

Cremation burials in Greece from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age: continuity or change?

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Zusammenfassung

BRANDBESTATTUNGEN IN GRIECHENLAND VON DER SPÄTEN BRONZEZEIT BIS ZUR FRÜHEN EISENZEIT: KONTINUITÄT ODER WANDEL? Die Belege für Brandbestattungen der Phase SH/SM IIIC werden zusammengestellt und einer vergleichenden Untersuchung unterzogen. Es zeigt sich, dass die häufig vertretene Ableitung der ägäischen Brandbestattungen aus Kleinasien nicht zutreffend ist. Um die Brandbestattungen des 12. Jhs. v. Chr. im ägäischen Raum kulturell einzuordnen, ist es nötig, zwischen Brandbestattungen als Minderheitenritus in traditionellen Kammergrabnekropolen und Brandbestattungen als vorherrschender Bestattungsform in Tumuli zu unterscheiden. Die Brandbestattungen in Kammergrabnekropolen lassen sich wahrscheinlich auf italische Einflüsse zurückführen. Dagegen ist für die Tumuli mit Brandbestattungen in der Argolis eine Beziehung zum westlichen Balkan sehr wahrscheinlich. Es gab keine direkte und kontinuierliche Entwicklung, die von den wenigen verstreuten Brandbestattungen der Phase SH IIIC zur Brandbestattung als fast ausschließlich praktizierter Beisetzungsform in Attika und Euböa während der frühen Eisenzeit führte. Brandbestattungen der SH IIIC-Phase und der frühen Eisenzeit sind zwei verschiedene Phänomene, die einen unterschiedlichen kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Hintergrund hatten.

Abstract

The evidence for cremation burials in the LH/LM IIIC period is re-evaluated. It can be concluded that the widely held view, according to which the custom of cremation was introduced to the Aegean from Asia Minor, no longer applies. It is necessary to differentiate between cremation as

a minority rite in ordinary chamber tomb cemeteries and cremation as a majority rite in tumuli in order to understand the cultural affiliation of the custom. Cremation as a minority rite in chamber tomb cemeteries probably derives from Italian influence. The tumuli with inurned cremations in the Argolid seem to be connected to the Western Balkans. There was no direct or continuous development that led directly from the occasional LH IIIC cremation burials to cremation as the almost exclusively practiced type of burial in Attica and Euboea during the Early Iron Age. Cremations during the LH IIIC period and during the Early Iron Age are two separate phenomena, each having a different cultural and social background.

Cremation was a very rare burial practice throughout the entire Aegean Bronze Age. Generally, this also applies to the 12th century BC, the time after the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces that was accompanied by the complete dissolution of the palatial political and economic system. This period is referred to as LH (Late Helladic) IIIC on the Greek mainland and LM (Late Minoan) IIIC on the island of Crete.

However, some considerable changes occurred in the 12th century BC with regards to cremation burials. There were far more cemeteries with a few cremation burials in this period than in the preceding palatial era of the Mycenaean culture (LH IIIA–LH IIIB: ca. 1400–1200 BC).

It is far from certain that cremation was practiced at all during the palatial period in the area of the Mycenaean



Fig. 1. LH IIIC, LM IIIC and Subminoan cemeteries with cremation burials in the Aegean region. – 1. Elatea – 2. Perati – 3. Mycenaean-Chania – 4. Argos – 5. Palaiokastro – 6. Agrapidochori – 7. Spaliareika – 8. Kallithea-Spentzes – 9. Achaia Klaus – 10. Cos, Langada – 11. Rhodes, Ialysos – For Crete see fig. 2 (F. Ruppenstein, prepared by M. Frauenglas).

an culture.¹ Claims of cremation burials in chamber tomb cemeteries by archaeologists without any anthropological evidence or without cremation urns should be treated with extreme caution. This is because of the widespread, though still not generally noticed, practice of cleaning chamber tombs by purification fires,² which could have resulted in the partial burning or smoking of bones from inhumation burials. These partly burned bones could easily be mistaken for genuine cremation burials by the non-specialist. There is not a single Mycenaean cremation burial of the palatial

period that is confirmed by anthropological analysis. Only two cases of LH IIIA–LH IIIB cremation urns have been asserted so far. One was found in Brauron in East Attica,³ the other in the Mycenaean type chamber tomb cemetery at Müskebi near Bodrum on the southwestern coast of Asia Minor.⁴ The possible cremation remains from chamber tomb A in the cemetery at Brauron were deposited in a small alabastron that was found next to a fireplace. According to the excavator's convincing interpretation this fireplace is the remains of a purification fire. This gives reason to speculate that the bones in the alabastron were burnt by the purification fire. Moreover, the greenish discoloration of the bones from their contact with bronze objects is more fitting for the inhumed than for cremated bones. Thus, the possible inhumed cremation in Müskebi is the only reported case of a LH IIIA–LH IIIB cremation burial that can be accepted with some degree of confidence. However, even in this instance, the limited amount of information does not make it certain.

