

# Late Helladic IIIC cremation burials at Chania of Mycenae<sup>1</sup>

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## Zusammenfassung

SPÄTHELLADISCH IIIC-BRANDBESTATTUNGEN IN CHANIA BEI MYKENE. Es werden die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabung eines Tumulus bei Chania, ungefähr 3 km südwestlich von Mykene, präsentiert. Der Tumulus enthielt ausschließlich Brandbestattungen, die in das spätere 12. Jh. v. Chr. datieren (SH IIIC Mitte/Fortgeschritten bis zum frühen SH IIIC Spät). Alle neun Brandbestattungen waren in Urnen, hauptsächlich Amphoren, deponiert. Die Urnen waren mit umgedrehten, kleinen offenen Gefäßen verschlossen. Der Tumulus bei Chania wird als ein multikulturelles Phänomen aufgefasst. Die Sitte der Brandbestattung war in der Argolis fremd und geht möglicherweise auf Anregungen aus Italien zurück. Die Verwendung ausschließlich mykenischer Keramik zeigt jedoch, dass die Nutzer des Tumulus in erster Linie eine mykenische kulturelle Identität hatten. Die kurze Nutzungsphase des Tumulus steht wahrschein-

lich mit den unbeständigen Lebensverhältnissen während des 12. Jhs. v. Chr. in Zusammenhang.

## Abstract

The results of the excavation of a burial mound at Chania, about 3 km southwest of Mycenae, are presented. The mound contained only cremation burials dating to the later 12th century BC (LH IIIC Middle Advanced to early LH IIIC Late). All nine cremations were deposited in urns, mostly amphorae. The urns were closed with small open vessels that were placed upside-down. The tumulus at Chania is interpreted as a multicultural phenomenon. The custom of cremation was foreign to the Argolid and has possibly an Italian derivation. However, the cultural identity of the burial group was basically Mycenaean, as is attested by the exclusive use of Mycenaean pottery. The short period of use of the tumulus is probably connected to the unsteady living conditions of the 12th century BC.

<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers for inviting me to the congress and their encouragement for this work. I also wish to thank the following for the fruitful discussion: my late Professor N. Coldstream, Prof. A. Vlahopoulos and Dr. Alcestis Papadimitriou, who also facilitated my final work. The drawings are owed to the skillful hands of our unforgettable Maria Nioti and V. Stavropoulou, who completed and inked a number of them and did her best to draw the octopus stirrup jar. The field photographs were taken by the author, the general view photographs from an eight meter high photographic tower offered by the late Professor Kilian and those of the finds by Y. Patrikianos. The bronze finds were cleaned by G. Kapsali and the pottery was mended and restored by A. Kousoulas, V. Kontos, K. Piteros and V. Galanis, permanent staff members of the Conservation Department of the Ephoreia. Furthermore this work could not have been completed without the generous help of my colleagues Dimitrios Kousoulas, Nikos Katsareos.

The site Chania is situated in a fertile plain about 3 km southwest of the acropolis of Mycenae. In contrast to the palace on the top of the acropolis, which is 246 m above sea level, it is only 73m above sea level. It was first identified as an archaeological site by Bernhard Steffen<sup>2</sup> who mentioned it Chani, as it was named by the villagers, because of the ruins of a Chani, i.e. a hostel that existed there. The Chani (i.e. a resting place for travellers with horses and other animals during the late Ottoman occupation) was mentioned by William Martin Leake<sup>3</sup> and other travellers. It was situ-

<sup>2</sup> STEFFEN 1884, 12.

<sup>3</sup> LEAKE 1830.

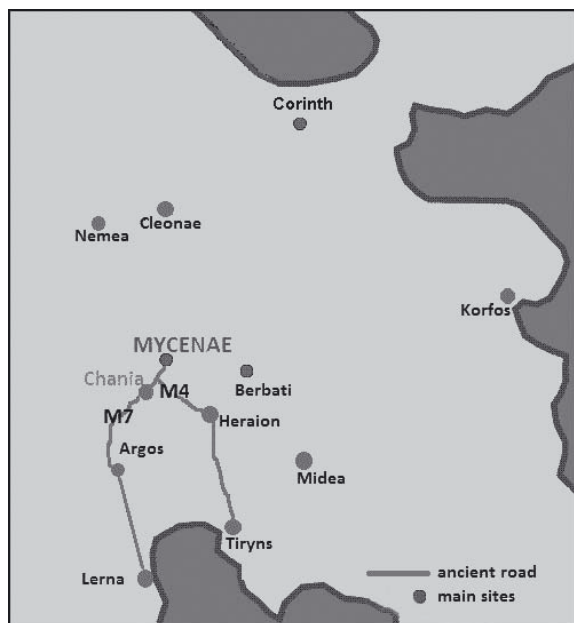


Fig. 1. Map of NW Peloponnese.

ated on the road from Argos to Corinth<sup>4</sup> and evidently on the course of the Mycenaean road from the acropolis of Mycenae to Argos (fig. 1). Nowadays the wider area is called Chania which is the plural form of Chani<sup>5</sup> – a common occurrence among Greek place names.

B. Steffen described and depicted walls at the site which are no longer preserved. The closest excavated archaeological site are Mycenaean chamber tombs of a LH III A–B date at a distance of approximately 1.2 km to the southeast,<sup>6</sup> at the nearby village of Monastiraki, formerly Priftiani<sup>7</sup>, and situated 92 m above sea level.

At a distance of 300 m to the west of Chania the river Dervenaki-Kephisos flows from the north to the south and,

4. The Mycenaean road towards Argos is marked by the number M7 by J. Lavery (LAVERY 1995) and in the Archaeological Atlas of Mycenae (IAKOVIDIS 2003, 31). B. Steffen's map (map 3) presents the "ancient road-alte Straße" that was then in use, passing "Chani" and going to Cleonae and Argos (STEFFEN 1884, 11–12).

5. There is a diachronic grammatical principle called "elliptical plural" (NAGY 2004, ch. 9) which is described in detail for the Homeric texts. It is witnessed at Mycenae, the place of a nymph called Mycene, in the sense of the wider area of her surroundings and of the population living there. If we were allowed to apply it in Modern Greek, Chania would include the properties around a Chani, which in turn is then transformed into a place name.

6. PHILADELPHUS 1919, 35–38. – CHARITONIDIS 1952, 19–29.

7. Charitonidis gave an historical account of the village from antiquity to his time in the above article.

a short distance to the east of Chania, the probable ancient junction of the ravines of Chavos-Gouvia and Vathyrema is to be found. In summary, the site is situated on a main road, in a plain between two sources of water, with a wide view of and to the acropolis of Mycenae. The excavation that further revealed the finds described took place in 1983–4 because the proprietor wanted to cultivate the field by deep ploughing. The survey of the site showed a concentration of sherds together with a great quantity of stones at a certain part of the site. The subsequent excavation, which was rather a clearing of surface earth down to 0,10–20 m, revealed the periphery (fig. 2) of a strong wall with a diameter of 20 m, full of various sized stones. The general appearance of the structure looked like a tumulus, although its surface layer was not more than 10 cm higher at its centre than on the periphery, and the height of the construction is circa 1 m from the floor (Fig. 4d).



Fig. 2. A view to Mycenae from Chania.

Gradually this periphery proved to belong to a circular wall, 1–1.20 m thick with a well-constructed outer face of large, rough, unworked blocks and orthostats of limestone and conglomerate stone (figs. 3a–b). The inner face is not as well-constructed and does not have any orthostats. However, its surface appears to be even. A filling of rubble, stones and earth was placed between the two faces. The entire tumulus-circle was filled with stones of various size and shape. Some of them were small river stones and others were large irregular blocks. There were only a few worked blocks that were probably taken from a destroyed building. The filling material varied from hard limestone to conglomerate and poros blocks. On the upper surface of this structure, with the appearance of a tumulus, a quantity of unbaked red clay was found in several places, indicating that it once covered the entire construction as a means to protect it from the pen-



Fig. 3a The tumulus – general view of the surface.

etration of rainwater. The tumulus was concealed by a thin surface layer, 10–20 cm deep. The upper layer of the remains was later disturbed by cultivation. In fact, the scarce sherds collected among the stones and the small amount of soil are in a very poor condition. The date of some of the sherds ranges from Byzantine, Hellenistic and Archaic to Late Geometric periods but most of them date to the LH IIIC period.

However, the chronology and the function of the construction of the monumental tumulus is proven by a number of human cremations buried in urns of various sizes and in various depths. Some of them are close to the modern surface in a depth of about 10 cm and they are partially destroyed by cultivation. Others are deposited between the rubble stones in pits at a depth of about 45 cm. These vessels were found partly destroyed because of their proximity to the rubble stones.

The primary burial of the tumulus (figs. 3c–d) and one of the ones found last at the excavation was put in a circular pit on the floor of the construction before stones were piled on top of it. The circular pit was covered with a rectangular poros block, beneath which the cremation urn was revealed, which in turn had been covered with an upside down bowl. The burial pit was the only one dug in the ground with the dimensions: depth 70 cm, diameter 37 cm; while all the oth-

ers were dug between the stones of the filling in a sufficient size to contain the cremation covered by an open shaped vessel, cup or bowl, but without clear evidence of the dimensions of the pit.

The very first burial was also deposited before the construction of the tumulus, since it is covered with the poros block which was laid before the application of a 10–12 cm thick layer of reddish clay on the floor of the entire circle.

The stones were heaped upon this layer and since they were mainly potato-shaped river stones their weight was supported by rough retaining walls. In the northwestern quarter, in particular, a well-constructed wall (radial from the centre to the periphery) functions as a solid retaining wall for the stone filling and relieves the wall of the periphery from the pressure of the weight (figs. 4a–c).

The excavations revealed that there were only few cremations in comparison to the size of the monument. They were deposited close to each other around the centre with the exception of the first cremation in the pit of the floor which was situated in the northeastern quarter near the enclosure. It seems that firstly the floor level was formed and then the circular enclosure was constructed without foundations leaving an opening at some points. The constructors carried the heavy filling through this opening, pebbles from the nearby rivers and a few worked blocks from nearby



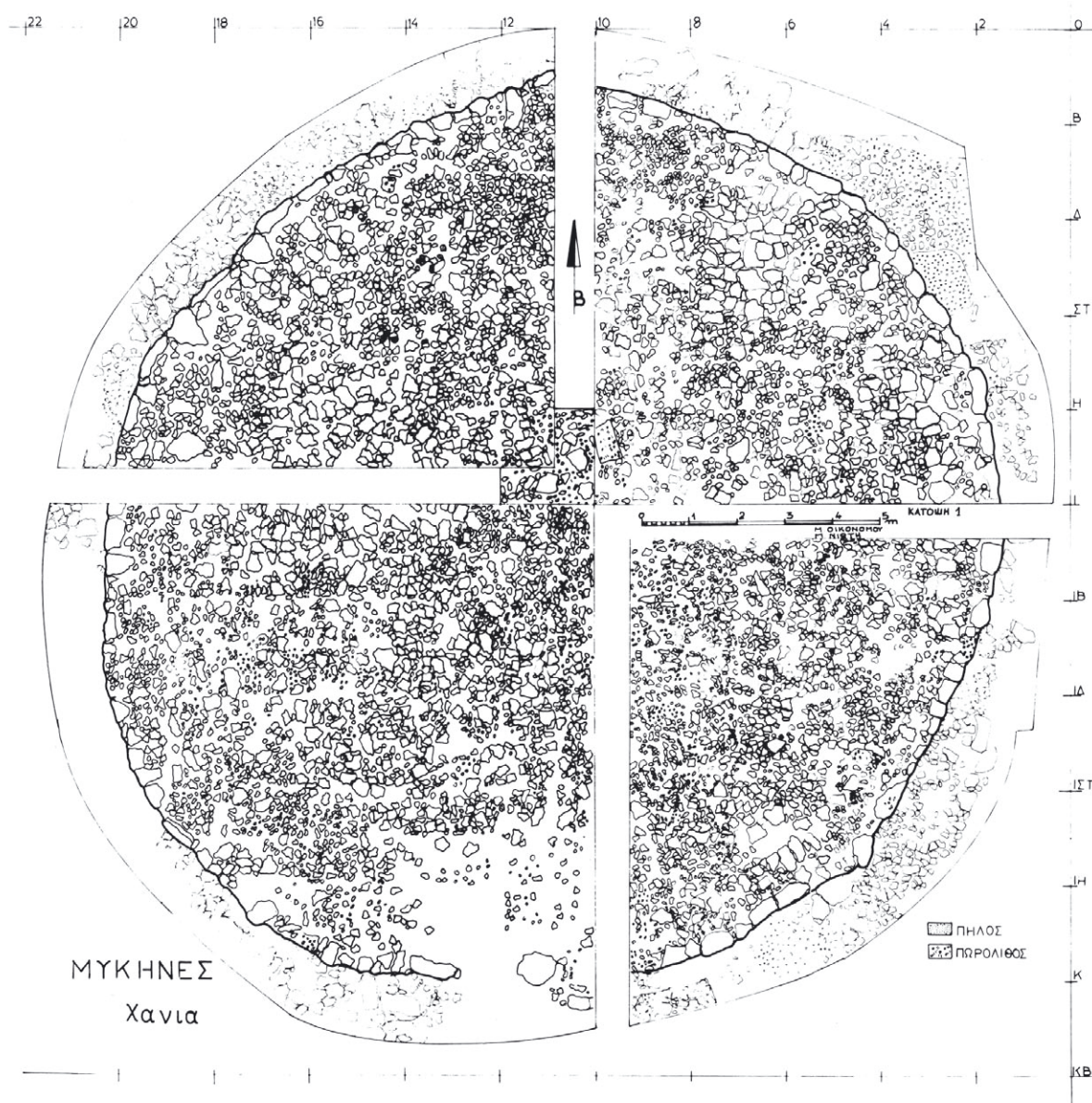


Fig. 3b. Plan of the tumulus surface.

buildings which had previously been destroyed. When the work had nearly been completed, the entrance was built up and the work was completed at the top of the mound. A possible entrance is still discernible on the south side and was probably used since it is close to of the cremations. The assumption that this was an entrance looks quite likely, although this point was disturbed in the Hellenistic period.

