnings by Wells 1990: 137.
[542] *Supra* pp. 264ff.
[543] Based on the scarcity of examples, Kontorli-Papadaopoulou accepted the practice as peculiar and wondered whether this was the result of a special local ritual or no more than the remains of purificatory fires (1987: 157).
[544] *Supra* p. 328.

Commemorative rites and feasting in honour of the dead in LH IIIA-B times

Ethnographic parallels suggest that the closing of the third stage of the rites of passage, in particular the second funeral, is often celebrated with the performance of an elaborate communal feast. The Grave Circles at Mycenae have provided sufficient information on the performance of ritual dining in honour of the ancestors. In particular, the fills of Shaft Graves Alpha, Beta, Delta, Xi, Omikron and Rho in GCB have produced shells and bones belonging to small animals, whereas in Shaft Grave Ni the teeth of a large animal, possibly a cow, were uncovered[545]. In Shaft Grave Omikron a fragment of charcoal was found mixed with animal bones, most probably brought there with the meal prepared for the banqueting. In Shaft Graves Iota, Kappa and Ni[546] stone slabs might have served as tables for the performance of feasting at the time of the burial as well as for the post-funerary rites in honour of those buried therein.

The presence of ashes at the base of the funerary *stelai* in GCA has been interpreted as the remains of offerings and/or of funerary banquets at the time of the re-arrangement of the Circle in LH IIIB[547]. Nevertheless, the *stelai* erected on top of the shafts would have facilitated the performance of the appropriate rites in honour of the ancestors[548], their importance being

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[545] Mylonas 1973: 22, 38, 82, 158, 177, 187, 211.
[546] Mylonas 1973: 110, 122, 158.
[547] *Supra* p. 366.
[548] On the funerary *stelai* from the Grave Circles at Mycenae, see Mylonas 1951b and Younger 1997.

stressed by the fact that their re-positioning on a new level was also included in the LH IIIB renovation scheme.

Turning to LH IIIA-B funerary locales, there is evidence to suggest that the living performed repeated commemorative visits and rituals to the tombs of the ancestors, and that the presence of tombstones would have facilitated the practice of such customary rites.

Tomb markers in Mycenaean tholos and chamber tombs

Tomb markers are surprisingly rare in the cemeteries of the regions under discussion in this thesis and there are mostly not found *in situ*[549]. Most of the examples come from the necropolis at Prosymna, e.g. tombs V, VI, XI, XLIII, where rather large stones of limestone, often boulders from the nearby streams, had been wedged into the top of the *dromos* at its inner end, or had been placed almost directly above the entrance at a high level[550]. Blegen suggested that they might have served as markers to indicate the position of each individual tomb, rejecting any connection with grave monuments[551]. In the Heraeum tholos a *stele* was found amid the debris of the collapsed tholos[552]. The cemeteries at Mycenae have yielded to-date only three *stelai* -one with curved curvilinear and chevron

[549] Noteworthy is also the carved stone from tomb XXXVII at Ialissos, which Maiuri identified as 'sema tombale' (Maiuri 1923-24: 150, fig. 72). For LM *stelai* see Papadopoulou 1996: 1471-1478.
[550] Blegen 1937: 237.
[551] Blegen 1937: 237.
[552] Stamatakis 1878: 271ff.

designs[553], another one plastered and decorated with animal and human figures[554]- from tombs 51 and 70 respectively. At the south end of the *dromos* of Deiras XXIV a cut on the surface of the natural rock may indicate the position of a *stele* marking the tomb[555].

Near the top of the *stomion* of tomb XL (the *Tomb with Coffins*) in the Athenian Agora a broken conglomerate grave marker proved to have been erected at least three times[556]. Likewise, a stone slab, dressed smooth on the face and the sides, found on the floor near the centre of the east side of tomb XXIV might once have been a grave marker at ground level[557]. At a distance of 1.70m from the outer end of the *dromos*, two upright slabs would have marked the position of tomb 8 at Alyki[558]. Finally, large stones would have been employed to mark the position of graves Θπ5, Θπ14, Λπ1 and Λπ3 within the necropolis at Eleusis[559].

The fact that tomb markers would have been made of some perishable material, most probably wood, or that they were not fixed securely enough to stand *in situ* for long intervals, or even the fact that in a number of cases simple piles of stones might have been employed, render the identification

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[553] Tsountas 1888: 127; Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 152, fig. 53. Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 130-131.
[554] Tsountas 1896: 1ff.; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 203-204, coloured plate.
[555] Deshayes 1966: 65.
[556] Immerwahr 1971: 102, 242, 246.
[557] Immerwahr 1971: 102, 221.
[558] Papadimitriou 1954: 86. Cavanagh notes that a grave marker was found just below the modern surface above chamber tomb 1 (Cavanagh 1977(II): 12).
[559] Mylonas 1975b: 227. The custom seems to exist at Eleusis since MH times as indicated by corresponding evidence from grave Θπ9 (*ibid.*). For EH and MH examples of funerary *stelai*, see Andronikos 1961-62: 153ff.; *idem* 1968: 114-118; Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 115 note 105.

of Mycenaean tomb markers extremely difficult[560]. Nevertheless, the organisation of the tombs within the cemeteries, the nature of Mycenaean multiple burials and the requirements of funerary and post-funerary ritual would have necessitated the existence of funerary *stelai* for identification reasons. More importantly, these tomb markers would have served as *loci* for offerings to the dead and, in a manner analogous to later Greek customs, they might even have been glistered with oil as symbols of the dead who, like the living, are wreathed on festive occasions[561].

Feasting and commemorative meals

'Food is coercive...It has power over us. Food as identity, as our physical selves, as a way of thought, as sex, as power, as friendship, as a medium for magic and witchcraft, as our time-controller –in all these ways and more, food pervades our culture and gives meaning to our lives. It plays a central role in our societies, and provides us with intricate symbols and metaphors as with nutritional substance'[562]. In human societies, food and death are inextricably linked; humans are consumed by death as food and drink are consumed in a funerary context[563]. The remains of animal bones in tombs do not necessarily imply the offering of food provisions to the dead; more importantly, they mark a whole sequence of feasts and related

[560] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 153; Wace 1932: 124; Persson 1931: 113-114; Blegen 1937: 237; Wiesner 1938: 84-85; Mylonas 1948: 71-72; *idem* 1961-62: 163ff.; Andronikos 1961-62: 167ff.; Iakovidis 1970(II): 27; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1975: 24.
[561] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 115; Burkert 1985: 72.
[562] MacClancy 1992: 5.
[563] Hamilakis 1998: 115.

rites triggered by death and associated with the offering and consumption of food.

Mortuary feasting was certainly practiced in LH IIIA-B funerary locales, although its intensity, character and scale of participation are not always easy to ascertain. Due to preservation and recovery obstacles, food remains may not survive in the archaeological record; they may also be lost or mixed among human remains following secondary burial treatment and *post festum* cleaning operations in the tomb[564]. Moreover, there is a possibility that the *Totenmahl* might have been held at the house and not at the grave[565].

On account of the evidence from the tombs at Mycenae, viz. tombs 15, 24, 78, 79, 81 and 100, Tsountas argued that ritual dining was held not in the *dromos* but above the entrance, before the *stomion* was closed and the *dromos* filled up, as suggested by the positioning of the funerary *stelai*[566]. He also maintained that a portion of the feast was placed in an opening in the packing of the door left below the lintel[567]. Mylonas assumed that a feast was held around the tomb in honour of the dead at the time and after the burial[568]. Andronikos rejected the theory that animal bones signify the remains of feasting in honour of the ancestors and inclined to accept that they were gifts offered to the dead[569].

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[564] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 111; Hamilakis 1998: 119.
[565] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 111.
[566] Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 157
[567] Tsountas 1888: 130; Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 150.
[568] Mylonas 1948: 72.
[569] Andronikos 1968: 87.

Recently, Konsolaki-Yannopoulou has presented firm evidence for the performance of ritual dining in the *dromos* and the chamber of Mycenaean tombs at the sites of Apatheia and Magoula at Galatas[570]. In front of the *stomion* of chamber tomb A1 shattered drinking vessels and the leg of a tripod cauldron were taken to imply ritual drinking and dining[571]. In chamber tomb A5 -a tomb that was used to accommodate a primary burial and an unusually large number of secondary burials- the animal bones provided proof for the ritual deposition of two dog carcasses or parts of them that had been skinned, and for a dining ritual at which hare and birds were consumed[572]. The presence of large deposits of food waste in the chambers of the two tholoi at Magoula also implies food offerings, ritual dining or even both[573]. Interestingly, the presence of pig bones in the chamber of tholos 1 is consistent with the pig-headed rhyton and the heavy preponderance of juvenile pig bones in the Mycenaean sanctuary at Haghios Konstantinos, Methana[574].

Evidence for the preparation and consumption of food in Mycenaean tombs is not based exclusively on the presence of animal bones. The occurrence of cooking vessels in the *dromos* or the chamber of the tomb, frequently blackened by fire or resting on top of charcoal and ashes and occasionally mixed with shattered pottery, offerings and animal bones, could provide positive evidence for the performance of feasting in honour of the

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[570] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 217-219.
[571] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 218.
[572] Hamilakis 1996: 153-166; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 218.
[573] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 219.
[574] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001b: 214-215.

ancestors. 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*[575]. Additionally, corresponding evidence from Kolonaki/Thebes 4 and 12, Pharaklas tomb 1 (1967) and Tanagra 76 suggests that food was, on certain occasions, prepared and consumed at the grave[576].

Analogous function to the stone slabs from Shaft Graves Iota, Kappa and Ni in GCB at Mycenae[577], would have been fulfilled by the rectangular slab, possibly a table supported by four wooden legs as indicated by corresponding holes on the floor of the chamber, from the tomb at Megalo Kastelli excavated by Pharaklas[578], the slab featuring six cavities from the Atreus Treasury[579] as well as by the benches featured in a number of Mycenaean tombs; in particular, the ones that run along the two or three sides of the chamber would have facilitated and provided additional space for the performance of ritual feasting.