1. One cemetery with a predominance of cremation burials was in use during the LM IIIA2–LM IIIB period on Crete: Olous in the eastern part of the island: KANTA 2001. The cremations were deposited mainly in pithoi. This unusual custom indicates that the cemetery at Olous represents an isolated phenomenon, which cannot be connected to the spread of cremation burials during the LM IIIC period. Other LM IIIA–LM IIIB cremations are unknown.

2. MORRIGONE 1967, 31. – CAVANAGH, MEE 1998, 112–113 and n. 83–84. The custom was much more widespread than Cavanagh and Mee believe. – GALLOU 2005, 120–123. – JUNG 2007, 216 and n. 8; 229 and n. 89. Jung as well as Cavanagh and Mee surmise that the fires had a ritual background. – PASCHALIDIS, McGEORGE 2009, 104.

3. LAZARIDIS 1968, 99.

4. BOYSAL 1967, 79.

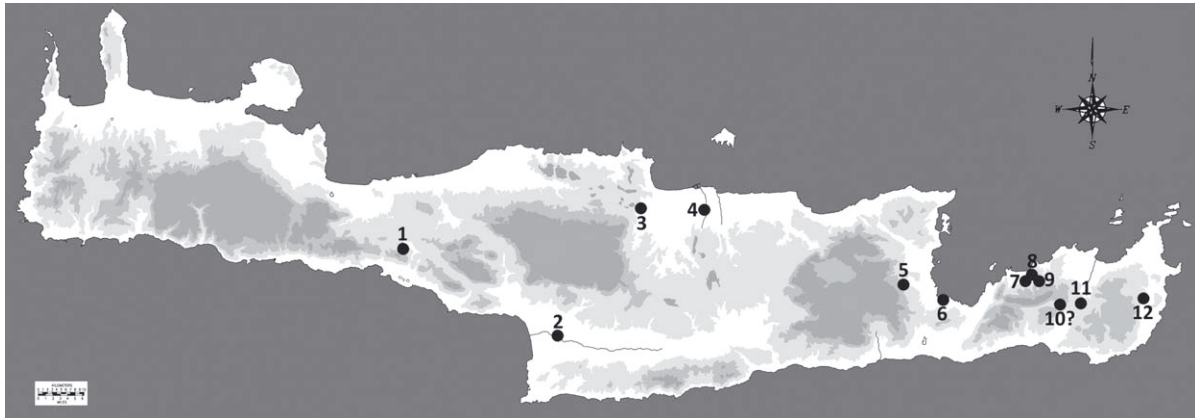


Fig. 2. LM IIIC and Subminoan cemeteries with cremation burials on Crete. – 1. Atsipades-Pezoulos – 2. Phaistos-Liliana – 3. Tylissos – 4. Knossos, North Cemetery – 5. Kritsa – 6. Vrokastro – 7. Tourloti – 8. Myrsini – 9. Mesa Moulia – 10. Krya – 11. Praisos-Photoula – 12. Epano Zakros-Palaimylos (F. Ruppenstein, prepared by M. Frauenglas).

Besides the few cremations in cemeteries with inhumation as a majority rite a small number of cemeteries, in which cremation was the prevailing burial practice, made their first appearance in the 12th century BC.

A more distinctive change in the Greek burial customs happened at the very beginning of the Early Iron Age in the late 11th century BC. In some regions, notably in Attica and Euboea, cremation became the dominant, nearly exclusively practiced burial custom.

These alterations in the burial customs and the reasons behind them have attracted scholarly interest for a long time and are still continuing to do so. In the following I will try to add some new thoughts to this ongoing discussion. Emphasis will be placed on the origins of the new burial rite in the 12th century BC and to the relationship between LH IIIC and Early Iron Age cremations.

On the origins of the cremation burial rite in the 12th century Aegean

When discussing the origins of cremation as a burial custom in the Aegean region it is not advisable to treat all LH/LMIIIC cremations as a unity (cf. figs. 1–2). The cremation burials of this period can be divided into two groups according to the structure of the cemeteries to which they belong. The first group consists of the cremation burials in traditional Mycenaean chamber tomb cemeteries in which inhumations clearly dominated. The small number of cremations was placed in the same tombs as the numerous inhumations. Apparently, the people who practiced cremation in this way were fully integrated members of the respective local Mycenaean communities.

Cemeteries with a predominance of cremation burials belong to the second group. Only three such cemeteries are known: at Argos⁵ and Mycenae-Chania⁶ on the Greek mainland and at Atsipades⁷ on Crete. The cremation burial cemeteries at Argos and Mycenae-Chania were established in other places to the usual chamber tomb cemeteries of the same settlements. Moreover, they differ from the customary Mycenaean cemeteries because the cremations were deposited in tumuli and not in chamber tombs. Thus, the communities who cremated their deceased members and buried them in tumuli clearly set themselves apart from the majority of the population. Therefore, it can be inferred that these communities were distinct groups, which were not fully integrated into the Mycenaean society.

Firstly, the origin of cremation burials in chamber tombs will be investigated.