The great quantity of clay pieces on the upper level and fewer on the second level constitute a constructional characteristic of the tumulus. If they had been re-used mud bricks

from the nearby ruined buildings they would have formed part of the lower levels of the mound, as they were the first accessible material provided after the roof tiles. The way the clay was used indicates that it was to serve as protection for the contents of the tumulus from the rainwater and to achieve a nice and homogeneous appearance of the tumulus. The distribution of preserved clay pieces, although uncertain because they are on the surface, indicates that the whole area was covered and not merely a central core. The use of clay on funeral tumuli is a common constructional feature



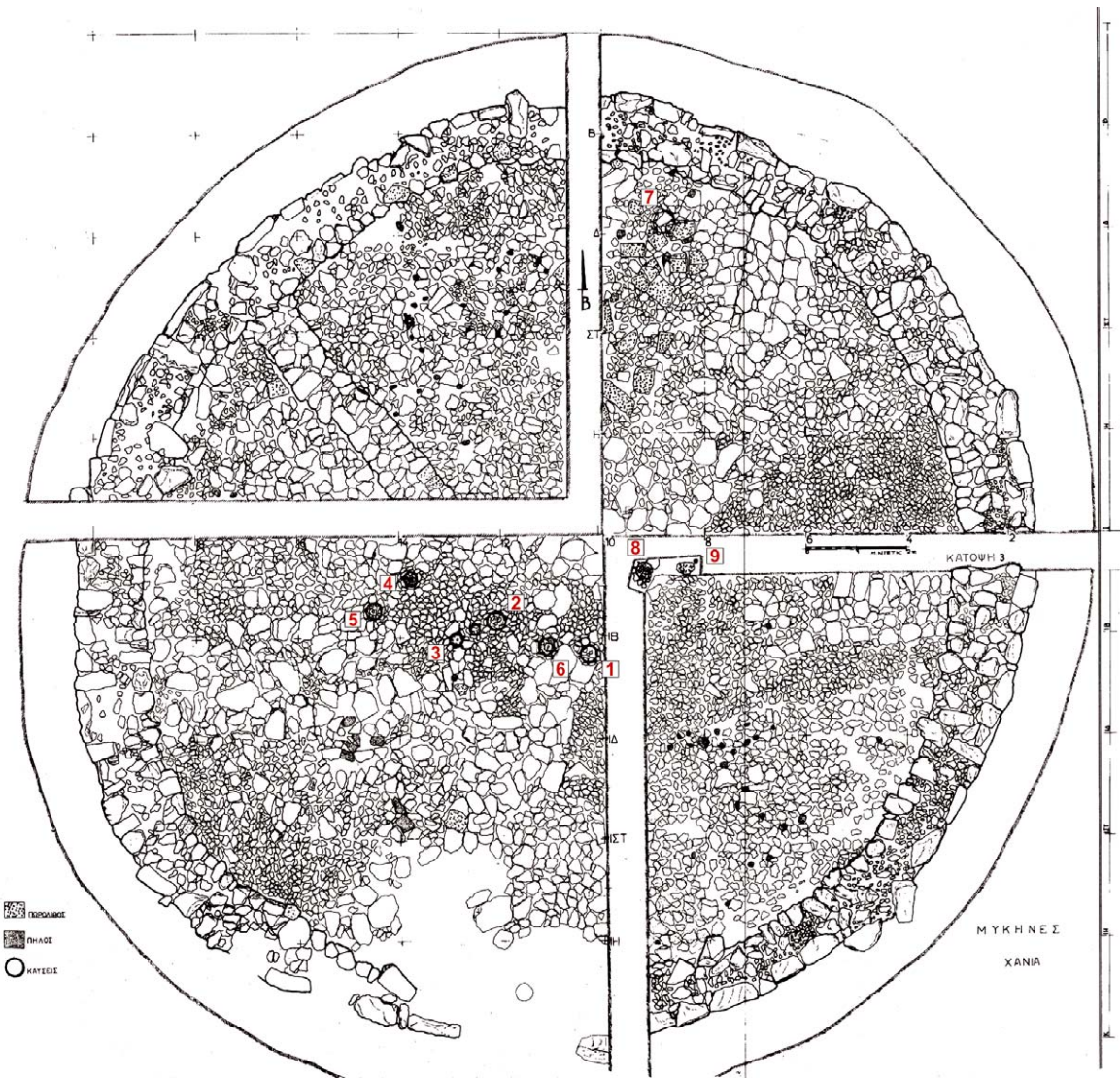


Fig. 3c. Distribution of cremation burials (ΠΙΩΡΟΛΙΘΟΣ = soros stones, ΠΗΛΟΣ = clay, ΚΑΥΣΕΙΣ = cremation burials).

in distant areas and ages, from Northeastern Italy and the Balkans to Greece, and from the late third to the early second millennium.<sup>8</sup>

Among the stones used for the surfaces there is a poros block and some stones are worked as if they had been designated to function as markers for the cremation burials. However, no marker was found in situ and, if they had existed, they would probably have been moved due to the effect of cultivation. The cremation ceremony took place outside of the circle, at a place unknown to us. The remains

of the buried cremations consisted of ash and some pieces of bones which were always placed in an urn. In most cases the urns were covered by bowls or cups which were placed upside down. It seems rather possible that all of the vases were covered in the same way, if we consider the sherds of angular bowls collected around them. In one case, cremation 6, a stone slab, that had covered the pit of the burial, was found.

8. BORGNA, CÀSSOLA GUIDA 2007, 198.

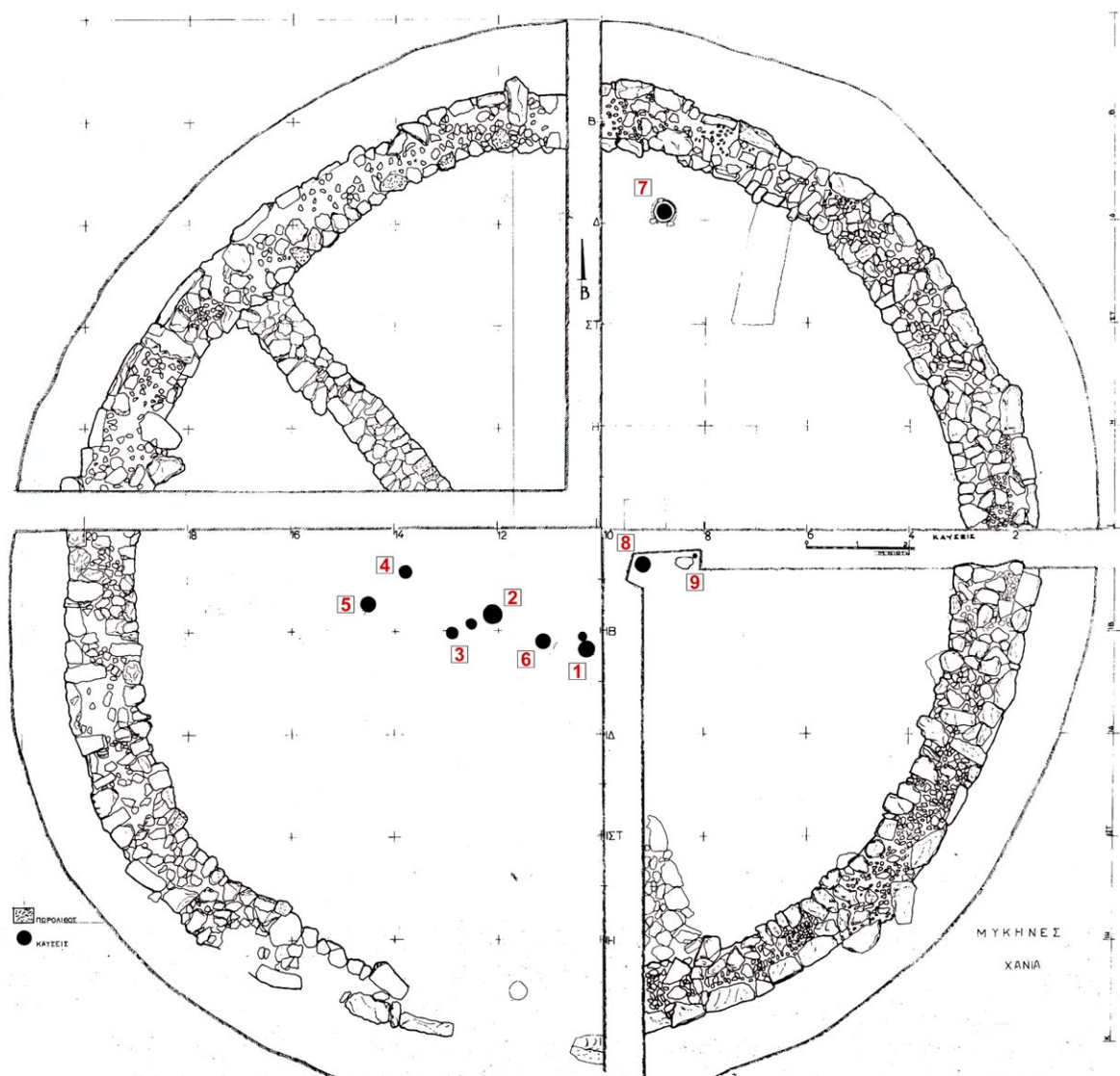


Fig. 3d. The end of the excavation.

#### Catalogue of the cremation burials according to when they were excavated

##### Cremation 1

The urn (figs. 5a–b)<sup>9</sup> is a biconical jug with a tall narrow neck, pronounced rim, raised flat base, a strap handle, slant-

ing inwards from the rim to the shoulder. The linear decoration consists of one band inside the rim, another one on it, a band at the base of the neck and three bands on the shoulder.

A crossed loop on the handle is divided by a horizontal band at the centre. It is comparable to the Argive examples from Argos,<sup>10</sup> Tiryns<sup>11</sup> and Asine<sup>12</sup> without additional mo-

9. The study of the anthropological remains was carried out by Professor Theodoros Pitsios who supplied the following results which have been incorporated into the text. Cremation 1: weight 320 gr., mainly long bones, thickness 0.003 m – 0.008 m, some pieces of a skull, thickness 0.004 m – 0.006 m, colour grey to whitish, medium deformation. Possible age: a young adult.