According to van Gennep's discussion of the rites of passage, the purpose of the meals shared at the commemoration celebrations is to promote the redefinition and reintegration of the living community and, concurrently, to reunite the living with the deceased, since these rites of re-aggregation are

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[575] Frizell 1984: 27. He also suggested that the material originated from a sacrifice made before the final filling of the tholos' *dromos* (*ibid.*).
[576] Characteristic is also the example from Routsi/Myrsinochori tholos 2, in which the presence of a bronze double axe, a hearth, cooking vessels and an amphora in the *dromos* has been construed as evidence for the performance of funerary feasting (*PAE* 1957: 119).
[577] Mylonas 1973: 110, 122, 158.
[578] Pharaklas 1967: 228; *idem* 1996: 216.

equivalent to those of hospitality, incorporation into the clan, adoption and so forth[580].

Hamilakis has attempted to 'theorize food consumption as an active, multifaceted social phenomenon which is implicated in the construction of social persons and evokes senses, emotions and feelings'[581]. Furthermore, according to his approach, food and drink consumption seems to have constituted part of a whole mechanism aimed to generate remembering and forgetting; other devices would have included dancing, consumption of psychoactive substances, secondary burial treatment and the 'killing' of artefacts[582]. He fails, however, to draw a distinct -if any- line, between Minoan and Mycenaean mortuary practices as well as between spatial and chronological terms. What may be 'natural' and 'normal' in the mortuary beliefs and practices of a given society or era is not necessarily acceptable by other human groups or in different times.

The preparation of food and drink to be consumed in a rite of incorporation denotes a conscious choice on behalf of the mourning community. It is the participation in a feast where the living and the dead are reunited, where the living community can redefine itself and where humans can experience contact with their ancestors via religious acts. Food and drink consumption at the time of the burial aims at the consolation of the living facing the inevitable drama of death. Death breaks unexpectedly the consolidation of

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[579] Lindsten 1944: 198; Andronikos 1961-62: 171.
[580] Van Gennep 1960: 165; Bendann 1930: 147-171; Thomas 1991: 67; Sourvinou-Inwood 1981: 31-31. For Thomas (1991: 48-49), feasts would have also served the need to feed those coming from a long distance in order to participate in the ceremonies.
[581] Hamilakis 1998: 115-132, esp. 127-128.

the living community and feasting is the device through which its members are redefined in various ways.

On the other hand, the performance of post-funerary rituals is a scheduled matter. Commemorative rites are *repeated,* although their intensity and mode of performance may be much dependent on expressions of socio-political superiority, claims of authority and display of wealth surplus. Feasting in the context of the third stage of the rites of passage is not about forgetting Charon who stands at one's shoulders, it is a celebration of life and regeneration, an opportunity for two antithetical worlds -the sphere of humanity and the realm of the ancestor collectivity- to reunite in a common experience, that of death and its reality.

Funerary games and the cult of the dead in Mycenaean times

In classical times, sacrifice, banquet and *agon* formed a combination that structured large religious festivals[583]. Although the nature and performance of athletic contexts has left no actual recognisable traces in the Bronze Age archaeological record, pictorial sources suggest that the Mycenaeans were performing such festive acts on various occasions and in different ways[584].

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[582] Hamilakis 1998: 128.

[583] Rystedt 1999: 96. Burkert (1985: 105-107) has cited several examples of festivals connected with games.

[584] Bull-leaping scenes formed part of the fresco decoration at Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos and Orchomenos (Immerwahr 1990: 110, 157; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996: 146-147). Younger (1995b: 528ff.) has provided a catalogue of corresponding scenes in Mycenaean minor arts.

The depiction of funerary games is originally attested in the sculptured decoration of the *stelai* from GCA and GCB at Mycenae[585]. The fragment of an ivory plaque decorated with a bull-leaping scene was uncovered in the earth fill between Shaft Graves Alpha, Delta and Rho in GCB[586]. Following an account of the funerary *stelai* from Mycenae, Mylonas concluded that several of the chariot scenes refer to races in honour of the dead and as such were considered appropriate themes for the decoration of funerary monuments[587]. Conversely, Andronikos associated the scenes with everyday life episodes and suggested that the juxtaposition of scenes was simply imposed by *horror vacui*[588].

Extrapolating parallels from later traditions, Protonotariou-Deilaki assumed that actual martial contests were held immediately after the death of the leader and might have served claims of authority and rights over political succession[589]. She also pointed to the fact that the nucleus of all great athletic centres in ancient Greece was formed by the worship of a Mycenaean hero, e.g. Olympia, Nemea and Isthmia[590]. Wright has pointed to the fact that 'the iconography of the scenes carved on the stelae announces in an explicit manner something about the behaviour contemporaries were to associate with those interred'[591].

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[585] Heurtley (1921-23), Younger (1997) and Mylonas (1973) have provided detailed descriptions of the *stelai*.
[586] Poursat 1977: no 240, pl. XIX. Mylonas (1973: 23) suggested that the plaque's original provenience was ShGr Rho.
[587] Mylonas 1951b: 134-147, esp. 142.
[588] Andronikos 1961-62: 164-166, 173-175.
[589] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 175; *eadem* 1990a: 83. In the absence of proof, however, caution is called for.
[590] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990a: 82-83. A similar argument has also been put forward by Spyropoulos 1974: 24. See also discussion in *SCABA*: 209.
[591] Wright 1987: 175.

Turning to LH III examples, the lower register of the front long side of a larnax from tomb 22 at Tanagra is decorated with a bull-leaping theme **(fig. 47)**[592]. Two bulls are depicted face to face in axial symmetry, whereas corresponding leapers are depicted grasping the bull's horn with the one hand and the shoulders of the animal with the other; between the two bulls a human figure is depicted standing and holding the animals' horns in a pose reminiscent of depictions of the Master of Animals. The right side of the panel is occupied by a third 'man-bull' group, which, I believe, is the result of the artist's attempt to fill the empty space created in this part of the decorative panel.

The depiction of a bull-leaping theme on a funerary monument is striking, especially since analogous scenes are relatively rare in large-scale painting from the mainland[593]. Ward, followed by Immerwahr, argued that bull-leaping in Mycenaean mainland was known merely as a borrowed exotic motif and even doubted its performance in the area[594]. If such was the case, then the depiction of bull-leaping on the larnax would have been a convention and, as Cavanagh and Mee have already pointed out, it might have been the heroic dimension of the activity that would have led to the inclusion of the theme in the Tanagra repertoire[595]. Furthermore, such a

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[592] Spyropoulos 1969a: 14, pl. 13a; *idem* 1974: 22. According to Younger (1976: 133), the scene follows the Floating Leaper Schema.
[593] Immerwahr 1990: 157. The rare examples of bull-leaping from the mainland led Mylonas to suggest that 'whatever their meaning in the Minoan world, in the Mycenaean area bull sports were devoid of religious significance (1966: 158). The performance of bull-leaping games in Bronze Age Aegean has been discussed by Reichel (1909: 85-99), Ward (1968), Pinsent (1983), Marinatos (1986, 1989) and Younger (1976, 1995b).
[594] Ward 1968: 120; Immerwahr 1990: 157. Pinsent (1983) has also expressed scepticism on the performance of bull-leaping in Bronze Age Aegean.
[595] Cavanagh and Mee 1995: 50.

hypothesis could adequately explain the presence of fanciful variations in the iconographical programme of the larnax, namely the addition of the Master of Animals[596]. Immerwahr has proposed that both panels of the same long side of the larnax may be suggestive of the activities the deceased would have enjoyed in the underworld[597].

The lower register of the other long side of the same larnax depicts two men engaged in a fencing duel, framed by two chariots, each carrying three occupants; small quadrupeds, possibly dogs, fill the background of the decorative panel **(fig. 18)**[598]. Spyropoulos has pointed to the scene's similarities with the Homeric description of heroic duels and suggested that the chariots depicted on the larnax are participating in the communal ceremonies in honour of the dead[599]. Influenced by the Homeric 'αθλα επί Πατρόκλω', he stressed the significance of athletic contests in the performance of Mycenaean tomb cult[600]. Cavanagh and Mee have noted that the chariots may represent the funerary procession or the games held in honour of the heroes[601]. Correspondingly, a LH IIIB2 *krater* from Tiryns depicts an enthroned figure of indeterminate sex raising a goblet and, before him/her, chariots participating in the funeral games **(fig. 76c)**[602].

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[596] Younger 1976: 132.
[597] Immerwahr 1995: 119 note 29.
[598] Spyropoulos 1969a: 14. See also discussion in p. 296 of present thesis. Immerwahr (1990: 157) identifies the male figures as boxers instead of fencers. Rystedt (1999: 95) has suggested that the scene depicts a chariot race of the *apobates* type (for this type of Mycenaean games, see Rystedt 1986 and 1988).
[599] Spyropoulos 1974: 23.
[600] Spyropoulos 1974: 22-24.
[601] Cavanagh and Mee 1995: 50.
[602] Kilian 1980; Wright 1995b: 304.

Keramopoullos was the first to observe that a ceremonial way ran along the hill of Megalo Kastelli at Thebes and suggested that it would have served the communal customary rites and games in honour of the dead in the context of a cult of the dead, as described in the Homeric and Hesiodic narration[603]. Keramopoullos's interpretation was validated in the early 70s when Spyropoulos investigated part of this way[604]. The excavations revealed that the road, which was formed in the natural rock and ran along the hill of Megalo Kastelli, is 400m long, 1.40-3.60m deep and 4-6m wide (depending on the formation of the hill)[605]. The pottery uncovered in the *epichosis* dates the installation to LH IIIA2-B1 times[606].