Cremation burial as a minority rite in chamber tomb cemeteries

It is still almost generally accepted that the custom of cremation was introduced to the Aegean from Asia Minor. This hypothesis was supported most forcefully by Spyros Iakovidis.⁸ However, Reinhard Jung and Oliver Dickinson have since argued that at least the cremation burials in Achaea could have been inspired by contacts with Italy⁹. Nevertheless, neither R. Jung nor O. Dickinson doubts the

5. PITEROS 2001.

6. PALAIOLOGOU, this volume.

7. AGELARAKIS, KANTA, MOODY 2001.

8. IAKOVIDIS 1970, vol. 2, 56–57.

9. JUNG 2007, 229. – DICKINSON 2006, 73.

importance of Anatolia as the place of origin for the custom of cremation in the Mycenaean culture. Yet there are significant reasons why it can be believed that the LH/LM IIIC cremations in the Aegean are not at all connected to Asia Minor:

1. If Asia Minor was indeed the source of inspiration for the introduction of cremation to the Aegean, one would have expected cremations of an early date and in comparatively large numbers in the regions of the Mycenaean cultural sphere next to Anatolia, especially on the Dodecanese. However, this is not the case. Just one possible cremation burial of the palatial period has been reported for Ialysos on Rhodes but it is far more likely that this is just a case of an inhumation that was smoked by a purification fire.¹⁰ The one possible inurned cremation in Müskebi can hardly be the reason for the spread of this custom to the Aegean.

In LH IIIC cremation burials are well represented in the chamber tomb cemetery at Ialysos. According to Mario Benzi eight secure instances were found.¹¹ A further example is known from the island of Kos.¹² However, these numbers are not exceptionally high when compared to sites on the Greek mainland. In the cemetery of Perati in East Attica 18 cremated individuals were found.¹³

2. Regions with an extraordinarily high concentration of cemeteries with cremations show no particular connection to Asia Minor. This is particularly obvious in the case of the northwestern Peloponnese due to its geographical position. Yet even East Crete, that is much closer to Anatolia than the northwestern Peloponnese, exhibits no characteristics in its material culture, which reveal a close relationship with the indigenous cultures of Western Asia Minor.

3. Hitherto it has hardly been noticed that swords of Naue II type and cremation burials are concentrated in the same regions during the LH/LM IIIC period (cf. tab. 1).¹⁴ This observation is significant because R. Jung and Matthias Mehofer have plausibly substantiated that the Aegean Naue II swords depend on Italian prototypes. A Naue II sword from a hoard that was found by Tsountas in 1890 in Mycenae is probably even an import from Italy.¹⁵

The Northwest Peloponnese and East Crete are the regions with the highest concentration of cemeteries with cre-

mation burials and Naue II swords in the Aegean region.¹⁶ This means that the same communities who had particular interest in or had access to a new weapon type of foreign ancestry were also particularly receptive to the introduction of a new burial rite of foreign ancestry. Cremation was a widespread burial custom in Italy during the 12th century B.C.¹⁷ It is therefore a plausible assumption that the introduction of cremation to the Aegean was inspired by contacts to Italy. This hypothesis holds as well for the Dodecanese because even this archipelago was in contact with Italy as is attested by weapons and implements. An inhumation burial in tomb 21 of the cemetery at Langada on Kos was equipped not only with a Naue II sword but also with an Italian type spearhead as has recently been demonstrated by R. Jung.¹⁸ A flange-hilted knife with a ring-end was found in tomb 15 of the cemetery at Ialysos on Rhodes.¹⁹ The type can be associated with the Urnfield koine of weapons and implements. Parallels exist in Italy, east central Europe and the Northern Balkans. Therefore, the knife from Ialysos indicates a connection to the Adriatic region, which cannot be specified.

Both cremation burials and Naue II swords were found in five LH/LM IIIC cemeteries, but not in the same tombs. In two cemeteries Naue II swords as well as cremation burials were detected in the same tomb, but the swords did not belong, at least not with certainty, to the cremation burials. A Naue II sword is part of the grave goods of a cremation burial in tomb 201 at Knossos North Cemetery.²⁰ It is hardly

10. MEE 1982, 8–9. – BENZI 1992, 231.

11. BENZI 1992, 230.

12. MORRICONE 1967, 30–31, 202–203 no. 2 and fig. 214.

13. IAKOVIDIS 1970, vol. 2, 32.

14. GIANNOPOULOS 2008, 229 was the first to recognize a possible connection between cremations, warrior burials and Naue II swords.

15. JUNG, MEHOFER 2009, 124–127, 134.

16. With 13 published specimens Achaea exhibits the highest concentration of Naue II swords in the entire eastern Mediterranean. Even more swords have been found but they are still awaiting publication: GIANNOPOULOS 2008, 168. For a recent discussion on the Achaean warrior burials see GIANNOPOULOS 2008, 202–252. – See also DEGER-JALKOTZY 2006, 157–161. Nine Naue II swords are known from Crete: GIANNOPOULOS 2008, 176–177. – For a list of Aegean Naue II swords see EDER, JUNG 2005, 494–495 and pls. 107–108.