10. PITEROS 2001, 111, fig. 28.

11. PODZUWEIT 2007, 134, pl. 66/11.

12. MOUNTJOY 1999a, 162–163, no. 332, fig. 43. – THOMATOS 2006, 56–58, fig. 1, 165–168.



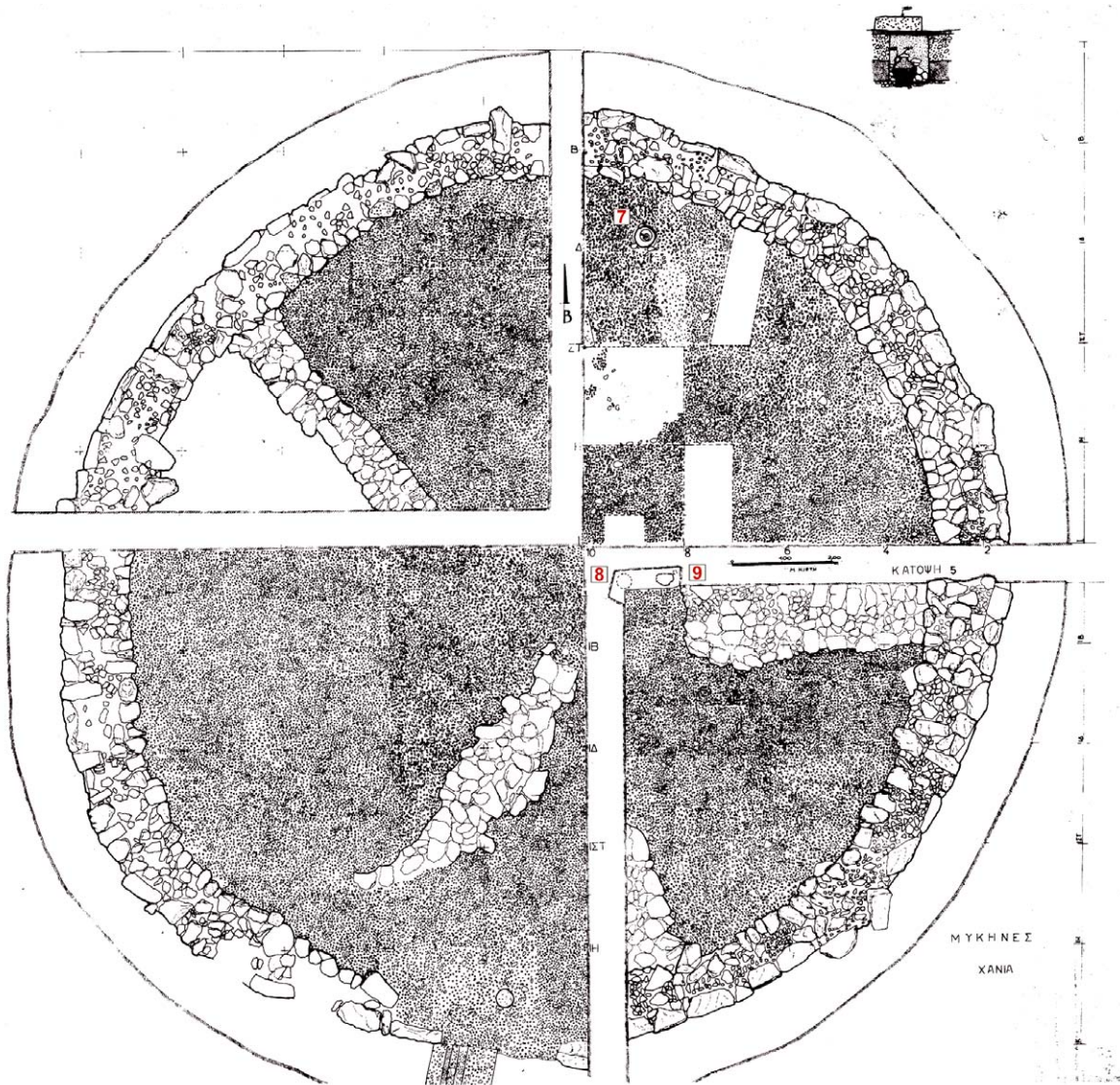


Fig. 4a. The enclosure wall – general view.



Fig. 4b. The enclosure wall – outside view.



Fig. 4c. The enclosure wall – inside view.

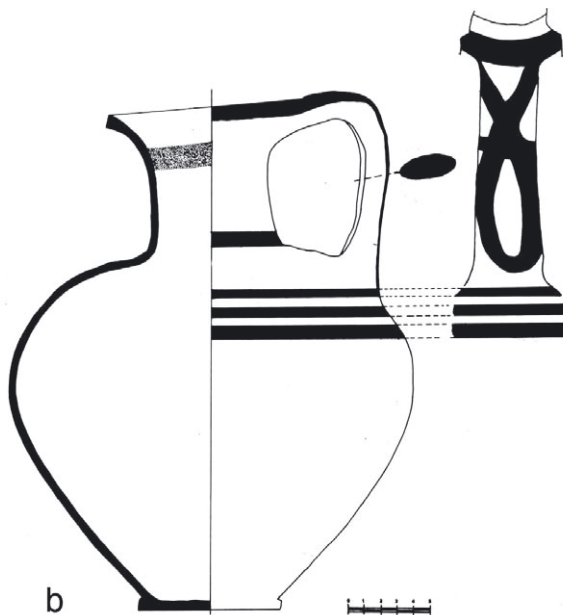


Fig. 5 a, b. Cremation 1, the urn, a jug.

tifs on most of them, but with the Argolic standard decoration of the triple banding.<sup>13</sup>

BE (entry book Mycenae Museum) 27326, FS 106; H. 0.306 m, D. of the rim 0.117 m; D. of the base 0.088 m; D. max. 0.237 m

A female head of a figurine (BE 27374) was collected between the cremated bones of Late Psi type B.<sup>14</sup>

#### Cremation 2

The urn<sup>15</sup> (figs. 6a–b, BE 27329) is an ovoid, wide-mouthed amphora, well-fabricated with a raised, slightly concave base, a spreading rim and vertical flat handles from the neck to the shoulders. It is decorated with two bands inside the lip, painted on the outside, with a lower reserved band, a thin parallel line from which, at both faces, a four-foiled tassel is hanging at the centre, a group of three lines around the belly and the oblique parallel bands on the handles. The colour of the clay is pinkish 5YR, 6/6, FS 69, FM 72, h. 0.417 m, d. of the base 0.112 m, d. of the mouth 0.194 m, d. of the belly 0.275 m. The vertical handles from the neck to the shoulder and the oblique parallel lines on the handles date the vase to LH IIIC Late.

13. THOMATOS 2006, 56.

14. FRENCH 1971, 135; preserved h. 0.024 m; d. of the polos 0.016–9 m.

15. Cremation 2: weight 65 gr., small whitish pieces.

The cover (figs. 6c–d, BE 27292) is a rounded basin with a flat rim and horizontal strap handles just below the rim. It is painted monochrome inside, on the outside there is a horizontal wavy band from one handle to the other. The transition between the unpainted upper part and the painted lower part of the body is marked by two horizontal lines.

BE 27292, FS 294, FM 53; H. 0.097 m; D. of the rim 0.18 m; D. of the base 0.053 m

As a shape it is closely comparable to the basin from the LH IIIC Middle<sup>16</sup> Athens Fountain house and to the fragmentary examples from Tiryns,<sup>17</sup> but the arrangement of the decoration, the high ring base, the motif of the thick wavy line and the connection to the amphora, date it to LH IIIC Late.

The basin is an uncommon shape derived from the earlier rounded cup.<sup>18</sup> These were developed closely to each other. Basins are not usually found in funerary but mainly in domestic contexts.<sup>19</sup>

16. MOUNTJOY 1999a, 602, no. 500, fig. 224. – THOMATOS 2006, 131, fig. 1447.

17. THOMATOS 2006, 131, fig. 1448. – PODZUWEIT 2007, 73–74, pl. 40/8; with monochrome interior 41/1–3.

18. FRENCH 2007, fig. 1.

19. MOUNTJOY 1999a, 1230.



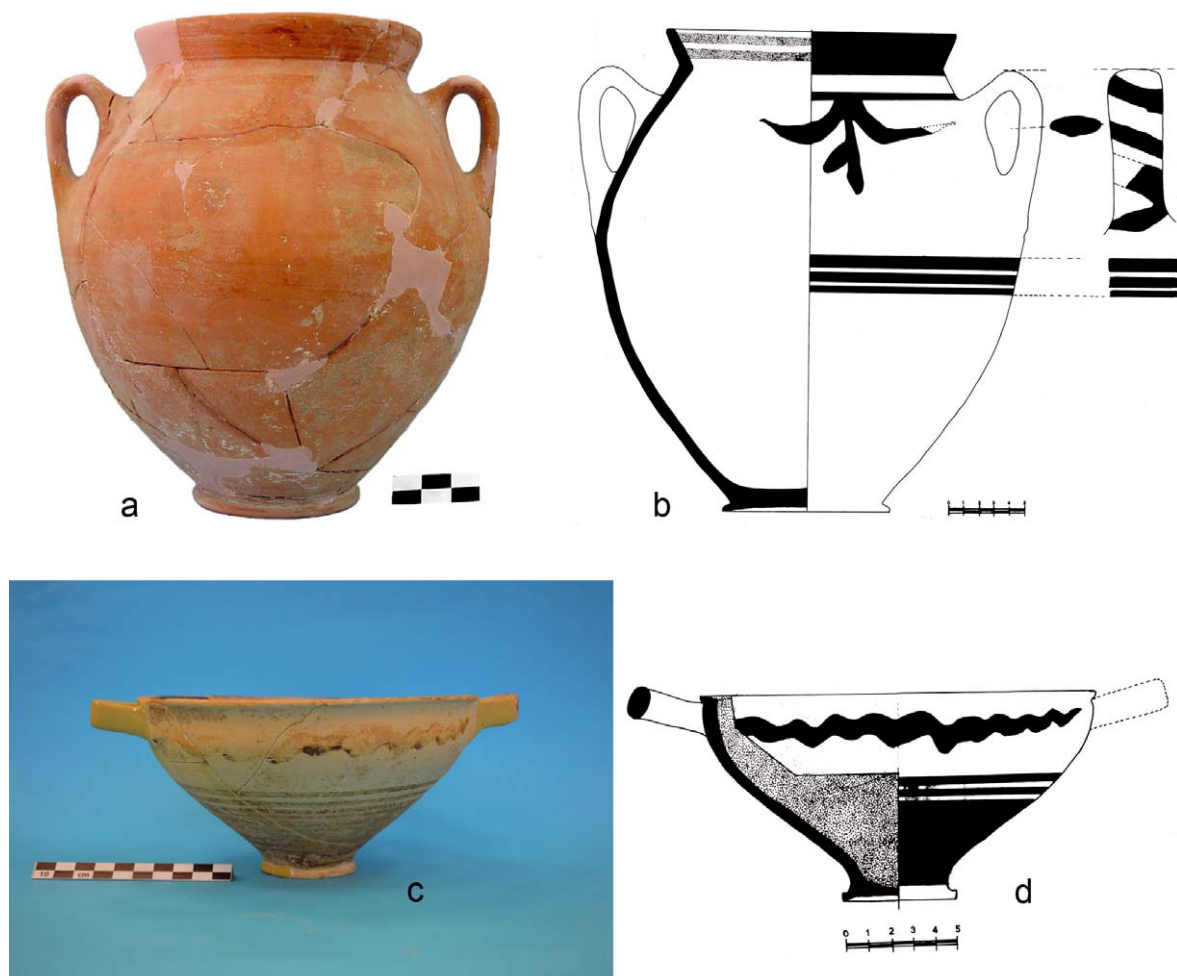


Fig. 6. Cremation 2; a, b. the urn, an amphora; c, d. a basin, which covered the urn.

### Cremation 3

Another ovoid, wide-mouthed amphora (figs. 7a–b)<sup>20</sup> is badly preserved and was fabricated in poor and gritty clay, and although it was wheel-made, it looks like it was hand-made. The amphora has a high everted rim, vertical handles from the rim to the shoulder and a raised flat base and it is decorated with a painted band inside the rim, another one outside at the lower part of the rim, followed by the relief line at the joint of the rim to the body, a broad band around the belly and one band which was a little narrower on the lower body. The clay is reddish-yellow.

BE 27327, 10YR 7/6 FS 66; H. 0.269 m; D. of the base 0.11 m; D. of the mouth 0.165 m; D. of the belly 0.24 m.

It was covered by a deep semi-globular cup with a ring base and a vertical strap handle (figs. 7c–d). On the inside it was decorated with two pairs of painted bands at the bottom and in the middle it had a painted lip and on the outside there was a band below the rim and a hook under the handle.