A stepped formation on the rock to the west of the royal chamber tomb has been interpreted as an *exedra* from where the spectators would have watched the ceremonies and the games **(fig. 86)**[607]. In front of the *exedra* opens a spacious area. The course of the way destroyed part of the *dromoi* of the chamber tombs on the hill, a fact that would adequately explain Keramopoullos's observation that the *dromoi* of the tombs he excavated were disproportionately short compared with the spacious chambers. The later literary tradition led Spyropoulos to connect this installation with the performance of games for the Theban heroes and, in particular, in honour of Oedipus's sons[608].

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[603] Keramopoullos 1917: 111.
[604] Spyropoulos 1973b: 255-158.
[605] Spyropoulos 1973b: 256.
[606] Spyropoulos 1973b: 256-257.
[607] Spyropoulos 1973b: 256, pl. 208c. The excavator has compared it with the depiction of the games in honour of Patroclus on Sophilos's *dinos*.
[608] Spyropoulos 1973b: 258.

Nevertheless, the existence of this permanent installation, being a processional way, a 'hippodrome' or both, opens a new chapter with respect the use of Mycenaean tombs as foci of post-funerary ceremonies. At this point, it is worth stressing two essential points: *a*. the way's course and the positioning of the *exedra* were linked with the royal tomb and *b*. the construction of this peculiar installation coincides with the construction phases of the royal tomb[609]. If one accepts that the two niches at the outer end of one of the two *dromoi* were acting as guard posts, then it would be reasonable to suggest that the magnificent tomb with its double *dromos* and the frescoed façade must have been visible and would have acted as focus for the performance of commemorative rites in honour of the ancestral spirits[610].

This installation is indicative of the Theban community's initiative to establish an official *locus* where it could propitiate its ancestors with ceremonies and games of heroic context. This initiative, however, should also be seen as another case of Mycenaean regionalism attested in LH funerary agenda. Thus, whilst Thebans built a permanent installation for the performance of games, the Tanagrans chose to include the theme of *agon* in the repertoire of larnax decoration and open spaces were created before the *tholoi* at Mycenae to serve similar purposes.

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[609] Two phases could be distinguished in the construction and re-arrangement of the royal tomb at Megalo Kastelli; LH IIIA2 signalled the original construction of the tomb, whereas LH IIIB witnessed the re-arrangement of the chamber, the opening of the second *dromos* and the frescoed decoration of the monument.
[610] *Supra* p. 197.

Nevertheless, other games, e.g. foot race, boxing, fencing, wrestling, javelin throwing or archery, might have taken place during these commemorative ceremonies, as suggested by artistic representations on pictorial pottery. Proof for the performance of archery games or for their symbolic implications as regards the exorcism of death and evil spirits, may be sought in the presence of arrowheads in several Mycenaean tombs in Messenia, Achaia and the Argolid[611].

Due to their social context, it seems highly improbable that chariot races and bull-leaping games -if they ever occurred- would have taken place in short intervals and in great intensity as might have been otherwise required by the needs of new interments. It seems logical that they might have occurred at fixed intervals, maybe on the occasion of festivals and offering ceremonies in honour of the dead, as suggested by relevant mentions in Linear B documents. *Pace* Mylonas's suggestion that bull sports were devoid of religious context in Mycenaean society, the Tanagran artistic repertoire suggests that bull-leaping might have been associated with sacrificial rituals as implied by the scenes decorating the front panel of the larnax from tomb 22[612].

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[611] Marinatos, followed by Korres, Kontorli-Papadopoulou and Demakopoulou, considered the presence of arrowheads as part of a farewell ceremony at the time of the burial (Marinatos 1956: 205; Korres 1982: 96; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995: 118; Demakopoulou 1990: 122).

[612] See also Younger's discussion on the connection between Aegean bull-games and sacrifice (Younger 1995b: 518-521).

SACRED PLACES OF THE DEAD: THE CASE OF THE DENDRA 'CENOTAPH'

The appropriation of components from contemporary sacred architecture indicates that for the Mycenaeans the tomb was not conceived as merely the final resting place of the departed but rather as a sacred locus and a liminal zone where the ancestral spirits were propitiated and contacted in the course of customary ceremonial acts[613]. The transformation from tomb as house of the motionless body to tomb as cultic locale could be pinpointed in the case of Dendra tomb 2, the so-called 'Cenotaph' **(fig. 87a)**.

The tomb features a saddle-roofed chamber and a monumental *dromos* measuring ca. 20m in length[614]. The fill of the *dromos* contained large stones and a few potsherds (some belonging to FM 62_{10}, $46_{4,}$ allowing a LH IIIA1 date). The entrance walling was found intact and below the *stomion* a cist was unearthed packed with thirty-five bronze vessels. In front of and partly under the blocking wall fragments of a red coarse cooking vessel, ashes and charcoal were found. In a pit under the *stomion*, the badly preserved remains of a female burial were uncovered on a stratum of exceptionally large decorated glass ornaments and a quantity of thin gold leaf, accompanied by spindle whorls and a long bronze pin.

Within the burial chamber were found a stone slaughtering block, a sacrificial table, a bench, two menhirs and two pits –one located in front of the hearth containing ashes, animal bones (oxen and sheep/goats) and

offerings (a silver cup with golden rim, a sealstone of agate, a large ivory flower and a bronze sacrificial knife), and a second one absolutely empty. Charcoal was found near the bench at the rear wall, whereas above it the presence of seven holes was interpreted as a constellation of stars associated with death in Egypt. Immediately inside the entrance were found three lamps of steatite (one of them, ca. 0.50m high, was placed to the right of the door), whereas four large alabaster vases were also unearthed. The floor was strewn with thousands of beads and other ornaments in glass, gold objects, a sealstone and beads of carnelian, wild boar's tusks, a broken bronze sword, an iron pendant, a few potsherds (three-handled jugs and jars, stemmed kylikes) and the head of a small bovid figurine. Ashes and carbon were found in great quantities to the left of the entrance.

The total absence of skeletal remains and the presence of the '*menhirs*' led Persson to interpret the monument as a cenotaph for two persons who perished abroad and whose remains were never transferred to their homeland[615]. However, the peculiar arrangement of the tomb's static and movable equipment and the evidence for the performance of rites comparable to contemporary religious observances encourages a different interpretation, namely that the monument might have been employed as a sacred ancestral locale where invocation and offering rituals were performed in honour of the dead members of the Dendra community.

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[613] Also *supra* p. 225.
[614] Persson 1931: 73-80, 91-117.
[615] See section on Mycenaean cenotaphs.

The evidence for sacrifices, suggested by the presence of the sacrificial pit, the bronze sacrificial knife, the animal bones and the accumulation of charcoal and carbon in the chamber and in the *dromos*, attest to the monument's constant and repeated use for sacrificial rituals connected with feasting. The presence of the stone sacrificial table with the carefully arranged cavities and grooves may be suggestive of the performance of libations in which the blood of the sacrificed animal would have been poured.

The vast quantities of glass ornaments, some gold-plated, suggest gift-giving rituals, in particular the offering of jewellery and clothing elaborately decorated with gold and glass ornaments. The offering of necklaces and cloth to the deity is vividly illustrated on Mycenaean processional frescoes[616]. Glass beads and metal ornaments from the sanctuaries at Mycenae (beads and other ornaments in a small two-handled bowl and near benches) and Phylakopi (beads and metal objects near platforms) have been construed either as votive offerings or as part of the gear employed for the adornment of the deity's image[617].

Fires would have been lit in the context of invocation rites and the consumption of food and drink would have stimulated the senses of the celebrants. An interplay of light and darkness would have been achieved by the presence of the lamp in the entrance of the tomb and the kindling of torches above the altar, whereas a sense of mysticism would have been

[616] Immerwahr 1990: 115; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996: 135.
[617] Moore and Taylour 1999: 17-18, fig. 5, pl. 6b; Renfrew 1985: 371, 408.

created to those attending the ceremonies, either in the chamber or in the *dromos*. The offerings would have aimed at summoning the ancestral spirits and at ensuring their participation in the celebrations of death. Contact with the divine ancestors would have been facilitated by the consumption of food and alcohol as well as by the dizziness created by the smoke of the sacrificial pyres.

Intriguing is the presence of the two '*menhirs*' in the chamber of the funerary monument **(fig. 87b)**. As has been mentioned above, Persson, followed by several scholars, understood them as symbolising the presence of two persons who died abroad and whose remains were never transferred to their birthplace. Åkeström, on the other hand, rejected this interpretation and alternatively proposed that the two stones were 'libation tables' that were associated with the 'coffin platform' (Persson's 'slaughtering table')[618]. At this point, it is appropriate to mention the boulder discovered in an upright position in the chamber of a tomb excavated by Pharaklas at Megalo Kastelli, Thebes. Clearly influenced by Persson's interpretation, the excavator has suggested that it might have represented a person whose body was never found[619].

Certainly the presence of these two stones must have been of symbolic significance. On the account of iconographical and archaeological counterparts as well as by the context of the tombs itself, it is tempting to

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[618] Åkeström 1978: 73.

[619] Pharaklas 2000: 216. The tomb features an elaborate architectural plan (long *dromos*, saddle-roofed chamber, niches and benches) and valuable offerings. A burial of unspecified date has been reported from the *stomion* but none from the chamber. Traces of

suggest that they might have served as *baetyls* symbolising the presence of the ancestral spirits or the chthonic deities, and connected with the cultic activity performed in this ancestral locale. Warren has reconstructed a 'baetylic ritual' in Minoan world pointing to its ecstatic aspect, whereas he has reaffirmed the evocative and epiphanic value of the feature as the 'vehicle for possession by divine power' conveying notions of fertility[620].

A *baetyl* has been unearthed outside the doorway of the West Shrine at Phylakopi and could be ascribed cultic significance[621]. Mylonas proposed that perhaps in the baetyls and free-standing columns, they (i.e. the important and ancestral male Mycenaean deities) may have found their aniconic representations'[622]. La Rosa has recently discussed the use of *baetyls* in the funerary sphere and has linked them to the performance of ancestor cults[623].