17. JUNG 2007, 227 with references.

18. JUNG 2009, 73–74, 89 and fig. 1.

19. HARDING 1984, 132–134 and fig. 35/5. Harding refers to the Urnfield parallels as “...instructive and, indeed, close...” (p. 133) but, in spite of this, remains skeptical because Mycenaean knives may also have had ring-ends. This reasoning is unconvincing because greater importance is attached to pure speculation than to verifiable facts. – BOUZEK 1985, 146–147 and fig. 72/14. – BENZI 1992, 177 and pl. 179 h.

20. Details are given in table 1 and the attached list of LH/LM IIIC cremation burials. The Subminoan burials are considered as well because there is a greater degree of continuity from the LM IIIC Late to the Subminoan period than on the Greek mainland from LH IIIC Late to Submycenaean. The discussion on separating LM IIIC from Subminoan is still ongoing. See most recently D’AGATA 2007. – HALLAGER 2010. Hallager holds the view that LM IIIC Late is identical to Subminoan.

surprising that there are also cemeteries with cremations but without Naue II swords. Elateia in Central Greece and Perati in East Attica are especially worth mentioning in this respect. Interestingly enough, both cemeteries are situated in regions without any evidence for bronze Naue II swords²¹ and with no further evidence for cremation. Therefore, the cases of Elateia and Perati do not weaken the general validity of the observation that Naue II swords and cremation burials are both concentrated in the same regions of the Aegean. The Naue II swords and other bronze objects of Italian, or more generally Adriatic, inspiration strongly indicate that the new burial custom of cremation was introduced to the traditional Aegean chamber tomb cemeteries from Italy and not from Asia Minor.

Same Burial	Same Tomb	Same Cemetery
Knossos, North Cemetery, tomb 201		
	Spaliareika, tomb 2	
	Mouliana, tomb A	
		Kallithea-Spentzes
		Achaea Klauss
		Palaiokastro
		Kos, Langada
		Myrsini

Tab. 1. Correlation between cremation burials and bronze Naue II swords in LHIIIC, LMIIIC and Subminoan cemeteries.

Cremation burial as a majority rite in tumulus cemeteries²²

As mentioned above the communities that used tumuli for the deposition of inurned cremations at Argos and at Mycenae-Chania clearly detached themselves from the majority of the population. They achieved this by predominantly practicing cremation, using tumuli and not chamber tombs and by establishing separate burial plots. Thus, they were apparently not fully integrated members of the Mycenaean society. This impression is enhanced through the inhumations in the tumulus at Argos as the deceased were

laid to rest in stone cist graves.²³ This is an entirely uncommon grave type in the palatial and postpalatial periods of the Mycenaean culture. In fact, the cist graves in the tumulus at Argos are the only examples of their type in the core regions of the Mycenaean culture that can be securely dated to the LH IIIB–LH IIIC period.²⁴ For all these reasons, it can be deduced that the burial communities, who used the tumuli at Mycenae-Chania and Argos were groups of foreigners or were of foreign descent. It is almost impossible for a population group of foreign origin to leave more obvious marks in the archaeological record. A first indication of the region of their origin is provided by some grave goods from the tumulus at Argos: a twisted arched fibula,²⁵ two large arched fibulae with two discs,²⁶ a bronze ring with spiral terminals²⁷ and some handmade pottery.²⁸ All of these objects have no Aegean pedigree and can be connected to the Adriatic region. The large cast arched fibulae with two discs are of particular interest because they have good parallels on Sicily²⁹ as well as on the Croatian coast.³⁰ Therefore, these fibulae clearly demonstrate the close interaction between both sides of the Adriatic and the Aegean during the 12th century B.C.

Klaus Kilian suggested that the tumulus at Mycenae-Chania was erected by Dorians from the mountainous regions of Northwestern Greece.³¹ However, tumuli are indeed very common in Epirus but in connection with inhumation and not with cremation. Therefore, Epirus can hardly be the place of origin of the people who built the tumuli at Argos and Mycenae-Chania.³² On the other hand, Birgitta Eder and R. Jung proposed that the Argive tumuli could have depended on Italian prototypes.³³ Yet the same problem here emerges as with Kilian's theory, just the other way round: there are many cremation burials in Italy but

21. There is one iron Naue II sword reported from Elateia. It can probably be dated to the Submycenaean/Protogeometric transitional phase.

22. The cemetery in Atsipades on Crete will not be discussed in this section because the evidence available is insufficient to be able to provide clear indications of the cultural belongings of the burial community.

23. PITEROS 2001, 100–103, 115. 16 inhumation burials corresponding to 30.7% of all of the graves were found in the tumulus.

24. For stone cist graves that became popular in parts of Greece from the Submycenaean period onwards see: RUPPENSTEIN 2007, 248–250.

25. PITEROS 2001, 112 n. 59. – JUNG 2006, 192.

26. PITEROS 2001, 107, 111. – For this fibula type see: JUNG 2006, 192–194. – RUPPENSTEIN 2007, 220–221. A detailed study on this fibula type is scheduled.

27. PITEROS 2001, 105 n. 21. – For rings with spiral terminals see: RUPPENSTEIN 2007, 213–216. – GIANNOPOULOS 2009, 122–125.