It was commonly found during LH IIIC, both in settlement and funerary use<sup>21</sup> and is comparable to many examples with linear decoration on the inside and outside from LH IIIC Middle. The hook under the handle is a common feature on the mainland throughout the LH IIIC period.<sup>22</sup>

The amphora–urn, that is similar to the urn of Cremation 2, although of a LH IIIC Middle date, represents a common ovoid shape, that was known in earlier periods as

20. Cremation 3: weight 206 gr., mainly from long bones, some pieces from a skull, a whitish colour, medium deformation.

21. THOMATOS 2006, 113, Chart 1, 2.

22. MOUNTJOY 2007, 224.

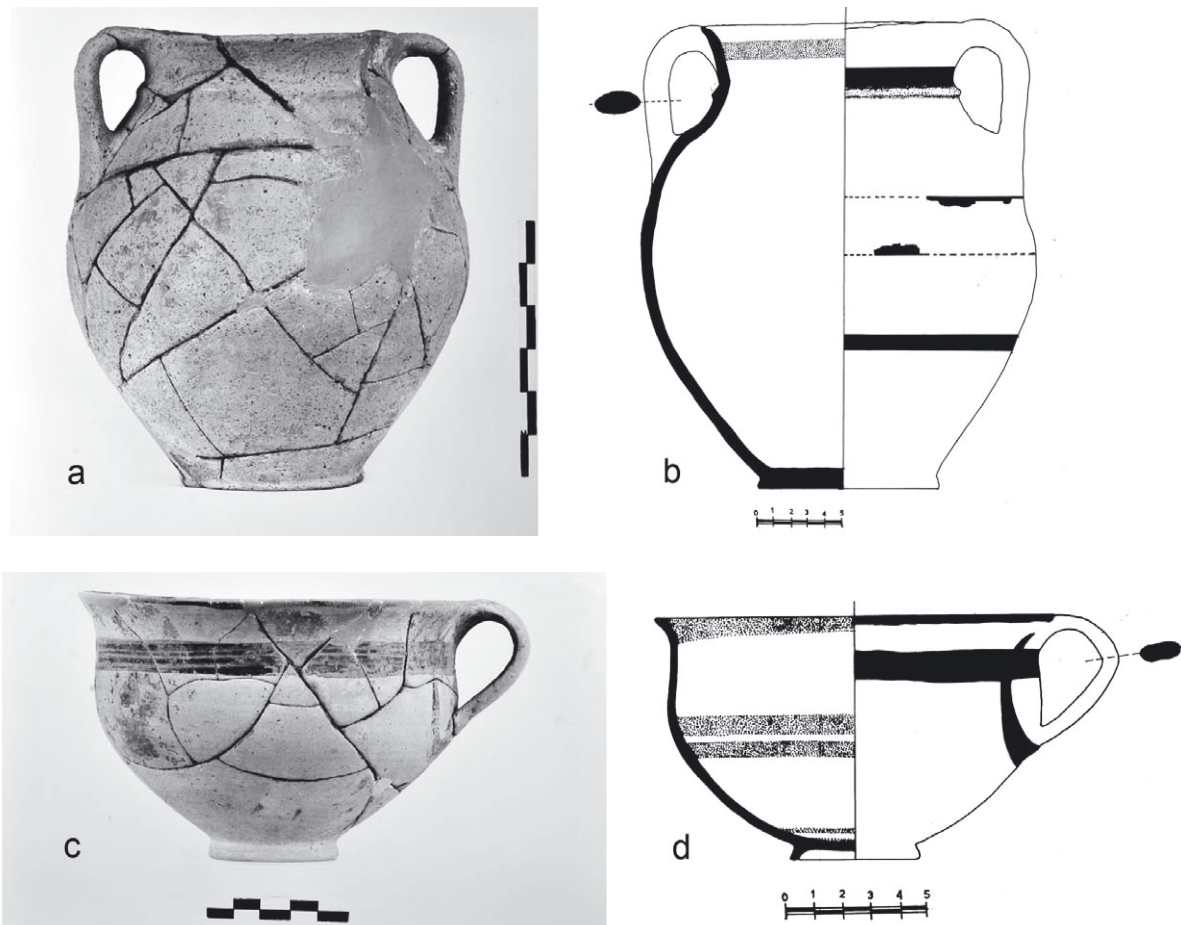


Fig. 7. Cremation 3; a, b. the urn, an amphora; c, d. the cup which covered the urn.

storage or cooking vessel of Helladic origin.<sup>23</sup> The shape can be compared to an example from Tiryns,<sup>24</sup> an earlier vessel from Kommos<sup>25</sup> and a later one from Enkomi on Cyprus.<sup>26</sup> It resembles more the wide-mouthed jars of handmade burnished pottery with foreign northern characteristics. This is despite the tendency of the time to imitate and adapt this northern pottery to the Mycenaean style and quality. It might have been made by foreigners influenced by Mycenaean pottery or by Mycenaeans, who had integrated foreign elements after a long period of co-existence.<sup>27</sup>

#### Cremation 4

The fourth cremation burial (fig. 8e) was deposited in an amphoriskos<sup>28</sup> with a globular body, concave neck and raised ring base and horizontal round handles pointing upwards from the shoulders (figs. 8a–b). The entire neck is painted with a reserved line under the rim and another one at the joint to the shoulder; a broader painted band runs around the belly.

It is close to the monochrome type that is common in the Argolid,<sup>29</sup> Attica<sup>30</sup> and Naxos and Rhodes.<sup>31</sup>

23. FURUMARK 1941, 38, FS 66.

24. STOCKHAMMER forthcoming, pl. 47/1186.

25. LM IIIB. – WATROUS 1992, pl. 32/1345.

26. MOUNTJOY 2005, 189 and fig. 31.

27. RUTTER 1977, 5.

28. Cremation 4: weight 179 gr., pieces of long bones and seven to eight pieces of a skull, whitish colour, partly cracked. Outside the urn, 19 gr., 20–30 thin bone fragments were collected. They possibly belong to a baby, length of the arm bone: 0.0065 m, cracked.

29. Tiryns: PODZUWEIT 2007, 142, pl. 72/3. – Asine: MOUNTJOY 1999a, 160–161, no. 328, fig. 42. – FRÖDIN, PERSSON 1938, 415 and fig. 270/3.

30. Perati: IAKOVIDIS 1970, 885, pl. 565.

31. THOMATOS 2006, fig. 46–52.



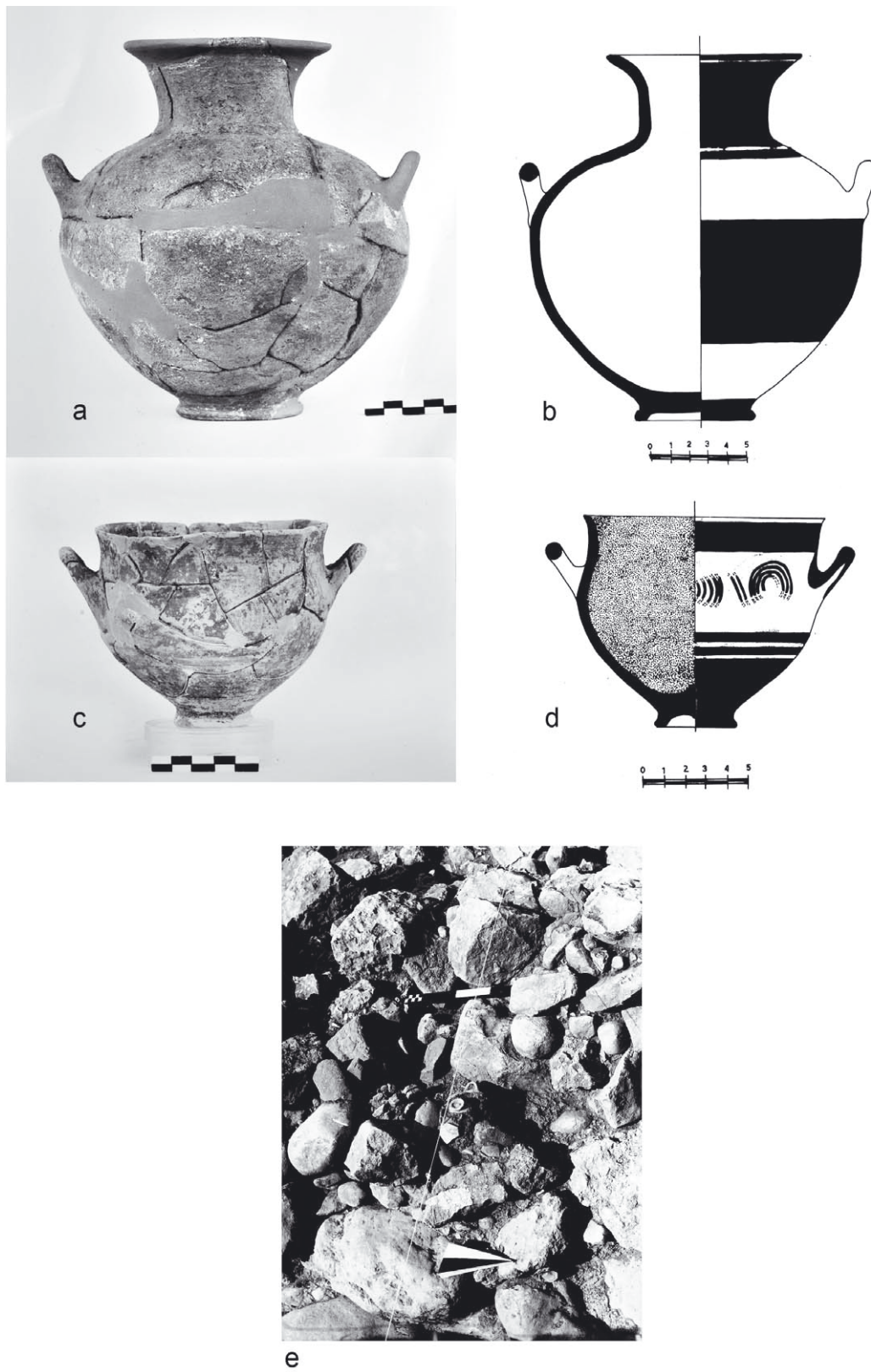


Fig. 8. Cremation 4; a, b. the urn, an amphoriskos; c, d. deep bowl, which covered the urn; e. situation.

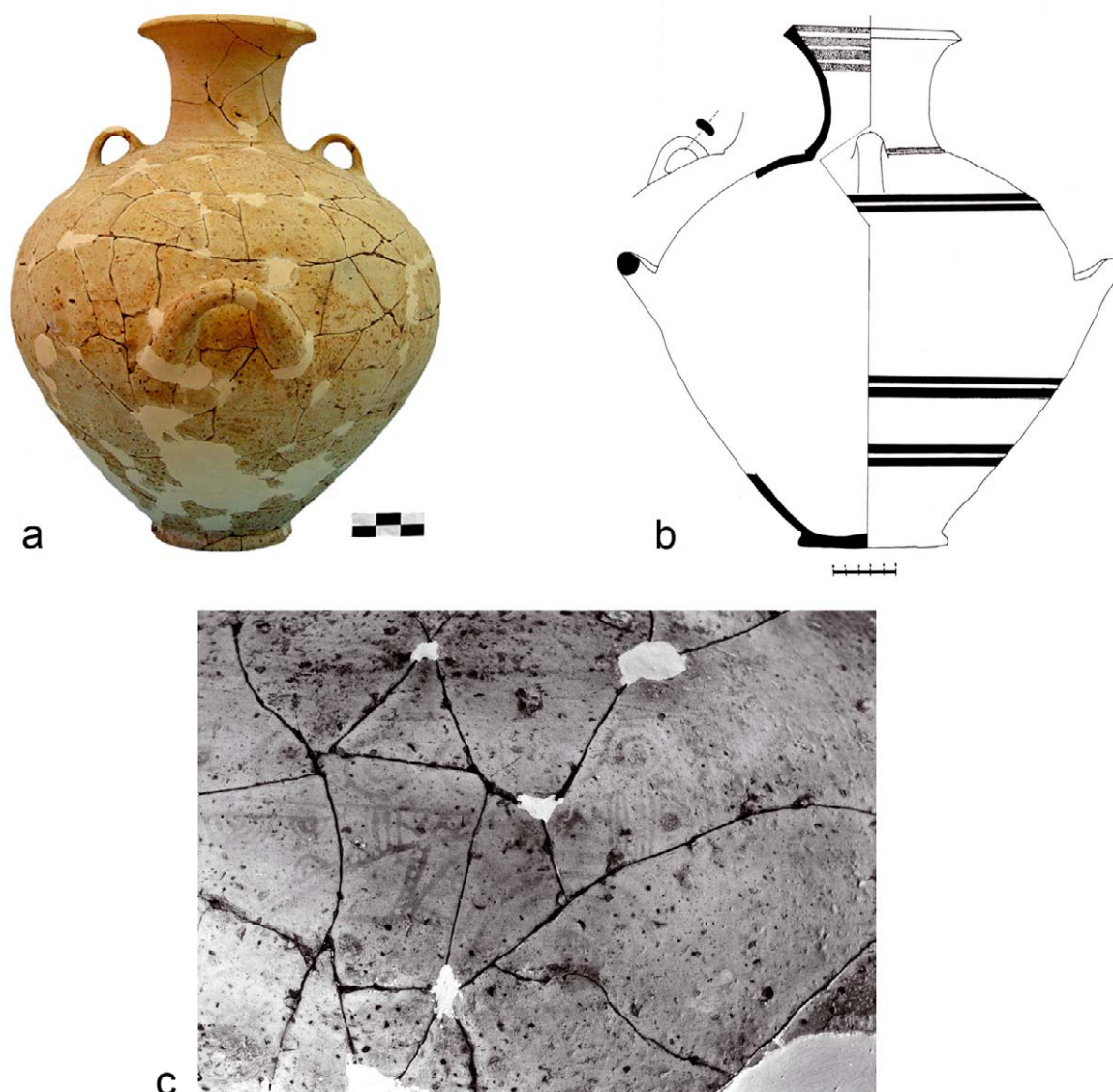


Fig. 9. Cremation 5; a, b. the urn, a four-handled amphora; c. a detail of the amphora.