The striking similarities shared between the chamber tomb at Dendra and contemporary sacred places suggest that it might have served the communal ceremonies in honour of the sacred ancestors at Mycenaean Midea. A MH 'sanctuary for the cult of the dead' has been reported from Malthi-Dorion[624]. The structure is located inside the main southern gate of the fortified site and has preserved only two walls formed in a T-shaped form. Valmin was inclined to believe that this building was connected with

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fire and the existence of a table in the chamber attest to the ritualistic use of the monument.

[620] Warren 1988: 16-18; *idem* 1990: 197ff.

[621] Renfrew 1985: 430-431.

[622] Mylonas 1966: 160-161.

[623] La Rosa 2001: 222ff.

[624] Valmin 1938: 126-131.

a grave circle and that it was given to the veneration of the dead in a way similar to GCA at Mycenae[625]. Conversely, Mylonas rejected Valmin's hypothesis and stated that this structure was connected with the arrangement of the southern gate, and possessed no religious or other significance'[626].

Turning to the LH mainland, it is worth referring to a rather peculiar Mycenaean funerary monument from the LH IIB-IIIC necropolis at Palaiokastro in Arkadia[627] that presents striking similarities with the Dendra tomb. The structure was excavated during the early 80s and its plan shows a typical Mycenaean chamber tomb **(fig. 88)**. The tomb was used for interments at some point of its history, although no burials were uncovered *in situ* at the time of the excavation. Part of the chamber's roof was deliberately cut into a square hole, an *οπαίον*. Below this hole part of the chamber's wall was hewn into the shape of a basin. At a lower level a bench was formed out of the natural rock and on top of it stood an 'altar' built of slabs –Spyropoulos calls it a *λατρευτικός οίκος*[628]. A slender boulder, a *baetyl*, occupied the space to the right of the *λατρευτικός οίκος*. LH III *skyphoi* had been deposited in cavities cut into the walls of the chamber. The only other object from the chamber was a typical Mycenaean bovid figurine uncovered in the area the bench.

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[625] Valmin 1938: 126-131.
[626] Mylonas 1951a: 72-76.
[627] Spyropoulos and Spyropoulos 2000: 15-16. Unfortunately, this tomb like rest of the cemetery remains unpublished. Valuable information on the material evidence from the tomb has been provided by the excavator Dr Th. Spyropoulos during lectures and conducted tours in the Museum of Tripolis. Informative are also the explanatory notes displayed in the Archaeological Museum of Tripolis.
[628] Spyropoulos and Spyropoulos 2000: 15.

Influenced by the Homeric *Νέκυια*, the excavator has argued that this monument was the first-known Death-Oracle, *Νεκυομαντείον*, in Greece, a suggestion also adopted by Laffineur in his study on the rites depicted on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus[629]. According to his reconstruction of the rites performed at Palaiokastro, the square hole on the ceiling of the tomb would have facilitated the pouring of libations (honeyed milk, wine and water) as well as the offering of the blood of the sacrificed animals to the souls of the dead with the purpose to deliver oracles. The liquids poured would have been collected into the basin and then sprinkled onto the 'altar'. The presence of the *baetyl* would have been the aniconic image of the dead and as such would it have been experienced. The cavities in the walls have been interpreted as *ψυχοπομποί οδοί* from where the souls would have emerged whenever called.

Appealing as the death-oracle hypothesis may be, the lack of published data prevents a thorough assessment of Spyropoulos's interpretation. On the other hand, the similarities shared between this monument and the chamber tomb at Dendra, the arrangement of their static and permanent features and *comparanda* from contemporary religious places and contexts could allow their identification as cult places set apart for invocation and offering rituals performed in the context of Mycenaean ancestor worship, in a way analogous to GCA at Mycenae, as has been thoroughly discussed in *Chapter II*.

[629] Spyropoulos and Spyropoulos 2000: 15; Laffineur 1991a.

BREAKING THE TOMB'S SILENCE: RITUAL ACTION AND THE MYCENAEAN CULT OF THE DEAD

'The awareness of the reality of death, its final and uncompromising nature as an event outside life...heightens the significance of living human gestures, those actions which proclaim a belief in the innate value of being human and being alive'[630]. Rituals connected with death are not arbitrary but are reflections of conscious human behaviour and, although archaeologists should approach and study them as such, on many occasions, they are hindered by their own intellectual and ethnocentric preconceptions about what constitutes death ritual[631].

Renfrew's 'Deductive System' and the Mycenaean cult of the dead

It has been argued in *Chapter II* that the methodology advocated by Renfrew in his analysis of ritual action in the Mycenaean sanctuary at Phylakopi, may be the most effective means of tackling the problem of recognition of cultic activity in LH tombs[632]. According to his 'Deductive System', the performance of *expressive actions* of worship and propitiation by the human celebrant towards the *transcendent being* requires focusing of attention devices, a boundary zone between this world and the next, the presence of the deity as well as participation and offering on behalf of the human celebrants[633]. His remark that 'the rituals associated with the transition from life to death, including burial itself, stand in a special

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[630] Grainger 1998: 105.
[631] Wells 1990: 125; Parker Pearson 1999: 147.
[632] *Supra* pp. 27-28, 83ff.
[633] Renfrew 1985: 18-21; *idem* 1994b: 51.

relation to the sacred rituals of life', merits attention[634]. Thus, if one seeks evidence for *expressive actions* and *transcendent being* in Mycenaean funerary agenda, the outcome is encouraging.

1. *Attention focusing*

According to Renfrew, 'ritual demands of the human celebrant (and may be expected to induce in him) a state of heightened awareness or religious excitement'[635]. Therefore, it is essential to examine whether Mycenaean tombs were organised in order to provide a place set apart for sacred functions and to facilitate performance of ceremonial acts addressed to the ancestors. The analysis of the literary, artistic and archaeological data suggests that Mycenaean post-funerary rituals were specific in time and in space. The requirement of attention focusing devices in the structure and equipment used is reflected in the tombs' original tripartite plan, their individual features (benches, hearths, sacrificial pits, side chambers, grooves, niches and pits, frescoed façades) and in the movable equipment (slaughtering and libation tables, *stelai*, figurines, tables of offerings, pouring and drinking vessels, ritual vessels, lamps, incense burners and other paraphernalia)[636].

The recording of names/epithets *-do-po-ta*, *ti-ri-se-ro-e* and, possibly, *di-pi-si-jo(i)-* and offerings associated with the dead in the Mycenaean

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[634] Renfrew 1985: 17.
[635] Renfrew 1985: 18.
[636] According to Kilian's distinction of primary and secondary criteria by which archaeologists could identify cult areas and equipment, altars, slaughtering tables and benches belong to the primary criteria, whereas secondary criteria comprise objects of

administrative documents could be regarded as instructive of the formalisation and periodicity of the cult of the dead in LH IIIA-B times. Not surprisingly, the documented offerings correspond closely with the artefacts and remains of ceremonial activity uncovered in the tombs and the three monuments, notably GCA, the '*Cenotaph*' at Dendra and the '*Death-oracle*' at Palaiokastro, which were in all probability dedicated to ancestor worship.

Mycenaean funerary art has preserved illustrations of *δρώμενα*, *δεικνύμενα* and *λεγόμενα,* such as formalised gestures of mourning and salutation, dance, music, *theophoria*, ceremonial processions and games, that would have been irretrievable otherwise. In a way similar to sacred contexts, the performance of *expressive actions* in honour of the ancestors would have required the employment of experience inducing devices and acts. Sacrificial and libation rituals would have stimulated the senses and would have facilitated contact with the ancestral spirits. The consumption of food and drink, the kindling of fire and the burning of incense, as reflected by the presence of service sets associated with the preparation and consumption of food and drink, animal bones, incense burners and the remains of fire rituals, would have stimulated the celebrants' senses and would have contributed significantly to their attempts and desire to gain communion with the Other World.

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certain religious functions that could be determined only by context, such as figurines and anthropomorphic vessels (see discussion in *SCABA*: 209).

2. *Special aspects of the liminal zone*

Renfrew has stressed the requirement of a boundary zone between this world and the next as the focus of ritual activity[637]. Analogously to cult buildings, Mycenaean tombs were intended to fulfil two main functions; to shelter the remains of the ancestors and to provide a 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. The boundary zone between the mortal celebrant and the world of ancestors may reflect special aspects of the liminal zone.

Mycenaean tholos and chamber tombs with their typical tripartite system were also 'tombs for the living' created with the aim at providing an enclosed environment appropriate for the performance of various ritual acts reinforced by an element of 'Public Display/Hidden Mystery'[638]. The *dromos*, which leads to the darkness of the burial chamber, would have contributed to the creation of contrast images and feelings. The *stomion* was certainly the focal point, the element of liminality in Mycenaean tombs. Once standing in the *stomion*, the mortal celebrants faced the darkness of the burial chamber, equivalent to death and the world of the ancestors, and at the same time, the *dromos*, the dominion of light and life.

It seems highly improbable that the burial chamber entertained large congregations. Restricted participation in the ritual acts performed in the

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[637] Renfrew 1985: 18-19; Renfrew 1994b: 51. For a detailed discussion on the issue see pp. 188ff. of present thesis.

[638] The correspondence between the tripartite plan of the typical LH tombs and the tripartite system of the rites of passage has been thoroughly discussed in *Chapter IV*.

chamber would have been imposed by the controlled access to the burial chamber as well as by the limited space available. The interplay of light and darkness created by the architectural plan of the tomb *per se* as well as by the employment of lighting devices (lamps, torches, scoops and small fires) would have created a sense of awe and mystery in those attending the ceremonies from outside the tomb, either at the outer end of the *dromos* or in the open areas before or even above the monument.

Concepts of cleanliness and pollution, similar to those attested in contemporary sacred locales, are reflected in the remains of purification practices, the facilities employed (incense burners, scoops, basins), the maintenance of the area and/or the positioning of the cemetery *vis-à-vis* the habitation area. In peoples' cosmologies, purification rites reflect the metaphysical, because cleanliness is related to godliness, hence rituals of purification render the funeral an 'overtly religious ceremony'[639]. 'Purification is one way in which the metaphysical can be made palpable. Although it can perhaps operate as a divider in a quite neutral sense, it more naturally separates higher from lower and better from worse'[640].