28. PITEROS 2001, 115. – For handmade burnished ware see: JUNG 2006, 21–47. – KILIAN 2007.

29. LO SCHIAVO 2010, 94–96 nos. 31–38, 98 nos. 43–49.

30. GLOGOVIĆ 2003, 8–11 nos. 7–29.

31. KILIAN 1987/1988, 154.

32. Kilian's suggestion was already criticized by JUNG 2007, 228.

33. EDER, JUNG 2005, 492–493. – JUNG 2007, 228–229.

hardly any in tumuli.³⁴ When searching for a possible place of origin, an area where cremations in tumuli were a common burial custom has to be looked for. In fact, it is possible to locate this region: it is the Western Balkans, the territory of former Yugoslavia. The cemeteries of the Paraćin and Donja Brnjica cultural groups compare especially well with the tumuli in the Argolid. These two cultural groups flourished in Southern Serbia and Kosovo mainly during the 13th century BC (Br D, LH IIIB).³⁵ The usual form of interment was cremation burial, often in tumuli. The cremated remains of the deceased were placed in urns, which were closed with bowls. This practice can be paralleled to the inurned cremations in the Argive tumuli.³⁶ The Argive custom of placing the small open vessel upside down on the urn finds its correspondence in a grave in the cemetery of Paraćin.³⁷ This grave is dated to phase Paraćin II by Rastko Vasić that can be equated to Br D2–Ha A1 and LH IIIB Late–LH IIIC respectively.³⁸ It is therefore roughly contemporary with the tumuli at Argos and Mycenae-Chania.

A tumulus on the plateau of Pešter (Latinsko Groblje), south of Sjenica, in Southwestern Serbia is particularly interesting because it contained inurned cremations as well as inhumations in cist graves. This coexistence of inhumation and cremation burials corresponds well to the situation in the tumulus at Argos. Tumuli probably also existed in the cremation cemeteries at Trnjane near Brestovac, Gornja Stražava and Donja Toponica in Southern Serbia. However, it was no longer possible to clearly identify the tumuli.

Cremation burials in tumuli have a long tradition in the Western Balkans and this can be traced back to at least the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age of the region. The inurned cremation burials of the first phase in the tumulus cemetery at Mojsinje (Lugovi-Bent) can be dated roughly to

this period (Br B–C that corresponds to LH II–IIIA).³⁹ The site is situated in the Čačak region in Central Serbia.

Cremation burials in tumuli are also characteristic for the cemeteries of the Barice-Gredani group in the northern part of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Cemeteries of this type were in use from Br C until Ha A1. However, the cremated remains of the deceased were deposited directly in pits and not in urns in this cultural group.⁴⁰

There is no other region in Southeast Europe where the combination between tumuli and cremation burials was so widespread and lasted for such a long period of time as the Western Balkans. Therefore, the tumuli at Argos and Mycenae-Chania are best related to this area.

The contact between the Western Balkans and Greece, that led to the construction of the Argive tumuli, was probably conducted via the Adriatic because there are no tumuli with cremations of a 12th century date in Northern Greece. The finds of Naue II swords of the early standard type in Donja Brnjica and Tekija near Paraćin clearly show that the Donja Brnjica and Paraćin cultures were not isolated but in contact with the innovative centers of the period.⁴¹

Deposition practice for cremations in the LH/LM IIIC period

It is a hitherto barely noted fact that the deposition practice for cremations differs remarkably between the LH/LM IIIC period and the Early Iron Age. Whereas in the Early Iron Age amphorae were the nearly exclusively used type of urn, they did not reach this position during the LH/LM IIIC period. Amphorae and amphoriskoi were the most common type of urn only in the tumuli at Mycenae-Chania and Argos.⁴² Belly-handled amphorae as well as rim-handled amphorae were utilized. This preference for amphorae in the tumuli at Argos and Mycenae-Chania may be the result of the Western Balkan descent of the respective burial communities because the Donja Brnjica and Paraćin cultures used amphoroid urns as well. Nevertheless, the two tumuli in the Argolid can hardly be the reason behind the widespread use of amphorae as urns in the Early Iron Age.

The LH/LM IIIC urns were not normally closed with

34. JUNG 2007, 228 cites two tumuli at Frattesina in the Veneto. However, these tumuli can barely prove an Italian ancestry of the two Argive tumuli because it is methodologically problematic to base a proposal for foreign inspiration on a completely exceptional case in the assumed area of origin.

35. The evidence is summarized by DELLA CASA 1996, 162–167. – See also VASIĆ, this volume. For references see both of these publications.

36. PITEROS 2001, 104 and n. 19 and figs. 9–10. Piteros believes that originally all urns were closed with a small open vessel. However, in 16 disturbed burials no small open vessels were found. It cannot be excluded, therefore, that not all urns were closed with a small vessel. – PALAIOLOGOU, this volume.

37. VASIĆ, this volume fig. 6.

38. Vasić dates the grave because of the similarity of the urn with pottery of the Belegiš II cultural group. Belegiš II is equated by Della Casa to Bz D2–Ha A1. See VASIĆ, this volume. – DELLA CASA 1996, 167–174, 188 and tab. 24.