BE 27291, 5YR 6/6; H. 0.19, FS 59, FM 559; D. of the base 0.063 m; D. of the mouth 0.10 m; D. of the belly 0.166 m

It is covered by a semi-globular deep bowl with a badly preserved decoration of running spirals in a reserved band between the horizontal round handles with a monochrome stippled interior (figs. 8c–d). If there had originally been an open centre of the spirals, then it would have been characteristic of the advanced phase of LH IIIC Middle.<sup>32</sup>

BE 27294, FS 285, FM 46, 10 YR 8/4; H. 0.092 m; D. of the base 0.038 m; D. of the mouth 0.15 m

<sup>32</sup> MOUNTJOY 1999a, 172.

A head of a human figurine (BE 27373) wearing a polos, similar to the figurine from Cremation 1 was found near the cremation urn.

#### Cremation 5

The urn (figs. 9a–c)<sup>33</sup> is a four-handled amphora with two horizontal round handles on the belly and two vertical strap handles on the shoulder opposite to each other. The body is biconical with a narrow, flat, discoid base. The badly

<sup>33</sup> Cremation 5: weight 29 gr., one fragment of a skull and 15 fragments of long bones.





Fig. 10. Cremation 6; a, b. the urn, a hydria; c, d. deep bowl, which covered the urn.

preserved decoration consists of two pairs of bands on the lower body, a pair on the shoulder, a band at the joint between the tall concave neck and the body and four bands inside the splaying neck. Traces of elaborate decoration with antithetic spiral patterns in the so-called Pleonastic style<sup>34</sup> are discernible on the belly.

The shape is rare in the northeast Peloponnese, where as it is common at Achaia and Elis.<sup>35</sup> It is always nicely or even elaborately decorated, but the best and most unique example is the four-handled amphora from the Granary at Mycenae, with an Octopus Style decoration on the belly and a Close Style decoration on the shoulder, with birds and rosettes. This kind of decoration is exceptional for such a large vase, as these decoration systems are only suitable for miniature vases, bowls or stirrup jars.<sup>36,37</sup>

BE 27332, 10YR, 7/3, FS 58; R. 0.41 m; D. of the belly 0.365 m; D. of the base 0.117 m; D. of the mouth 0.13 m

On belly-handled amphorae (FS 58) the handles on the shoulder are sometimes replaced by nipples. Both these types of amphora are quite similar and, seen geographically, similarly distributed. It is seldom found in the Argolid and Corinthia but is more frequently found in the west Peloponnese.

The same provenance is indicated by the choice of elaborate motifs on both urns. It is similar to the decoration from the west Peloponnese. However, the base of the Chania vase is smaller and regular.<sup>38</sup>

The reason as to why no cover was found is possibly that it had been broken during the use of the land. Fragments of stirrup jars with Close Style decoration and pieces of an

angular bowl found close to this cremation possibly served as offerings and a cover.

#### Cremation 6

The sixth cremation<sup>39</sup> was buried in the middle of the filling in a pit (d. 0.32 m) covered by a flat stone. It is a large hydria with a globular body, an oval shaped vertical handle and two horizontal round handles on the belly (figs. 10a–b). The vase was badly preserved both in shape and decoration. It was decorated with antithetic loops on the belly, a scroll on the front shoulder, a vertical scroll on the handle and three bands on the lower body. As a shape of this size it is derived from the undecorated domestic equipment of the LH IIIB period originating from the mainland tradition. The smaller, richly decorated version is a ritual vase originating in the Argolid. Since LH IIIA2 it is usually found in tombs, is frequently pierced at the base, so that it could have served as a rhyton for libations. A small hydria found in a chamber tomb at Mycenae<sup>40</sup> is decorated in Close Style, evidently of a LH IIIC Middle date, as is the date of the cremation urn. The ritual character associated with water is also attested by the funerary use of the shape here at Chania and also at Argos.<sup>41</sup> Its decoration can also be compared to specimens from Tiryns.<sup>42</sup> The restored shape is globular and the vertical handle is oval. Thus it differs to the usual shape in the Argolid which was more ovoid and it is similar to the Attic profile.<sup>43</sup>

BE 27331, FS 128, FM 48 (scroll), FM 50 (antithetic loops); H. 0.345 m; D. of the mouth 0.09 m; D. of the belly 0.305 m; D. of the base 0.122 m

It was covered by a semi-globular deep bowl (figs. 10c–d), another version of the well-known complete bowl from Korakou with antithetic birds around a central triglyph and triangular patches in Close Style decoration. Fragments of similar deep bowls were found at the acropolis of Mycenae,<sup>44</sup> at Korakou and Perachora.<sup>45</sup> All of these are considered to be Argive products, attributed to a Mycenaean workshop, active with a group of painters in LH IIIC Middle, painting on miniature vessels of high quality.<sup>46</sup> Another equally elaborate bowl comes from the Granary at Mycenae, where the birds are depicted in a frieze with fine and excellent rendering.

34. The term, first used by F. Schachermeyr, was brought back by P. Mountjoy (MOUNTJOY 1999a, 513) especially for Crete and further for all the local workshops, in order to differentiate this style of decoration from the similar miniature Close Style. A collar neck amphora, a cremation urn from Argos, displays elaborate decoration of the Pleonastic style with a mixture of linear motifs. It appears as if it had been realized that the large size of the vase did not suit the imitation of the miniature form of the Close Style (PITEROS 2001, 113, fig. 36).

35. MOUNTJOY 1999a, 159, 424–425, 430.

36. Firstly J. Benson attributed seven vases from Mycenae and Korakou to the “rosette painter” (BENSON 1961, 337–347), including the Granary four-handled amphora. Güntner considers that the “rosette painter” belongs to a larger workshop that produced a great number of vases (GÜNTNER 2000, 120, pl. 56.4a–b). A. Vlahopoulos agrees and attributes more vases to the production of this workshop from the excavations at Tiryns and an Octopus Style stirrup jar from the J. P. Getty Museum. He also presents all the opinions and bibliography regarding the “rosette painter” (VLAHOPOULOS 2006a, 179–192).  
37. FRENCH 2004, fig. 5. – VERMEULE, KARAGEORGHIS 1982, pl. xi.19.  
38. THOMATOS 2006, 21–22. – MOUNTJOY 1999a, 425–426, nos. 85–86, fig. 149.

39. Cremation 6: very few unidentified fragments of bones.

40. VERDELIS 1962, 77–78 and pl. 84a; 85a; Alepotrypa tomb Γ.

41. PITEROS 2001, 112, fig. 32, 34.

42. PODZUWEIT 2007, 148–151, pl. 77.

43. MOUNTJOY 1999a, 119, 136, 163. – THOMATOS 2006, 14–6.

44. SAKELLARAKIS 1992, 89–93, nos. 185–194.

45. MOUNTJOY 1999a, 238–239, nos. 211–214, fig. 79.

46. BENSON 1961, 337 pl. 101/9. – VERMEULE, KARAGEORGHIS 1982, 166–167.



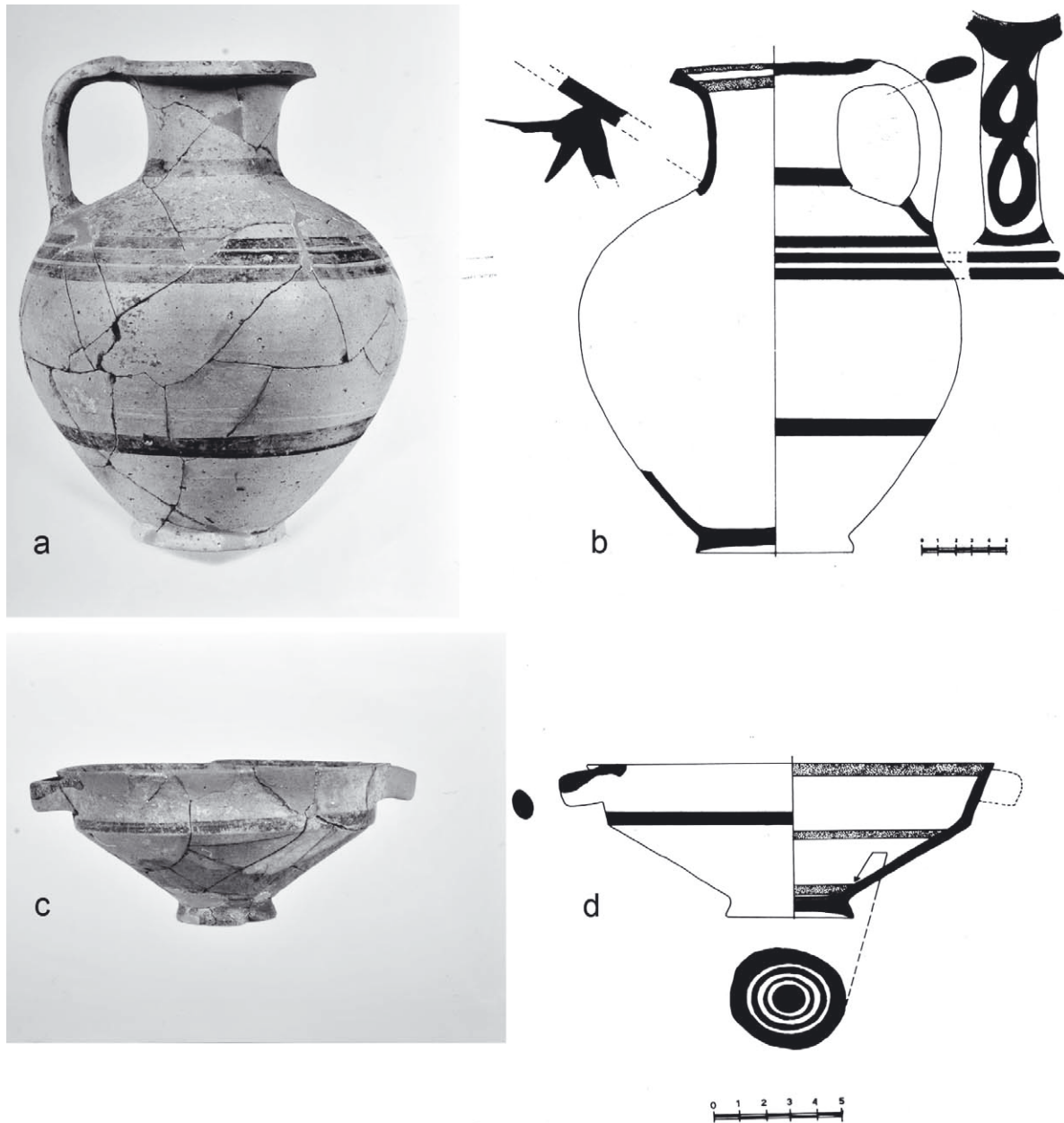


Fig. 11. Cremation 7; a, b. the urn, a jug; c, d. the shallow angular bowl, which covered the urn;

The Chania deep bowl represents a slightly later edition of the Mycenaean workshop since the Korakou and the Granary bowls are more finely drawn with a thinner brush. The birds are completely hatched on the granary piece and on the Korakou bowl they have a silhouette neck. On the Chania bowl the birds are mainly drawn in hatched outline and only partially as silhouettes. They have no common details and their calligraphic figures cover the panel without leaving much space for the hanging triangles. Nevertheless,

another pictorial vase of fine quality is added to the highly decorated pottery of LH IIIC Middle and a representative example of a Close Style workshop from Mycenae. The interior is monochrome with three reserved lines below the rim like the bowl from the granary. This decoration is in contrast to the single reserved line on the Korakou other deep bowls. A reserved band is also on the exterior under the rim and on the monochrome lower body there are three reserved bands.