3. *Presence of the transcendent being and its symbolic focus*

As a rule, invocation rituals aim at summoning the divine and allowing worshippers to express their reverence. Nevertheless, effective ritual requires the presence and participation of the transcendent forces in the

[639] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 106.
[640] Parker 1983: 19.

liminal zone and the religious celebrations. The presence of the deity may be reflected on the use of a three-dimensional cult image and/or on the employment of a symbol or an illustration in religious art.

The belief in the presence and participation of the ancestral spirits in the ceremonial acts is proved by the use of aniconic cult images such as '*menhirs*' or *stelai*, of allegories (e.g. winged figures, butterflies, birds) and of ritualistic symbols (e.g. thrones with or without occupants, terracotta figurines) depicted in two- or three- dimensional funerary art. The retention of the skulls and the long bones during the performance of secondary burial rites could signify the belief in the continuous presence of the ancestors in the funerary grounds and ceremonies. Moreover, the establishment and maintenance of ancestral grounds are suggestive of the Mycenaean belief that tombs were not simply places for the rotting corpse but rather shelters of the ancestral spirits.

Benches would have facilitated the performance of customary acts, but at the same time they might have been conceived as symbolic seats for the dead participating in the commemorative rites. Moreover, the carving of grooves in the *stomion* of several tombs would have been dictated by the LH belief in the presence of the ancestors within the funerary monument and their ability to participate in the invocation and offering ceremonies. Finally, the belief in the presence and participation of the ancestral spirits in these commemorative ceremonies is mirrored in the act of depositing food, drink and gifts in the tombs during and after the performance of secondary burial treatment and other post-funerary rites. Characteristic

examples of the above remark are the tholos tomb at Kokla and the *Tomb with the Ivories* in the Athenian Agora.

4. *Participation and Offering*

Ancestor cult, as all cultic activities, requires participation and offering by the living celebrant. Communal participation in the ancestral ceremonies is implied by the discovery of large quantities of *post festum* remains (animal bones, shattered pottery, traces of fire and burning) and by the repertoire of the Tanagra larnakes. The large numbers of mourners illustrated on a number of sarcophagi suggest large-scale participation in the rites, not so plausible at the initial event of a funeral for that constitutes a family occasion. Additionally, on the long side of a larnax from tomb 6 three women are depicted within apertures, doors or windows, raising their hands in typical mourning gestures **(fig. 89)**[641]. Judging from the domestic setting of the scene, N. Marinatos has placed the focal point of the decorative panel within the building and suggested that mourning rituals also took place within houses[642].

However, the similarities observed between this scene and other contemporary artistic media, suggest that the focal point of this scene should be placed outside the house and that the women should be considered to be observing some sort of ritual taking place outside the building. This suggestion is also supported by the scene on larnax 1 from tomb 60, which illustrates a male procession taking place outdoors as

[641] Spyropoulos 1969a: 12, pl. 6b; *idem* 1969b: 8-9, fig. 5.

indicated by the presence of a row of four windows in the background **(fig. 90)**[643]. Thus, it is tempting to assume that both scenes comprise themes of an artistic repertoire illustrating actual post-funerary rites in honour of the dead. The creation of open spaces before certain funerary monuments, the white-stuccoed *dromoi*, the presence of benches and especially reserved areas within the chamber reflect the care taken for those attending the religious ceremonies outside and inside the tomb. The presence of masses of smashed pottery in the level of the surface above the tomb in certain instances suggests that the surrounding areas would have provided space for participation in the ancestral rites.

Although we lack direct observation of Warren's λεγόμενα and δρώμενα, representations of musicians, gesturing mourners and choral lament *in corpore* or in funerary depictions provide valuable evidence for the employment of prayer, sound, gesture and performative acts. Libation, sacrifice and feasting would have invoked the presence of the transcendent being and would have facilitated communication with it. The act of transferring material things to the sacred ancestors would have entailed breakage, burning, hiding or discard connected with symbolic and eschatological connotations. The *δεικνύμενα* would have involved the display of the ancestral relics to the celebrants, an act aiming at demonstrating the incorporation of the deceased into the ancestral collectivity.

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[642] Marinatos 1997: 284.
[643] Spyropoulos 1971a: pl. 17a.

The scale of investment in cult facilities and observances for the performance of Mycenaean ancestor cult may be reflected in the planning and establishment of LH III funerary locales. Elaborate tombs equipped with features also attested in secular and religious buildings, such as decorated façades and wall paintings, saddle roofs, side chambers, benches, altars, hearths, sacrificial pits, carefully cut and white-stuccoed *dromoi*, would have contributed to the advertisement of the social status and wealth of their owners. Moreover, the similarities with contemporary sacred buildings would have acted as mnemonic devices in the consolidation of religious consciousness and the elevation of the ancestors to a divine status.

The performance of sacrificial rites, sophisticated offering rituals and athletic games of heroic character would also have reflected the prosperity of a few individuals or even of a whole community such as Mycenae or Thebes. Apart from the socio-political implications connected with this distinct monument, the LH IIIB refurbishment of GCA at Mycenae reveals the desire of the local leaders to provide the populace with an official place of ancestor worship. This is also apparent, albeit in a more restricted way, in the case of the 'Cenotaph' at Dendra and the 'Death-oracle' at Palaiokastro, Arkadia. In all the aforementioned instances, great investment of wealth in the formation of the ancestral ground but also in the offerings made to the ancestral collectivity is attested. Interestingly, the recording of offerings intended for the ancestors in the administrative documents of the palace at Pylos and the formation of sacred ancestral grounds in its vicinity, in a way analogous to GCA, may well reflect the desire of the local community to propitiate its ancestors with official communal celebrations.

It has been demonstrated in *Chapter II* that Nilsson's oversimplified definition of the term 'cult of the dead' has prevented to a significant degree the identification and acceptance of cultic action in Mycenaean tombs. However, the analysis of the available data and the application of Renfrew's ritual indicators suggest that in Late Helladic III times celebrating and honouring the sacred ancestors was a communal affair expressed, *inter alia*, through the establishment of official places for the cult of the dead and the performance of sacral and performative acts with the aim at invoking the presence of the ancestral spirits among the living and, consequently, by means of offerings and other acts, at communicating with the dead and gaining the mediation and benevolence of the ancestors for the living community.

From individual to ancestor in Mycenaean cultic activity

'Post-liminal rites, while they are part of any true ritual complex, are particularly suited to dealing with unfinished business. They mark the end of the old and the beginning of the new. They do not allow the old to come to an end: they are not powerful, nor traumatic enough for that- but they lay it gently to rest and its attendant emotions with it, once it has died. They are ritual and function as a milestone rather than revolution'[644]. Following a contextual analysis of ritual acts connected with ancestor veneration in LH III times and the criteria of ritual action established by Renfrew, I would suggest that the first stage of Mycenaean ancestor worship might

[644] Grainger 1974: 119.

have been the establishment and performance of secondary burial treatment rites. The handling of human bones is generally accepted as the termination of the funerary process connected with the re-aggregation stage of the rites of passage and at the same time 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 living community with its forbears and, subsequently, at effacing the deceased's individuality and their incorporation into the ancestral collectivity.

The establishment and performance of commemorative ceremonies of sacred character in honour of the ancestors indicate that for the Mycenaeans the dead were not simply motionless and livid corpses, but a spiritual entity invoked to provide benevolence and mediation and placated with offerings and sacred acts in order to ensure the well-being of the living community.

Table V. 1. Animal figurines in the cemeteries of the central areas of the Mycenaean dominion in LH IIIA-B times

Cemetery	*Tomb*	*Bovid*	*Canine*	*Unspecified*	*Other*	*Findspot*	*Use**	*References*
Mycenae	1	-	-	√	-	?	?	Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 53-54, pl. 1 (Π2353:2)
Mycenae	65	√	-	-	-	?	?	Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 190, pl. 81 (Π 3032)
Mycenae	79	-	-	-	Double-ended quadraped	?	?	Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985: 220, 222 (Π 3093), pl. 104
Mycenae	505	√	-	-	-	doorway (chamber)	sb	Wace 1932: 18
Mycenae	519	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Wace 1932: 88, 89
Mycenae	522	√	-	-	-	?	?	Wace 1932: 34
Mycenae	527	√	-	-	-	*dromos*	sb	Wace 1932: 94, 97, pls. XXIII(7)
Mycenae	527	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Wace 1932: 98, pl. XLVII(18)
Mycenae	531	√	-	-	-	doorway	with vases	Wace 1932: 44, 45
Mycenae	Verdelis A	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Verdelis 1962a: 71, 73 (no 13), pl. 82a
Mycenae	Kapsala II	√ (2)	-	-	-	*dromos*	offerings	Shelton 2000: 45
Mycenae	Panaghitsa I	√ (2)	-	-	-	*dromos*	offerings	Shelton 2000: 52, 57, 58
Asine	I:5	√	-	-	-	*dromos*	offering	Frödin and Persson 1938: 179.
Prosymna	sepulchral deposit	-	-	√	-	-	sb	Blegen 1937: 39, pl. 615