39. NIKITVIĆ, STOJČIĆ, VASIĆ 2002, 71, 108–112.

40. The evidence is summarized by GAVRANOVIĆ, this volume.

41. HARDING 1995, 35–36 and no. 76; no. 82. This type of Naue II sword is called Nenzingen or Reutlingen in Central Europe, Cetona in Italy and, according to Kilian-Dirlmeier, group A in Greece. See HARDING 1995, 35 and 37. – KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1993, 95–96.

42. PALAIOLOGOU, this volume. – PITEROS 2001, 106–107, 113.

small open vessels.⁴³ This is another point in which the deposition practice in the Argive tumuli differs from cremation burials in contemporary chamber tomb cemeteries.

The second most popular type of urn in the tumulus at Argos is the jug.⁴⁴ This connects Argos to chamber tomb cemeteries with cremations. Jugs are the solely used type of cremation urn in Ialysos on Rhodes.⁴⁵ The only cremation in the Langada cemetery on Kos was also deposited in a jug.⁴⁶ Four out of six urns are jugs in the cemetery at Perati.⁴⁷ Two more jugs were found in the tumulus of Mycenaean-Chania.⁴⁸ Jugs were obviously very popular urns in different parts of the Mycenaean culture.⁴⁹ Two oinochoai from the tumulus at Argos⁵⁰ and one from the cemetery at Elateia⁵¹ can be added as urns of a similar type (FT 137). Jugs were no longer used as urns in the Early Iron Age. There is only one jug that served as a cremation urn from the Kerameikos cemetery at Athens.⁵² This jug belongs to one of the oldest graves of the cemetery, one of the very few that date to the LH IIIC Late period.

Another common custom in the LH IIIC period was to loosely deposit the cremated remains on the floor of chamber tombs or in pits dug into the floors. Instances are known from Perati⁵³, Kallithea-Spentzes⁵⁴, Achaea Klaus⁵⁵ and Ialysos.⁵⁶ At Elateia the vast majority of cremations were

deposited in this way.⁵⁷ The deposition of cremations in pits without urns was not entirely unknown in the Early Iron Age but rather uncommon.

The use of large open vessels as cremation urns is without parallel in the Early Iron Age. This practice has been detected in Spaliareika⁵⁸ in Achaea and in Tylissos⁵⁹ and Moulia⁶⁰ on Crete. A bronze lekanis served as an urn in Spaliareika, a hemispherical bronze bowl in Tylissos and a clay crater with pictorial decoration in Moulia. This way of depositing cremated human remains was apparently restricted to elite burials because all three of the graves concerned are richly equipped with grave goods. Naue II swords were found in the same tombs in Moulia and Spaliareika, though not or not with certainty belonging to the cremation burials. The cremation burial at Tylissos was equipped with a spearhead. Therefore, a connection between cremation in prestigious open vessels and the LH/LM IIIC warrior elite can be assumed. Furthermore, this common practice is a further indication that the elites in the northwestern Peloponnese and on Crete had a close relationship during the LH/LM IIIC period.

The use of cylindrical pyxides as cremation urns is a local custom restricted to Eastern Crete.⁶¹ The rejection of jugs – vessels that were so common on the mainland and on the islands of the Dodecanese – as cremation urns is another Cretan peculiarity. The cremation urn that was found in a chamber tomb at Tourloti in Eastern Crete is a curious case. The cremation was placed in the lower part of a broken amphoriskos that consequently had become an open vessel.⁶² The usage of a broken vessel as an urn does not signify an especially rich burial. The modest grave goods provide the

43. In Spaliareika a four-handled amphora, which was probably used as an urn, was closed with the foot of a kylix. See GIANOPOULOS 2008, 223 and pl. 21; pl. 79. Two belly-handled amphorae from a chamber tomb at Agrapidochori in Elis were closed with a foot of a kylix. See PARLAMA 1971, 56 nos. 2, 4 and pl. AB/β, γ, ε. Cremations are not reported for the two amphorae with a kylix foot but for a four-handled amphora without a lid: PARLAMA 1971, 54 and pl. AB/α. Were the belly-handled amphorae with a kylix foot perhaps originally also used as cremation urns? Regrettably, the evidence available does not allow any firm conclusions.