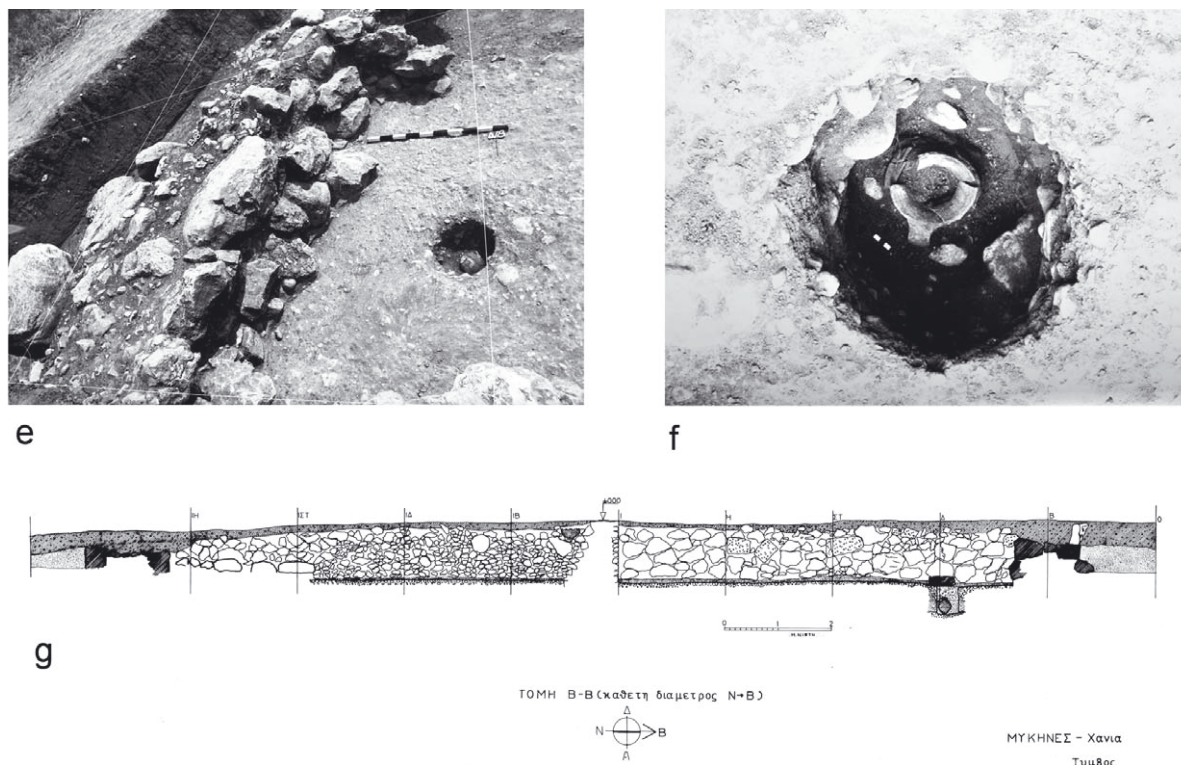


Fig. 11. Cremation 7; e. primary burial under the floor; f. the urn without shallow angular bowl; g. North-south-profile of the tumulus with cremation 7.

BE 27290, 5Y, 7/2, FS 285, FM 7, FM75, FM42; H. 0.096 m; D. of the mouth 0.11 m; D. of the base 0.04 m

A head of an anthropomorphic figurine (BE 27372) with pellet eyes and a polos, quite similar to the one from cremation 1, was collected next to the bowl which had been placed upside down. It is a part of a late Psi type B figurine.<sup>47</sup>

#### Cremation 7 (figs. 11e–g)

Cremation 7 was the primary burial on the floor of the tumulus described above. The urn,<sup>48</sup> in the shape of a bi-conical jug (figs. 11a–b), had a hollow rim and a flat handle from the rim to the shoulder. The body is slanting inwards to the raised base. The jug was decorated with a single band around the rim and another a bit deeper on the inside, a band at the joint between the neck and the shoulder and a group of three lines framing the shoulder zone, with a tassel hanging opposite the handle. The handle is decorated with

a band around the base and a figure of eight shaped loop. This decoration can be compared to a vase from Tiryns,<sup>49</sup> vessels from the tombs at Asine<sup>50</sup> and a cremation urn from Argos.<sup>51</sup>

BE 27325, 10YR 7/3, FS 106, FM 48; H. 0.29 m; D. of the rim 0.117 m; D. of the base 0.092 m; D. max. 0.229 m

It was covered by a shallow angular bowl with horizontal flat handles (figs. 11c–d). The linear decoration consists of one band at the carination, one at the inside on the rim, another one at the carination and a faded spiral or concentric circles on the bottom. The type of vase (FS 295) is at home in the Argolid in the LH IIIC Advanced phase, Mycenae,<sup>52</sup> Tiryns and also functions as a cover of an urn at Argos.<sup>53</sup>

BE 27295, 7.5R, 5/6, FS 295; H. 0.071 m; D. of the base 0.047 m; D. of the rim 0.158 m

47. FRENCH 1971, 135–136.

48. Cremation 7: total weight of the double cremation 465 gr., fragments of long bones and skulls, medium deformation.

49. PODZUWEIT 2007, 134, pl. 66/11; pl. 67/1–6.

50. MOUNTJOY 1999a, 162–163, nos. 332–333, fig. 43.

51. PITEROS 2001, 111, fig. 28.

52. FRENCH 2004, 178, fig. 181; fig. 185/6.

53. PITEROS 2001, 111, fig. 29.



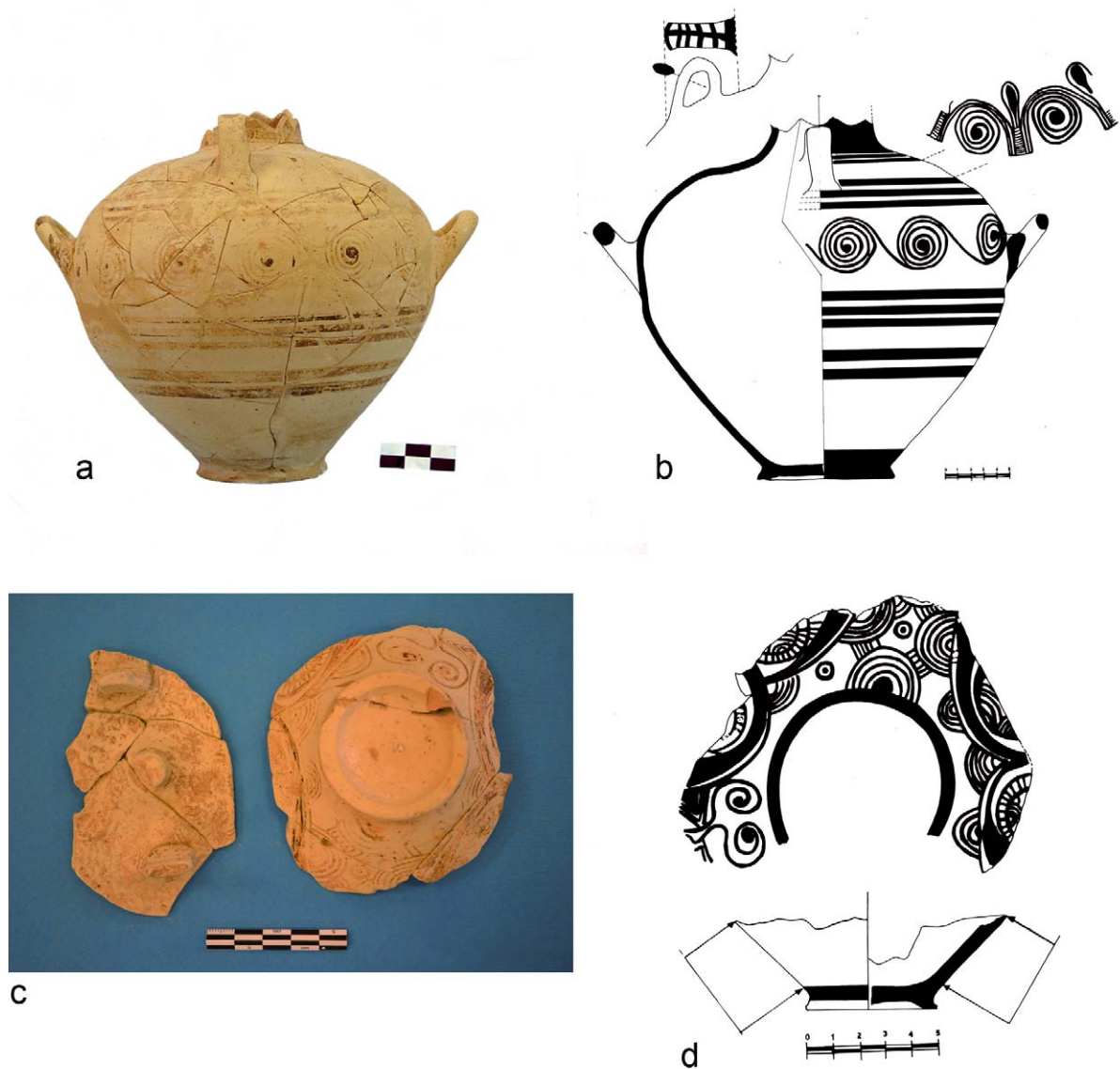


Fig. 12. Cremation 8; a, b. the urn, a four-handled amphora; c, d. Octopus Style stirrup jar.

The group is dated to LH IIIC Middle Advanced which is an important fact since as it belongs to the primary burial it dates the construction of the tumulus. The other interesting point is that the anthropological study of the remains of the bones has identified two cremated skeletons, one of a strongly built male adult and another one of a child of about 1 to 4 years. The simultaneous burial of two deceased persons is not uncommon but it cannot always be easily identi-

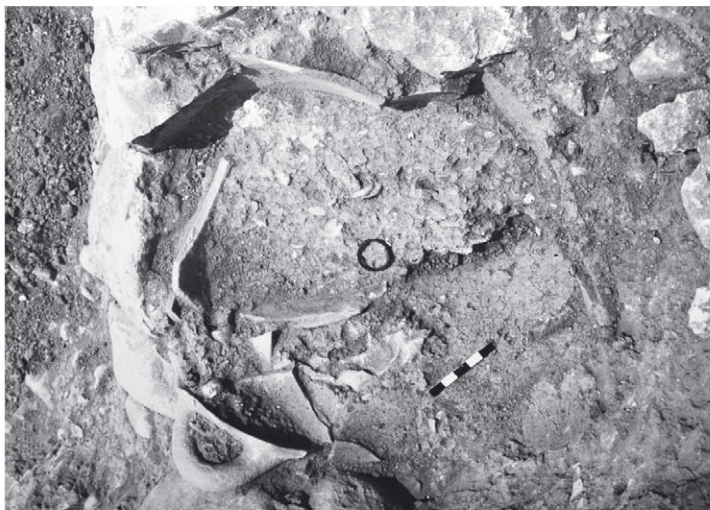
fied unless both skeletons are undisturbed. In this case it is certain that an adult and a child were buried together, even if their death happened at slightly different times. The child enjoyed the protection of the adult, be it male or female, in the afterlife, as is supposed for multiple inhumations in MH cist graves.<sup>54</sup>

After the burial the circular pit was covered by a poros block. Sometime later the construction of the tumulus took place in a procedure described above.

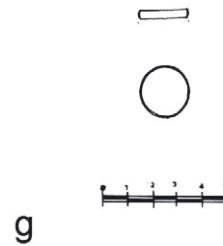
<sup>54</sup> NORDQUIST 1990, 39, n. 21.



e



f



g

Fig. 12. Cremation 8; e. situation; f. the urn with the bronze ring; g. the bronze ring.