* *sb*: secondary burial, *pb*: primary burial

Cemetery	*Tomb*	*Bovid*	*Canine*	*Unspecified*	*Other*	*Findspot*	*Use**	*References*
Prosymna	XXIX	√	-	-	-	chamber	child burial	Blegen 1937: 78, fig. 155 (419)
Prosymna	XXXVII	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Blegen 1937: 127, fig. 297 (725)
Prosymna	XLVI	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Blegen 1937: 222, fig. 565 (603), 613
Prosymna	III	√	-	-	-	chamber	pb	Blegen 1937: 182, fig. 457 (133)
Prosymna	III	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Blegen 1937: 14, fig. 457 (132)
Prosymna	XXXVIII	√	-	-	-	chamber	child burial	Blegen 1937: 129, fig. 308 (744)
Prosymna	XXXVIII	√ (2)	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Blegen 1937: 130, fig. 308 (748, 756)
Prosymna	IV	√ (5)	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Blegen 1937: 191-192, fig. 491
Prosymna	XIX	√ (5)	-	-	-	chamber	no bones	Blegen 1937: 60, fig. 114
Prosymna	XXII	√ (4)	-	-		chamber	pb	Blegen 1937: 66, fig. 132
Prosymna	XXII	√ (4)	-	-	-	chamber	no bones	Blegen 1937: 67, fig. 133
Nauplia		√	-	-	-	chamber	pb?	Kondakis and Kastorchis 1878: 195
Nauplia		√	-	-	-	chamber	?	Kondakis and Kastorchis 1878: 200
Nauplia		√ (8)	-	-	-	chamber	?	Stais 1892: 53
Deiras	IX	√	-	-	-	chamber	?	Deshayes 1953: 88, fig. 27; *idem* 1969: 614
Deiras	XII	-	√	-	-	*dromos*	offering	Deshayes 1966: 35
Deiras	XXVII	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Deshayes 1966: 85
Deiras	XXVII	-	-	-	horse	*dromos*	offering	Deshayes 1966: 83, 84, pl. LXXXI,2
Deiras	XXIX	-	-	√	-	chamber	sb	Deshayes 1966: 91
Deiras	XXXIII	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb	Deshayes 1966: 101
Zygouries	XXXV	√	-	-	-	chamber	sb?	Blegen 1928: 64, fig. 193
Dendra	2	√	-	-	-	chamber	offering	Persson 1931: 107

Cemetery	*Tomb*	*Bovid*	*Canine*	*Unspecified*	*Other*	*Findspot*	*Use**	*References*
Kato Almyri	?	-	-	√(2)	-	?	?	*ArchDelt* 35 (1980) 104
Thebes	14	-	-	√	-	chamber	offering	Keramopoullos 1917: 151, fig. 112
Thebes	21	-	√	-	-	chamber	offering	Keramopoullos 1917: 182-183, fig. 130(6)
Thebes	25	√(2)	-	-	-	chamber	offering	Keramopoullos1917: 189, fig. 135(5)
Thebes	Pharaklas 4	-	-	√	-	chamber	?	*ArchDelt* 22 (1967) 228
Tanagra [1]	6	√	√	-	-	chamber	?	Spyropoulos 1969a: 10, 14; *idem* 1969b: 11
Tanagra	60	√(10)	√(2)	-	-	chamber	?	Spyropoulos 1971a: 14
Kallithea	?	√	-	-	-	chamber	?	Spyropoulos 1970d: 329-330, fig. 5

[1] According to the *Archaeological Guide of the Archaeological Museum of Thebes*, bovid figurines and dog models are on display in cases 1, 4 and 8 (Demakopoulou and Konsola 1981: 85-86).

CHAPTER VI:

An Epilogue on the Mycenaean Cult of the Dead

Dove la storia è muta, parlan le tombe

Despite the general scepticism and rejection of a Mycenaean cult of the dead, the analysis of the archaeological material, as presented in *Chapters II, III, IV* and *V,* has sought to pinpoint religious action-moments in LH funerary locales and to gain access in the identification and understanding of the desire in Mycenaean society to ascribe sacred status to its ancestors and to propitiate them with offerings and acts analogous to those addressed to the divine. Having thus transformed material evidence into postulated and reconstructed *δρώμενα,* the evidence for the performance of a Mycenaean cult of the dead has to be transformed anew into 'historical' narrative.

THE ÉLITES, THE GODS AND THE ANCESTORS IN MYCENAEAN SOCIETY

A Theoretical Framework

'The dead are everywhere, inhabiting our memories and forming our world. We read or retell their stories, live in their houses, and work and

play in the places that they created and used'[1]. The omnipresent ancestor has haunted archaeological interest and writings, in particular scholars in their attempt to comprehend the role and function of ancestors in preliterate societies[2]. Ancestors are predominant, but how are these ancestors conceived in any given society?

In many cultures, ancestors are broadly considered to be 'immortal beings (or at least living until the end of the world) whose ontological position lies somewhere between deities and mortals'[3]. Moreover, they may be regarded as possessing power equivalent to a deity's and hence may be accorded cult status and considered able to influence society to a similar extent[4]. Concerned with hunter-gatherer societies, Tilley has defined ancestors as the animal spirits of the Australian dreamtime, which were responsible for the creation and ordering of the world[5]. In another study, ghosts, spirits and ancestral totems are classified as ancestors[6]. On the other hand, Fortes underlined the element of procreation and argued that 'ancestors receive recognition insofar as their descendants exist and are designated as such'[7]. Likewise, Bloch maintained that they designate forebears that are remembered[8].

For Whitley, 'Ancestors need not to be remembered as individuals, and called to mind through their names. They may be conceived in a generic

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[1] Parker Pearson 1999: 124.
[2] Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998: 318; Thomas 1991: 76; Tilley 1994: 40; Edmonds 1999: 21, 104..
[3] Parker Pearson 1999: 165.
[4] Hardacre 1989: 63.
[5] Tilley 1994: 40-41; *idem* 1999: 235-238.
[6] Steadman, Palmer and Tilley 1996: 63-64.
[7] Fortes 1976: 4.
[8] Bloch 1996: 43.

sense, as part of a 'collective'...And, being forebears, ancestors have to be linked to present generations through descent, through rituals that emphasise the idea of continuity, even if not always a genealogy of named individuals. It follows, then, that not all the dead are ancestors, and not every bone in a barrow, cursus, causewayed enclosure or henge can be construed as evidence that these monuments were 'ancestral''[9]. We should also not ignore those societies where memory of the ancestors is deliberately and thoroughly erased through the performance of rituals designed to lead to a collective amnesia, as in the case of the Achuar of the Ecuadorian rainforest; thus, 'the break between life and death is total, with no bridge between the beyond and the here and now, nor any destiny as an ancestor or lineage founder'[10].

'Death by itself does not confer ancestorhood'; in order to become an ancestor, once 'expunged from the world of the living in his human embodiment', the departed must be 'reincorporated among them in his ancestral and spiritual capacity'[11]. According to Whitley, ancestorhood is an 'achieved status'[12]. In societies characterised by strong patrilineal principles of descent the ancestors possess different status from those in societies with bilateral kinship patterns[13]. Saxe suggested that decisions by the living about the social identities emphasised on the occasion of death would have derived from the rights and duties of the relationships between

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[9] Whitley 2002: 122.
[10] Parker Pearson 1999: 26.
[11] Fortes 1976: 7.
[12] Whitley 2002: 122.
[13] Whitley 2002: 122. Steadman, Palmer and Tilley's study highlights the power of ancestors in kinship-based societies in which 'the way of the ancestors' provides an unquestionable authority and truth (Steadman, Palmer and Tilley 1996: 63-64). Note also Parker Pearson's comments on their analysis (1999: 26).

the deceased -in their various identities- and the living[14]. Parker Pearson has noted that for funerary archaeologists a central tenet has been to draw a line between *achieved status*, i.e. the position attained by individuals in life through education and personal advancement, and *ascribed status*, which is constituted of attributes over which we have no control (age, gender and race)[15]. However, archaeologists very often overlook the sociological definition of these terms and, instead, choose to make a distinction between societies in which high status is achieved (i.e. broadly egalitarian) and societies in which it is ascribed through heredity (i.e. hierarchical ordering of status by birth)[16].

For Peoples and Bailey, 'the greater the importance of kin groups such as lineages and clans in making public decisions, regulating access to resources, allocating roles, controlling behavior, and so on, the more likely a society is to develop an ancestral cult'[17]. The reverence displayed by the living for their ancestors is often *genealogical*, serving to reinforce family ties and identity as well as claims of inheritance, and *commemorative* in nature, acting as the matrix for strengthening institutions or concepts of nationhood[18]. In other cases, ancestor worship may reflect a set of complex religious beliefs that affect and influence several aspects of daily life. Nevertheless, through time and social processes, ancestor cult has

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[14] Saxe 1970: 9.
[15] Parker Pearson 1999: 74.
[16] Parker Pearson 1999: 74.
[17] Peoples and Bailey 2000: 233. Also Fortes 1976: 7.
[18] Soles 2001: 229.

embodied a variety of forms and attitudinal characteristics and has comprised part of broader religious and social systems[19].

EMyc Greece: a state in process

It is a consensus that EMyc period witnessed the evolution of different MH centres into chiefdoms over much of the mainland[20]. This was definitely a period of transition and instability in which claims and rights over authority would have been shared or disputed as the emerging polities were seeking to consolidate their power. Moreover, these emerging social groups, or élites, would have chosen to employ wealth as a means of self-identification as reflected by the unevenness observed in the distribution of grave goods[21]. Thus, 'death was used as an opportunity for competitive display' and 'death and power were seen as inextricably linked because hereditary rights were disputed'[22]. This pattern fits well with Metcalf and Huntington's analysis of the transition of kingship during royal deaths emphasising how royal rituals and funerary constructions serve to legitimise the institution of kingship[23].