44. PITEROS 2001, 111–112.

45. MEE 1982, 27–28. – BENZI 1992, 231.

46. MORRIGONE 1967, 30, 202–203 no. 2 and fig. 214.

47. IAKOVIDIS 1970, vol. 2, 40 and vol. 3, pl. 174.

48. PALAIOLOGOU, this volume.

49. The jugs belong to the Furumark Type (FT) 106–109.

50. PITEROS 2001, 113 and figs. 37–38.

51. DAKORONIA, DEGER-JALKOTZY, FABRIZII-REUER 2002, 140, 143 and fig. 4.

52. RUPPENSTEIN 2007, 24–25 grave 138 no. 1 and fig. 3; fig. 12 and pl. 14; pl. 31.

53. IAKOVIDIS 1970, vol. 2, 40.

54. PAPADOPOULOS, TH. 1982, 108–109.

55. PAPADOPOULOS, TH. 1995, 57: tomb N, pit I, burial Θ. – PASCHALIDIS, McGEORGE 2009, 84 and n. 16.

56. BENZI 1992, 230.

57. DAKORONIA, DEGER-JALKOTZY, FABRIZII-REUER 2002. – DEGER-JALOKOTZY, this volume.

58. GIANOPOULOS 2008, 116 no. Sp. G2–19, 168, 224 and pl. 23/19; pl. 39/19.

59. MARINATOS 1931, 112–113 and fig. 1. The cremation burial at Tylissos has been dated by some scholars to the Protogeometric Period; see DAVARAS 1973, 166 for a summary of the discussion. Yet a fragmented arched fibula with two discs can be dated with some confidence to an advanced stage of LM IIIC and certainly not later than the Subminoan period; see MARINATOS 1931, 114 no. 4 and fig. 2/4; fig. 3/4. This assessment is in accordance with B. Hallager's recent dating of the stirrup jar from the same burial to the LM IIIC Late phase: HALLAGER 2010, 143 and n. 44. – Cf. MARINATOS 1931, 114–115, 117 and fig. 4. A dating to the end of the LM IIIC phase is also in compliance with the appraisal of the excavator.

60. DAVARAS 1973, 163 with references. – D'AGATA 2007, 113 and fig. 13/1. – PAPADOPOULOS, A. 2009, 74 and fig. 9/8–9.

61. DAVARAS 1973, 158–160. – PASCHALIDIS 2009, 16 and n. 106.

62. PASCHALIDIS 2009, 15–17.

same impression. Therefore, it can be deduced that cremation burials during the LH/LM IIIC period were not restricted to the highest social elites.

Cremation burials at the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age

The burial customs of the LH IIIC⁶³ period and the beginning of the Early Iron Age can only be compared in a well-founded manner in a few regions of Greece. This is because there is good evidence for all the chronological phases from LH IIIC to the Early Protogeometric period only from a few regions. The comparison between LH IIIC burial customs in one area and Early Iron Age burial practices in another can only lead to limited results because the Greek burial customs of the Early Iron Age vary from region to region. The regions with the best available evidence are the Argolid and Attica.

Inhumation, especially in cist graves, is by far the most dominating burial practice during the entire Early Iron Age in the Argolid.⁶⁴ There are only very few instances of cremation burials.⁶⁵ Accordingly the tumuli in Mycenae-Chania and in Argos did not establish a long lasting tradition. In the case of the Argolid it is obvious that there is no continuation from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age in regard to cremation.

At a first glance, the situation in Attica is not as clear as in the Argolid because there are some LH IIIC cremations in Perati and from the Submycenaean/Protogeometric transitional phase⁶⁶ onwards cremation became first the prevailing and then the nearly exclusively practiced mode of burial. The intermediate Submycenaean period provides the answer to the question whether the LH IIIC cremations in the chamber tomb cemetery at Perati can be interpreted as the forerunners of a custom that reached its peak in the Early Iron Age. The Kerameikos cemetery in Athens has the most extensive evidence for the Submycenaean period. 6 out of 133 Submycenaean graves in the Kerameikos are cremations.⁶⁷ This corresponds to a ratio of 4.5 % to 95.5 % (cf. tab. 2–3). During the Submycenaean phase no growth of the proportion of cremation burials is noticeable. Three

cremations are dated to Submycenaean I,⁶⁸ two to Submycenaean III and one cremation allows only a general dating to Submycenaean I–III. The percentage of cremations in the chamber tomb cemetery at Perati was even lower.⁶⁹ The use of a jug as an urn in one of the oldest Kerameikos graves⁷⁰ indicates some continuity from the LH IIIC cemetery at Perati to the Submycenaean cemetery in the Athenian Kerameikos with regards to deposition practice.

A marked change in the preference for cremations occurred during the Submycenaean/Protogeometric transitional phase. 16 out of 28 burials in the Kerameikos are cremations in this phase (see tab. 3).⁷¹ This corresponds to a ratio of 57.1 % and a growth rate of more than 50 % compared to the Submycenaean period. This striking change can hardly be interpreted as a gradual development from one phase to the next. This is even more evident when considering the fact that there was no increase in the number of cremations during the course of the Submycenaean period. The sharp increase in the number of cremations during the transitional phase from Submycenaean to Protogeometric was apparently a sudden occurrence and therefore cannot be explained with a culmination of a development that started in the LH IIIC period. The reasons for the sudden shift to cremation as the preferred burial custom in the Submycenaean/Protogeometric transitional phase are not obvious. External stimuli are not recognizable and therefore intra-societal developments may be assumed. It seems that the Athenian society of the time was ready for a change and innovations in various fields. It is also the time of the introduction of iron weapons and thus corresponds to the beginning of the Iron Age.⁷²

63. The situation on Crete is too different to be discussed in this paper.

64. The evidence was collected and discussed by HÄGG 1974.

65. PITEROS 2001, 117–118 and figs. 40–41. The discovery of two urned cremations in Ancient Epidauros was recently reported. According to the excavator one urn dates to LH IIIC Late the other to the Submycenaean/Protogeometric transitional period. See PITEROS 2009, 187–188 and fig. 30.