#### Cremation 8

This cremation (figs. 12e–f)<sup>55</sup> was buried in a four-handled amphora in the surface layer with a depth of only 10 cm. The rim of the vase was broken and only the lower part of the neck is preserved. No cover was found, but sherds of an unpainted angular bowl. This bowl was probably used as

<sup>55</sup> Cremation 8: weight 152 gr., fragments of long bones and two to three fragments from a skull or a pelvis.

lid of the amphora. Furthermore, a fragment of a stirrup jar, decorated in the Octopus Style, was found.

The four-handled amphora (figs. 12a–b), similar in shape to the urn of Cremation 5, is decorated with painted bands in groups of three and two and a zone of running spirals on the belly between the horizontal round handles and stemmed spirals on the shoulder between the vertical strap handles. These are decorated by parallel horizontal lines crossed by a central bar. The preserved lower part of



the neck is monochrome, indicating the same for the entire neck.

The belly-handled amphora, a simpler version of the four-handled amphora (identical in shape), is a vase used consistently as a cremation urn from LH IIIC Middle onwards to the Submycenaean (Kerameikos) and the Geometric period. The shape is popular in the northwest Peloponnese and Perati where it is used as a cremation urn inside chamber tombs. It preserves a MH derivation of storage vessels encountered at Grave Circle B.<sup>56</sup> Belly-handled amphorae were used during the Protogeometric and Geometric periods in Attica. The amphorae were refined then in decoration and shape, sometimes with double horizontal handles, and were used as cremation urns for female burials.<sup>57</sup>

BE 27330, 10YR, 7/4, FS 58, FM 46, FM 51, H. 0.298 m; D. of the base 0.104 m; D. of the rim 0.077 m; D. of the belly 0.27 m

Some sherds of an Octopus Style stirrup jar were collected (figs. 12c–d). It evidently served as an offering or a ritual vessel of the burial. The sherds were mixed with the fragments of the neck of the urn. The painted decoration is mostly faded but four outlined tentacles can be discerned, the empty space being filled with groups of parallel lines, linear concentric semicircles and circles with a central dot. The tentacles form linear spirals at their end and they cover the preserved lower part of the vase down to the base without any further painted band. The whole appearance with motifs used for Close Style decoration and the complete covering of the lower part of the body indicate a local origin as is the case with the Asine amphoriskos<sup>58</sup> and the Tiryns stirrup jar.<sup>59</sup>

BE 29912, 10YR, 8/3, FS 175, FM 21 (octopus) 43 semicircles (44 arcs)

The Octopus Style stirrup jar is seldom found in the Argolid in LH IIIC Middle although such vases are found in great numbers at Perati<sup>60</sup> and Naxos. Its derivation is Cretan but during this period it was locally made at different places.<sup>61</sup> From Mycenae only two Octopus Style vases have been found: a four-handled amphora from the Granary (see above) with exceptional Close Style decoration and a deep conical kylix from Schliemann's excavation.<sup>62</sup> Both present

an uncommon combination of shape and decoration. The fragmentary Octopus Style stirrup jar from Chania is the first usual vessel type for this decoration found at Mycenae and manufactured at the active pottery workshops there.<sup>63</sup>

A flat bronze ring of a hammered band found inside the vase is the only metal item from a burial at the cemetery and the only jewel that differentiates the social status of the deceased (figs. 12f–g; 14a).

BE 27385; Weight 1 gr; D. 0.0215 m; Thickness 0.001 m

A conical conulus of grey steatite was found in the context of this cremation.

BE 27365; H. 0.018 m; D. 0.02 m

The function of the small items inside the cremation, the bronze ring and the conulus is questionable because the study of the skeletal remains has possibly identified a child (of 1 to 3 years of age). These finds do not fit to the age of the deceased, particularly the ring has a large diameter and the conulus could certainly not have been used as a spindle-whorl but possibly as a button. Both items were offerings to the dead by the relatives, irrespective of the age at death and their original functions. They seem to represent the alive rather than the deceased.

#### Cremation 9

Close to Cremation 8 some fragments and a base of a vase, remains of another cremation urn, which is not completely preserved due to the depth that it was in (10cm), were found. A small quantity of bones collected there indicates the use of the vase.

BE 27311, 7.5R, 7/6; D. of the base 0.075 m

Another partially preserved vase, without ash and bones, might also be a cremation urn. Both fragmentary vases come from belly or four-handled amphorae. The latter is decorated with three horizontal parallel bands below the horizontal round handles.

BE 27322, 5YR, 7/6 to 10YR, 8/3; H. (preserved) 0.122 m; D. of the base 0.07 m; D. max. 0.198 m

#### Finds without grave context

Close to and inside the burials the pieces of offerings that were collected indicate an association to the funeral

56. MYLONAS 1973, pls. 95, 103, 116.

57. COLDSTREAM 1977, 55.

58. MOUNTJOY 1999a, 160–161, no. 324, fig. 42.

59. GÜNTNER 2000, 120, pl. 56.4a–b; VLAHOPOULOS 2000, 179–192.

60. IAKOVIDIS 1970, vol. 2, 181–188.

61. VLAHOPOULOS 2006, 150–209.

62. DEMAPOPOULOU 1990, n. 295.

63. CROUWEL 2007, 74. – A. Vlahopoulos proposed that the workshop of the “rosette painter”, who created the twin, almost identical, octopus stirrup jars, one from Tiryns and the other of unknown provenance from the J. P. Getty Museum, was located at Tiryns and not at Mycenae (VLAHOPOULOS 2006a), as was considered by Benson (BENSON 1961). It might be accepted, if we take the prosperity of Tiryns in LH IIIC Middle into consideration, but masterpieces of the pictorial and Close Style pottery both came equally from Mycenae and Tiryns.

rites since the rest of the tumulus was intact without any sherds, from the surface to the floor, especially in the NW quarter of the tumulus. Besides the finds described above some other pieces of vases and other items in close relation to the burials were collected. Apart from the remarkable offering of the Octopus Style stirrup jar, a small fine vase of exceptional decoration and other fragments of stirrup jars in Close Style were dispersed among the filling. The stirrup jar is an offering usually found in great numbers in chamber tombs of the same period, as well as being found at the cremation and inhumation burials in the tumulus of Argos.<sup>64</sup>

Other sherds come from cups, deep bowls, closed vessels, and kalathoi. Moreover, a piece of a lid was found. A lot of the ceramic material was disturbed by the cultivation of the surface field, that was the unique later use of the land. Only the surface of the monument was disturbed by cultivation, deeper layers remained completely undisturbed. Thus a ceremonial smashing of the offerings or the equipment used for the burials appears to be probable. The custom of ritual smashing of the vessels used for a funeral ceremony at the grave has a long history. In the dromoi of Mycenaean chamber tombs drinking vessels and jugs were dispersed in front of the entrance.<sup>65</sup> It is also a traditional custom which has its roots in Early Helladic tumuli of Lefkas and which is shared by people of Balkan origin<sup>66</sup> during the Early and Middle Bronze Age.

The most common but also most intriguing finds are sharply cut fragments of legs of clay vessels in a long rectangular shape, corner pieces, decorated with motifs of LH IIIC Middle: quirks, spirals, semicircles, lozenges and other motifs (figs. 13a–b). They bear horizontal incisions at the joint of the leg to the main body, apparently imitating metallic prototypes. It is suggested that the metallic prototype vessel is the Cypriot fenestrated stand, which for the moment has not yet been found on the Greek Mainland either in bronze or in a clay copy,<sup>67</sup> till the Protogeometric clay stands at the Kerameikos,<sup>68</sup> with rectangular openings.<sup>69</sup> LH IIB to LH IIIB types of stands, although rare, have been recognized and fenestrated stands have been found on Minoan Crete.<sup>70</sup> A clay copy with rectangular and cut out openings in Herakleion from LM IIIC Late Karphi is the stand most comparable to the Cypriot ones. There was

a long tradition of imitating metallic Cypriot stands in Crete from LM IIIA1 onwards but it is in IIIC Late that this type of stand firstly appeared.<sup>71</sup>



Fig. 13a. Clay Stands.

The numerous Chania fragments come from the point over the cremation burials indicating a funeral ritual use. The stands themselves attributed a special importance and religious symbolism to the vases that they supported. Their small size, their diameter is estimated to be 10–16 cm, also indicates the small proportions of the pots supported, rather bowls, cups, or stirrup jars and not craters as is usually to

64. PITEROS 2006, 108.

65. CANAVAGH, MEE 1998, 112.

66. BORGNA, CÀSSOLA GUIDA 2007, 192–196.

67. PAPASAVVAS 2001.

68. MATTHÄUS 1986, 288.

69. KÜBLER 1943, pl. 25, inv. 2028–2029.

70. KOUNTOURI 2005.

71. KANTA, KARETSOU 1997, 162–163.

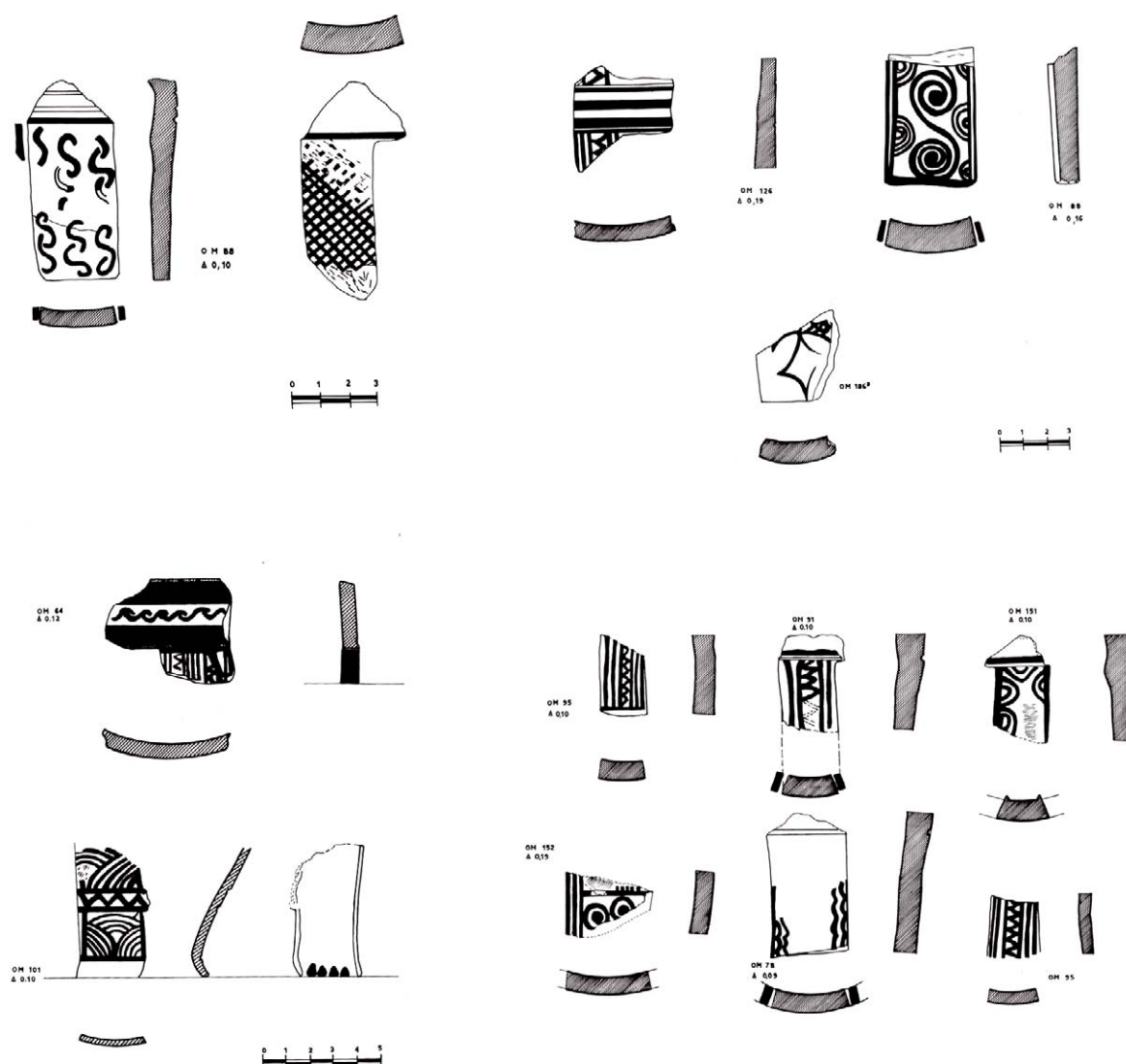


Fig. 13b. Clay stands drawings.

be expected.<sup>72</sup> Their decoration follows the principles of the LH IIIC Middle local pottery. They are evidently local products directly imitating Cypriot bronze fenestrated stands or clay copies of the bronze Mycenaean imitations.