The unprecedented level of investment and elaboration in burial architecture and funerary furnishings is suggestive of the privileged status

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[19] *Supra* pp. 32-33.
[20] Wright 1995c: 69. The early political organisation of Mycenaean society has been the topic of many studies including Kilian 1988b, Wright 1984, Laffineur 1995, Voutsaki 1995 and 1997, Cavanagh 1995, Deger-Jalkotzy 1995; Rutter 2001: 145ff.
[21] Although Iakovidis (1981: 17-28) has supported the hypothesis that the wealthiest tombs of this period are similar, Wright (1995c: 69) has convincingly demonstrated that there is at least one category of offerings, namely metal vessels, that demonstrates uneven distribution of goods among individuals or groups.
[22] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 56.
[23] Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 133-188.

of the dead in LH I-II times[24]. The relatively restricted number of official places of disposal and their stupendous quality as opposed to the impoverished conditions observed in the contemporary domestic architecture, indicate that formal burial became the prerogative of the élites[25]. The Grave Circles at Mycenae, followed by other sites in the Argolid, Messenia, Laconia, Attica and Boeotia, provide firm evidence for social stratification. The introduction of multiple tombs emphasises the increasing stress on descent. The choice of same types of grave offerings for the dead implies a sense of cultural identity, despite the regionalism and differentiation detected in the choice of tomb type. The grave goods displayed in the wealthiest tombs, especially at Mycenae, were precious items incorporated into prestige exchange with the Minoan ruling élites, but by and large the majority was of a ritual and symbolic nature, imported from or influenced by foreign societies[26].

But how can this pattern be explained? As Wright has correctly noted, on occasions where the outcome cannot be assured, the chief of a community bears the responsibility to override or compensate for any shortcomings, and this is partly why ritual activities play an important role in the organisation of chiefdoms[27]. Nevertheless, the responsibility for such acts is claimed as a right through lineage ties to ancestors; since ancestors are widely considered to act as intermediaries to the supernatural forces of a

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[24] For a detailed analysis of burial practices and tomb types favoured during this period, see Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 41ff.
[25] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 42, 123. The evidence for social stratification in EMyc tombs has been analysed *inter alios* by Alden 1981, Dickinson 1983, Mee and Cavanagh 1984, Voutsaki 1998.
[26] Wright 1995b: 291; *idem* 1995c: 70, 72; Palaima 1995b: 135ff.; Voutsaki 1998: 47.
[27] Wright 1995c: 69-70.

society[28], the dominant lineage will assume rights over the officiating of ritual[29].

In EMyc times, contacts with foreign societies through the prestige exchange network allowed access not only to practical knowledge, but also to differently constructed belief systems and rituals, which the Mycenaeans selectively adapted and transformed into the context of a pre-existing set of beliefs and values on the mainland. 'In the case of a Mycenaean chief introducing Minoan rituals and beliefs in his society, it is not hard to imagine that these would be readily accepted as authentic signs of authority, since it is highly likely that since at least the Middle Bronze Age knowledge of the Minoans and their palace society was widespread'[30]. It should be emphasised, however, that the formation of Mycenaean religion is best understood in evolutionary terms, since it emerges as early as the end of the MH period and continues until the formation of the first palaces in LH IIIA1[31].

To reiterate. In EMyc times death became the arena for competitive display among the emerging élites. Regional and chronological variations are detected. The investment of energy and expenditure in the construction and furnishing of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae and the restricted access to the realm of the dead as denoted by the enclosed character of the burials, reveals the desire of the local élite to express its distinct identity. Claims of descent from divine lineage were achieved through the establishment of a

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[28] Geertz 1973: 88; Parker Pearson 1999: 165.
[29] Wright 1995c: 70.
[30] Wright 1995c: 71.
[31] Wright 1994; *idem* 1995c: 71.

cult of the dead as early as MH/LH I as indicated by the existence of an altar in the burial ground of GCA and the stratification of the pottery in Keramopoullos's grotto in the same area. No doubt, the performance of religious ceremonies in honour of the ancestors would have overawed, to a certain extent, the populace who, in turn, would have sought protection and administrative control from these 'divine' élites.

The construction of tholos tombs would have had the same effect and the elaborate ceremonies and processions to the tombs of the ancestors would have acted as mnemonic devices of similar or identical religious and secular acts. The practice of horse and bull sacrifices -animals that reveal the prestige and status of those offering the sacrificial victim-, the pouring of libations and the performance of elaborate feasts in honour of the divine ancestors would have contributed to the strengthening and consolidation of the power and position of the emerging ruling classes as they moved into the acme of Mycenaean civilisation.

The evidence from LH IIIA-B mainland

Following the deep political changes of the EMyc times, LH IIIA-B witnessed the emergence and consolidation of a highly hierarchical and centralised political system. Given the construction and decoration of the palaces, the fortification of the citadels with Cyclopean walls and the evidence from the Linear B administrative texts, a process of political unification under local rule is attested with, indisputably, regional variations. Excavations have revealed major palatial centres at Mycenae,

Tiryns, Athens, Pylos, Thebes and Orchomenos and evidence suggests that other territories in their vicinity were under their palatial administration[32]. Despite the sense of regionalism observed, as shall be discussed below, 'this is the period of the Mycenaean cultural *koine*'[33].

An increasing religious awareness is apparent during this period. Its components include the establishment of official places of worship, the existence of religious personnel attached to the palace, the holding of sacred lands by religious officials, the possible management of a sacred calendar -as reflected by the regular offerings to deities and sanctuaries recorded in the Linear B documents-, 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 literary evidence and perhaps the co-depiction of the *wanax* with fantastic creatures in the minor arts[34].

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[35]. Large rampways led from the acropolis gate to the palace and processional ways linked the *megaron* with the Cult Centre. The

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[32] See *Chapter I.* EMyc complexes, e.g. the 'mansions' at Menelaion or the one at Kakovatos, might have anticipated the role of palaces, without encompassing the range or the scale of administrative bureaucracy attested in the Linear B documents. To the aforementioned Mycenaean palaces, one could add the recently reported palatial complexes from Iolkos and Pellana.

[33] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 77, 134.

[34] The male figures depicted with fantastic creatures, e.g. the ring from Vapheio, have been interpreted as administrators or priests. If one accepts the hypothesis that the *wanax* also held religious office, it is tempting to suggest that the depicted male figures could, on certain occasions, have attributed the image of the *wanax* who stands between his mortal followers and the divine sphere.

[35] Wright 1987: 176-182 and 1995c: 74.

entrance to the palace court was definitely emphasised by the presence of grand staircases and elaborate *propylaea*. Large open spaces before the *megara* would have allowed large congregations[36].

The stability of LH IIIA-B society is reflected in the relative uniformity observed in the burial practices of the period[37]. The typical Mycenaean tomb types, viz. the tholos and the chamber tombs, reached a high level of standardisation, whilst an increase in the number and size of chamber tomb cemeteries occurred during this time span. The use of pit and cist graves declined, although they do appear alongside other tomb types in necropolises such as Deiras, Kokla and Tanagra[38]. Likewise, tumuli and built graves are restricted to certain areas and denote a sense of continuity from the preceding periods. Uniformity is observed in the architectural plan and mode of disposal, whereas it is during this period that a set of eschatological beliefs and religious acts led to the establishment of an official cult of the dead.

There are two main themes in the history of the Mycenaean cult of the dead in the space and time of this thesis: a. the creation and transformation of a 'tradition' connected with the veneration of ancestors and b. the continuity of this tradition. The analysis of the remains of cultic activity and the post interment treatment of the dead in regional and chronological terms suggests that there existed regional variations in the expression of ancestor reverence.

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[36] Cavanagh 2001: 129ff.
[37] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 61ff.
[38] Lewartowski 2000: 55 and site catalogue.

The creation, transformation and continuity of traditions related to the cult of the dead in Mycenaean society

'The life of a community is comprehensible, subjectively and objectively, only when it is understood as grounded in a covenant of mutual loyalty between the living and the dead'[39]. But how was this 'mutual loyalty' perceived in Mycenaean society? The extent to which the ancestors influenced society's regulation in LH times and the community's response to this influence are fundamental matters that can be explored by investigating the varying proportions and possible diagnostic traits of different post-funerary ritual practices within the limits of a given community or in wider spatial or temporal boundaries, *always on the basis of context.*

Very often in human societies, traditions that appear or claim to be old are quite recent in origin and sometimes invented. The term 'invented tradition' encompasses 'both "traditions" actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and datable period -a matter of a few years perhaps- and establishing themselves with great rapidity'[40]. According to Hobsbawm's definition, *invented tradition* designates 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the

[39] Davies 1994: 12-13.
[40] Hobsbawm 1983: 1.

past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past'[41].

A striking example is the conspicuous placement of an already established part of tradition, GCA, within the lived and political landscape of LH IIIB Mycenae as a means for the ruling élites to make ostentatious statements regarding their ancestral ties with the EMyc heroic past. Therefore, the renovation of the Circle, the establishment of sacred rituals and offering acts, all initiated by the ruler, were a means not merely of propitiating the ancestral spirits but of claiming descent and of enlisting those buried therein as protectors or guardians in fluid socio-political times. Moreover, the connection between the burial ground of GCA, the palace and the Cult Centre would have facilitated the integration of secular, mortuary and sacred elements in a whole intended to bring the mortal celebrants close to the divine ancestors and, concurrently, to increase the distance between the ruler and the populace. On the other hand, it is necessary to stress the point that the manipulation of GCA is a *unicum* and as such should it be examined, avoiding generalisations or setting it up as a standard for the existence of ancestor worship in Mycenaean times.

Continuity in tradition may be detected in the cases where MH cemeteries, e.g. Eleusis, Marathon (Tumuli 3 and 4), Haghios Stephanos and Malthi, continue in use[42]. The motive of the construction of Tomb Rho in GCB at Mycenae was probably status by association[43]. A similar purpose would have been prompted for the insertion of the tholos tomb at Voidhokoilia

[41] Hobsbawm 1983: 1. See also Whitley 1995: 49ff.
[42] Mee and Cavanagh 1990: 227.
[43] Mee and Cavanagh 1990: 227.

into the pre-existing (MH) tumulus[44]. In a similar manner, the existence of earlier tumuli or cemeteries would have attracted the establishment of Mycenaean cemeteries or individual tholos tombs in immediate proximity as suggested by the pattern followed at Dendra and Myrsinochori (Routsi)[45]. The clustering of chamber tombs and their connection with earlier or contemporary tholoi, e.g. Mycenae, should be considered through this prism.