66. For the definition of this phase see RUPPENSTEIN 2009.

67. For the database see RUPPENSTEIN 2007, 243 and tab. 40a; 261 and tab. 46.

68. Including cremation burial 138 that dates to LH IIIC Late. See RUPPENSTEIN 2007, 24–25 and fig. 3; fig 12 and pl. 14; pl. 31.

69. S. Iakovidis estimates that more than 600 people were buried in Perati. 18 cremations of 600 burials correspond to a ratio of 3.0 %. See IAKOVIDIS 1970, vol. 2, 28–29, 32, 42. However, the inhumations in the cemetery at Perati were not analyzed by an anthropologist. An anthropological analysis usually leads to a higher number of individuals than an archaeologist's estimation.

70. Grave 138. See n. 52 above.

71. For the database see RUPPENSTEIN 2007, 243 and tab. 40a. – RUPPENSTEIN 2009, 343 and tab. 1. Note that the graves 114 and PG A contained two burials respectively. Furthermore, note that the disturbed cremation burial 145* is included: RUPPENSTEIN 2007, 30.

72. See RUPPENSTEIN 2009, 329.

Submycenaean Phase I	Submycenaean Phase II	Submycenaean Phase III	Submycenaean Phases I–III
Graves 67, 127, 138		Graves 75, 126	Grave 56

Tab. 2. Submycenaean cremation burials in the Kerameikos cemetery at Athens.

	Submycenaean	Transitional Submycenaean/Protogeometric
Inhumations	n=127 95.5 %	n=12 42.9 %
Cremations	n=6 4.5 %	n=16 57.1 %

Tab. 3. The ratio between inhumations and cremations in the Kerameikos cemetery during the Submycenaean period and the Submycenaean/Protogeometric transitional phase.

It can be concluded that the cremations of the LH IIIC period and the Early Iron Age are two discrete phenomena that are not connected to each other in a straightforward manner. Cremation as the predominant burial rite in Attica and Euboea during the Early Iron Age is not the logical culmination of a development that started with a small number of cremation burials in the LH IIIC period in diverse parts of the Aegean. Cremations in the LH IIIC period and in the Early Iron Age had a different cultural and societal background.

Appendix: LH IIIC, LM IIIC and Subminoan cremation burials⁷³

Greek mainland

- Elateia
DAKORONIA, DEGER-JALKOTZY, FABRIZII-REUER 2002. – DEGER-JALKOTZY, this volume.
- Perati
IAKOVIDIS 1970, vol. 2, 31–43.
- Agrapidochori
PARLAMA 1971, 54; 59–60.
- Spaliareika
GIANNOPOULOS 2008, 221–230.

73. The evidence for Crete was collected by DAVARAS 1973 and MCGEORGE 2009, 41 tab.1. Davaras gives full bibliographic references. – LH/LM IIIC cremation burials on the mainland, the Dodecanese and Crete were compiled by JUNG 2007, 230, 232 and pl. 57. – GIANNOPOULOS 2008, 221–230 provides a recent survey of cremations in the Aegean region. – Here a revised update is presented. Some highly dubious cases mentioned in the literature have been omitted. – Cf. figs. 1–2. I wish to thank Marion Frauenglas for preparing these maps.

- Kallithea-Spentzes
PAPADOPOULOS, Th. 1982, 108–109.
- Achaea Klauss
PAPADOPOULOS, Th. 1995, 57. – PASCHALIDIS, MCGEORGE 2009, 84 and n. 16.
- Mycenae–Chania
PALAIOLOGOU, this volume.
- Argos
PITEROS 2001.
- Palaiokastro
PITEROS 2001, 116 and n. 83.

Dodecanese

- Cos, Langada
MORRICONE 1967, 30, 202–203 no. 2.
- Rhodes, Ialysos
MEE 1982, 27–28. – BENZI 1992, 230–231.

Crete

- Atsipades-Pezoulos
AGELARAKIS, KANTA, MOODY 2001.
- Phaistos-Liliana
DAVARAS 1973, 162–163 no. 5.
- Tylissos
MARINATOS 1931.
- Knossos, North Cemetery
COLDSTREAM, CATLING 1996, 192; 645–646. – MUSGRAVE 1996, 692 Tomb 201.
- Kritsa
DAVARAS 1973, 162 no. 4. – TSIPOPOULOU, LITTLE 2001.
- Vrokastro
DAVARAS 1973, 164 no. 8.

- Tourloti
PASCHALIDIS 2009, 15–17. – McGEORGE 2009.
- Myrsini
DAVARAS 1973, 162 no. 3.
- Mesa Mouliana
DAVARAS 1973, 163 no. 6.
- Krya?⁷⁴
KANTA, DAVARAS 2004, 150.
- Praisos-Photoula
DAVARAS 1973, 162 no. 2.
- Epano Zakros-Palaimylos
DAVARAS 1973, 158–159.

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