Although superficially an indication of tradition, the distribution of LH tholos and chamber tomb cemeteries may also be suggestive of different 'cultural provinces' that may correspond with political divisions as, for example, suggested by the tholoi at Attica[46]. This may be another indication of cultural differences: 'a degree of regionalism which stands in contrast with the picture of a Greece unified under the control of the central palaces alone'[47].

Invention of tradition is detected in the introduction and use of specific tomb types, namely shaft graves, tholos and chamber tombs, whose typical tripartite plan denotes the relationship between architecture and ritual. In particular, the choice of tholos and chamber tombs was a conscious and carefully thought-out act on the part of the élites. This choice makes sense in LH IIIA2-B times when the elaboration of tholos and chamber tombs reached its peak with the Atreus Treasury and the Tholos of Clytemnestra

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[44] Korres 1977: 293-295.
[45] Protonotariou-Deilaki 1980: 197-200; Mee and Cavanagh 1990: 227. This suggestion does not apply in the case of Asine, where the LH cemetery was placed to the opposite direction of the MH necropolis.
[46] Mee and Cavanagh 1990: 241.
[47] Mee and Cavanagh 1990: 241-242; Darcque 1996: 710-711.

at Mycenae, the Minyas Treasury at Orchomenos and the royal chamber tomb at Thebes. These elaborately decorated tombs would have been a statement of wealth and display and, at the same time, the use of decorative elements from palatial and religious architecture and art would have acted as mnemonic devices for the commoners and as a means of imposing on them, by demonstrating the ruler's capacity to employ sacred features in his tomb. Such sepulchres were definitely locales of imposed memory.

A desire to imitate these elaborate tholos and chamber tombs is proven by the existence of similarly decorated, albeit of lesser quality, tombs in their vicinity. It is no coincidence that decorated chamber tombs were concentrated in the Argolid and Boeotia. 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 of Tanagra. Another instructive example of the attempt to imitate the monumental construction of a tholos tomb by people of lesser status is apparent in the case of chamber tombs 70, 83 and 84 at Mycenae, Palaiokastro (Arkadia) and Volimidhia (Messenia)[48]. All the cited examples feature circular chambers 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, however, that the recently reported *θολοειδής* tomb from Pellana, 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 its

[48] Tsountas 1896: 1; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 145-146; Daniilidou 2000: 162ff.

roof, as in the neighbouring tombs, is reminiscent of the successive layers of stones forming the cupola of a proper tholos. Furthermore, the carvings in its façade and burial chamber, the remains of precious grave goods (unfortunately, the tomb was plundered in antiquity) and the fact that sections of a palatial centre have recently been excavated 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[49]. This could also be an act of defiance and an indication that Laconia was politically divided at that time.

An interaction between centre and periphery, as defined by the Linear B documents and stylistic similarities in pottery and art, is evident in the adoption and imitation of mortuary practices and beliefs initiated by the centre. Thus, for example, although pottery styles, mortuary traditions and the Linear B evidence suggest that Euboea was under the control of Thebes, its inhabitants chose to bury their dead in tholos tombs, a type totally absent from Boeotia with the exception of the late tholos at Orchomenos. Their desire for distinction may also be reflected by the introduction of a local hybrid shape comprising a cross between an *alabastron* and a piriform jar in their tombs[50].

A similar case can be made with regard to Mycenaean funerary iconography. The depiction of animal sacrifices, athletic contests and the illustration of mourners on the decorative panels of the Tanagra sarcophagi

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[49] A similar case is observed in Thebes where the local rulers favoured the chamber tomb type as contrasted with the choice of tholos tomb as royal sepulchre at Orchomenos.
[50] The influence exercised from the centre towards the periphery is evident in the case of the cemetery at Aidonia (Korinthia) and Mycenae (see Cherry and Davis 2001).

as well as the material evidence for the performance of animal sacrifice, libation rituals and other cultic acts in the associated necropolis is in harmony with the evidence from the cemeteries of the major Mycenaean administrative centre of Thebes. Moreover, funerary iconography was employed by the Tanagrans as the medium through which they attempted to achieve a link with the distant and remote land of their ancestors and to modify their response to death via a system of associations, metaphors and allegories. By resolving to honour its dead by establishing an artistic tradition, the local community succeeded in presenting itself as distinct and different from its neighbours and the administrative centre[51].

Interestingly, the people of eastern Attica, Asine, Achaia and Elis excluded the deposition of terracotta figurines from their mortuary customs, not because they lacked religious consciousness, but rather as a result of cultural diversity. The proliferation of rhyta in the chamber tombs at Kallithea (Boeotia) and Vourvatsi (Attica) may not be taken as an exaggerated religious awareness but rather as part of a belief in the importance of libation in the performance of the customary rites in honour of the ancestors of the given communities.

The analysis of the available mortuary data also suggests that within the same necropolis the dead were frequently differentiated in terms of burial facilities or (post)funerary offerings and acts. This may be attributed to the status possessed by the deceased in his lifetime or, more likely, by the desire of his family or community to enhance or even construct status.

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[51] The same applies for their choice to establish a custom of using larnakes for the deposition of the dead.

Such a hypothesis provides further support to the suggestion that the remains of ritual acts in tombs do not comprise an entire archaeology of death but rather an archaeology of past lives and the attempt by the living to consider the dead as not gone but merely transformed into an ancestor, since from the time of an individual's extinction, 'death becomes an episode in the public time of others, an opportunity to reflect on death to come and to dwell on the meaning of time and existence'[52].

The list of instances of imitation, invention, transformation and continuity in Mycenaean death traditions is certainly extensive and definitely illustrative of the desire in Mycenaean communities to present themselves as culturally different and, concurrently, as part of a Mycenaean *koine*. Thus, the lack of uniformity in the adoption of certain mortuary attitudes and the desire for cultural differentiation, on the one hand, and aspects of ritual performance, on the other, do hint at shared beliefs and a sense of collective identity in LH III times[53].

Turning to the Mycenaean cult of the dead, the issue is not to search for and focus on the establishment of a 'mechanical check list' for cult recognition commonly applied in every single Mycenaean tomb[54]. Rather, the crux is to provide a model/guide of shared elements and features of ritualistic nature recognisable in the archaeological record taking into serious consideration the diverse chronological and regional traits of LH funerary agenda. Consequently, the absence of any pre-determined features

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[52] Parker Pearson 1999: 142, 193. See also Childe 1945.
[53] Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 79.
[54] See also *Chapter II* of present thesis.

or the occurrence of additional elements should by no means be considered in terms of a score certifying the identification of cult.

The established criteria for the identification and study of the Mycenaean cult of the dead are only validated when placed in a broader 'historical' narrative. The cultural interaction between centre and periphery or between different communities, the desire for cultural and traditional differentiation in individualistic or communal level, the construction of status, chronological and regional developments, the juxtaposition and manipulation of sacred, secular and funerary locales, an increased socio-political and religious awareness, shared eschatological beliefs and ritual acts should form the background of any future attempt to glimpse the ideology behind the archaeological evidence. Leaving aside the pessimistic views of Ucko, Hawkes and Morris with respect the extraction of information from prehistoric funerary record[55], the study of the Mycenaean cult of the dead should not be based on generalisations and oversimplified evaluations but rather on the contextual analysis of Mycenaean deathscapes.

[55] Hawkes 1954; Ucko 1969; Morris 1987: 212ff.

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Note

The *Chronika* of the *Archaeologikon Deltion,* the *BCH Chronicles*, the *PAE* and the *Archaeological Reports* are normally cited in the footnotes of the text and/or in the *Site Catalogue* and do not appear in the *Bibliography*. Only in exceptional cases, e.g. when they include references important for the textual analysis, do these reports appear under the name of the author and the full title in the *Bibliography*.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Journal/Series

AA	Archäologischer Anzeiger
AAA	Athens Annals of Archaeology/ Ἀρχαιολογικά Ἀνάλεκτα ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν
ABSA	The Annual of the British School of Archaeology at Athens
AEM	Αρχειον Ευβοϊκων Μελετων
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AJPh	American Journal of Philology
AM	Mitteilungen des Deutchen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung.
AntK	Antike Kunst
AR	Journal of Hellenic Studies, Archaeological Reports
ArchDelt. (Chr.)	Ἀρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον (*Χρονικά*)
ArchDelt. (Mel.)	Ἀρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον (*Μελέται*)
ArchDelt. (Par.)	Ἀρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον (*Παράρτημα*)

ArchEph	Ἀρχαιολογική Ἐφημερίς
ArchKorrBl	Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt
ASAtene	Annuario della R. Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente
BABesch	Bulletin Antieke Beschaving
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BCH	Bulletin de Correspodance Hellénique
BCH Suppl.	Bulletin de Correspodance Hellénique, Supplément
BIALond	Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of London
BICS	Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London
CAJ	Cambridge Archaeological Journal
CMS	Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel
ΕΕΦΣΑ	Ἐπιστημονική Ἐπετηρίς τῆς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν
ΕΕΦΣΘ	Ἐπιστημονική Ἐπετηρίς τῆς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης
Ergon	Τό Ἔργον τῆς ἐν Ἀθῆναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας
G&R	Greece and Rome
JAA	Journal of Anthropological Archaeology
JdI	Jarbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts
JEA	Journal of European Archaeology
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
JPR	Journal of Prehistoric Religion
JRGZM	Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz
KrChron	Κρητικά Χρονικά
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
OpAth	Opuscula Atheniensia
PAE	Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν Ἀθῆναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας
ProcBritAc	Proceedings of the British Academy
PZ	Prähistorische Zeitschrift

RHR Revue de l' Histoire des Religions

RM Rheinisches Museum für Philologie

SIMA Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology

SMEA Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici

WA World Archaeology

Catalogues, Conferences, Festschrifts and Selections of Papers

100 Years from the Death of Schliemann Demakopoulou, K. (ed.), 1990. *Τροία, Μυκήνες, Τίρυνς, Ορχομενός. Εκατό χρόνια από το θάνατο του Ερρίκου Σλήμαν.* Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture - ICOM.

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