Some other pottery fragments look like they are a clay copy of another Cypriot bronze and ivory vessel (fig. 13c), the incense burner found in association with tombs and sanctuaries on Cyprus and Crete.<sup>73</sup>

Close to them some other small handmade clay plaques were found. They bear incisions and have an even and well

worked surface on one side and an unworked surface on the other side (fig. 13d). They mostly resemble a handmade chest of LH IIIC from Kephallonia<sup>74</sup> and imitate metallic prototypes. Analogous chests are found in PG Kerameikos and Lefkandi.

All of these vessels replace metallic objects which are lacking in this period. Such objects played an important role in the funerary rites of the cremation burials.

On the whole, metal appears unexpectedly on the floor of the tumulus in the form of two small items and a thick piece of a vessel. They are really small but their presence in

72. KOUNTOURI 2005, 292.

73. KARAGEORGHIS 2006, 669. – GEORGIU 2006.

74. BRODBECK-JUCKER 1986, 133, no. 45, fig. 13.



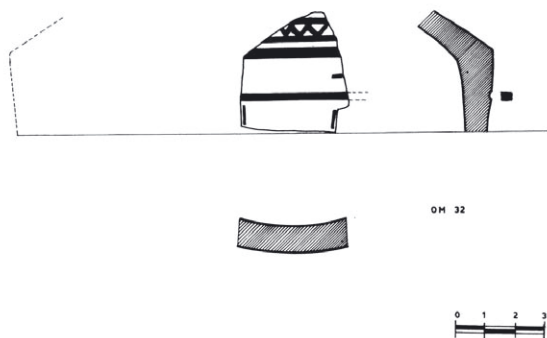


Fig. 13c. Clay incense burner.

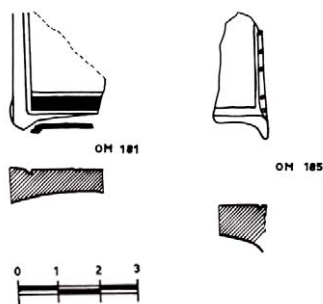


Fig. 13d. Clay pieces of chest.

an artificial level made of clay with rare sherds really makes sense. However, we should not forget the bronze ring from Cremation 8 (fig. 14a) but this is clearly associated with a burial while the three bronze items were an offering to the whole funeral construction. Their material function and date of manufacture may give an indication of their role in the funeral tumulus.

The first one is an instrument with a length of 5.80 cm and a weight of 3.5 gr., one end is pointed whilst the other end is broad and flat like a chisel (fig. 14b).

It is comparable to the bone styli from Mycenaean sites as Mycenae, Tiryns and Thebes. Louis Godart successfully tried writing with such a stylus on clay tablets.<sup>75</sup> The bone styli are usually long enough, those from Tiryns are both around 6.50–11.85 cm.<sup>76</sup>

The bronze one from Chania is shorter and not found in a context of tablets but it is found in a nonfunctional burial context of a period considered to be illiterate. Nevertheless, it is identified as a stylus because of its general appearance and resemblance to the possible stylus in bronze from Tiryns.<sup>77</sup> Both are comparable to the bronze styli of historical times in Greece, the bronze styli of the Near East and the ones most recently identified on Cyprus. Giorgos Papasavvas<sup>78</sup> proposed that they were mostly used for writing, more precisely to incise wax that had been applied to a wooden case, i.e. a writing tablet.

Such wax-filled wooden tablets consisted of two or more pieces tied together to make a diptych, triptych, or polyptych. Bellerephon carried such a tablet from Proitos to Iobates<sup>79</sup>, according to the epic narration.

This perishable material of wax and wood is not preserved in the excavations but a writing tablet of this type was preserved and identified from the Ulu-Burun shipwreck, dated to the end of the 14th century BC. The bronze hinges that connected the wooden tablets indicate that hinges from Pylos and Knossos might also belong to analogous written documents.<sup>80</sup> The production and use of the bronze stylus from Chania is more likely dated to the palatial period as the one from the acropolis of Tiryns, coming from a LH IIIA1 context.<sup>81</sup> Our stylus is found in a LH IIIC context in a secondary use. It is not related to writing since the tablet fragments of the LH IIIC context in House O at Tiryns<sup>82</sup> and elsewhere are considered to be accidental finds, but it was deposited intentionally on the floor of the tumulus. The same is true for the two other bronze items.

The second bronze find (fig. 14c) is a pyramidal four-

75. GODART 1994, 245–250.

76. RAHMSTORF 2008, 210–211.

77. GODART 1988.

78. PAPASAVVAS 2003.

79. Iliad, 6, 168–9.

80. MYLONAS-SHEAR 1998. – Papasavvas considers this uncertain as fringes might also have been part of wooden boxes (PAPASAVVAS 2003, 88). But since we find bronze stylus, proper for wax tablets, it gets more probable.

81. KILIAN 1988, 250–251.

82. GERCKE, GERCKE, HIESEL 1975, 195, 11, 16 no. 25 and pl. 41/4.

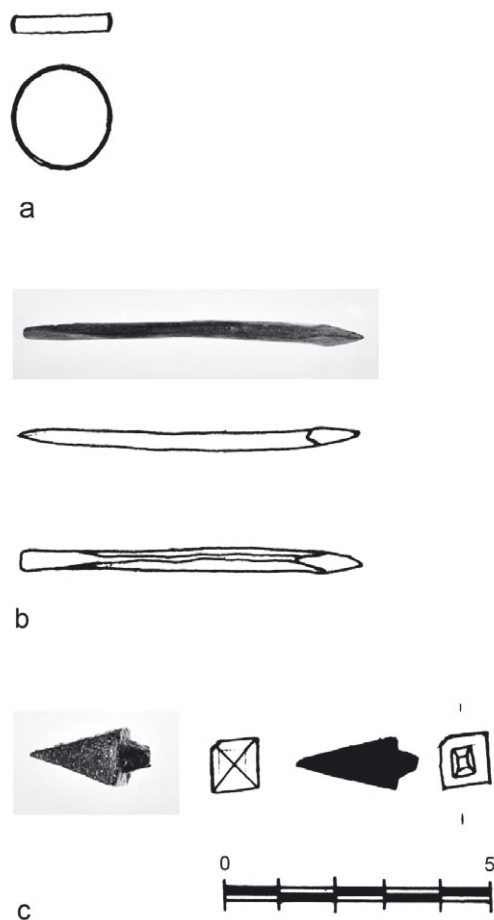


Fig. 14. The bronzes; a. ring (cremation 8); b. stylus; c. arrowhead.

sided arrowhead defined as type IX by Buchholz.<sup>83</sup> It is well preserved, appearing not to have been used. Its other functions as a tool or a pin were examined but the function as an arrowhead sounds the most plausible. Arrowheads of this type have been found in a LH IIIB context at Zygories,<sup>84</sup> Menidi<sup>85</sup> and elsewhere.

BE 27,382; l. pyram. 1.81 cm; total 1.2 cm; w. of base 1–1.1 cm; weight 6 gr.

The third object is just a small piece of a bronze vessel on the floor. It looks like it was placed in the tumulus because of the material value of the bronze and not because of its shape which cannot be identified.

BE 27,383; l. 2–3.5 cm; thickness 0.61 cm; weight 10.5 gr

We propose that the three bronze items were the material of the inauguration ceremony of the tumulus at the time

of its initial construction after the first cremation burial. The association of tumuli with metal trade routes was often expressed by bronze offerings.<sup>86</sup> This association has a long tradition coming from the beginning of the second millennium. During this particular period of LH IIIC Middle there was a decrease in bronze and the family or clan who used the tumulus had no access to metal. This did not prevent the group members from inaugurating the burial ground with the proper material with symbolic items coming from the past with no further practical use on their own. The stylus seems useless, the arrowhead does not preserve its tang to insert it in the wooden shaft and the piece of bronze vessel has no shape. Besides the flat ring from cremation 8 these are the only metal finds from the tumulus while warrior graves, richly furnished in metal, have been found in chamber tombs in Achaea, northwest Peloponnese.<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, hoards of metal items, vessels, ingots and weapons provide evidence for the insecurity of the population at this time. These unsafe conditions are a reason for not placing offerings in the tombs or it is because of a changed attitude towards the funerals. With respect to the social situation offerings to the dead decreased intensively during the LH IIIB2 period. In contrast, the LH IIIC warrior graves of an elite class are richly furnished with weapons and many of them have been excavated in the West Peloponnese. However, at present no certain LH IIIC Middle warrior tomb has been excavated in the Argolid. The only tomb with numerous exclusively metal offerings from Mycenae is the Tripods tomb,<sup>88</sup> where the offerings are 20 unused bronze axes, one tool and two bronze tripods. The 30 year old deceased does not look like a warrior but rather a treasurer or *qa-si-re-u, ka-ke-u*, basileus-chalkeus,<sup>89</sup> otherwise his family would not have been able to afford to offer him such a treasure<sup>90</sup>.

The foundation offerings on the floor were completed by the deposition of a figurine torso (fig. 15a), which is the fragment of a type B Psi late figurine with pellets representing breasts. It can be observed that no complete figurine was offered at the burials, where only heads of three Psi type figurines were offered (fig. 15b). This situation suggests a probable secondary use of the figurines. These were deposited during the funeral rites, after they had been used for a period of time for another religious function or they had

86. BORGNA, CÀSSOLA GUIDA 2007, 196. – MÜLLER 1989, 35.

87. DEGER-JALKOTZY 2006.

88. ONASSOGLU 1995, 25–49.

89. MAZARAKIS AINIAN 2006, 199. – KOUROU 1994, 214.

90. In the future we will come back to the identity of the dead from the Tripods tomb with more arguments.

83. BUCHHOLZ 1962, 27.

84. BLEGEN 1928, 202.

85. BUCHHOLZ 1962, fig. 7/15, no. 104.

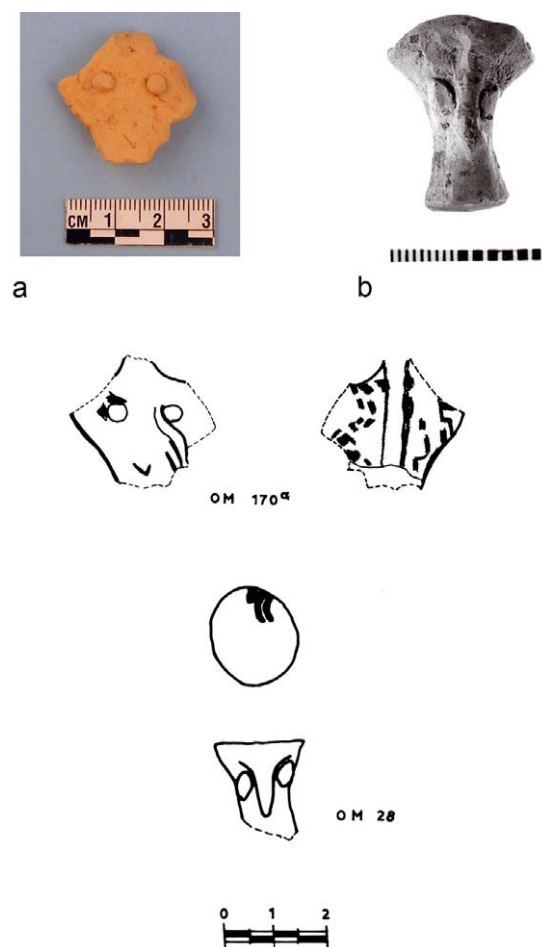


Fig. 15a. Body Fragment and heads of Psi figurines.

been damaged or intentionally broken during the funeral ceremony, depositing the head and keeping the rest of the figurine. Both suppositions take for granted that the sanctity of a figurine is preserved, even if it is damaged. This procedure is attested in chamber tombs in LH III burials, where fragmentary figurines are found, although skepticism exists about what happened when the tomb was reopened. It is proven that it occurred later at Lefkandi in the Protogeometric (PG) period.<sup>91</sup> This was the case with the famous centaur figure. The head of the centaur was found in one tomb and the body in another one some years later than the first, a certain act of a chthonian rite.<sup>92</sup>

91. LEBESSI 1996, 149–150.

92. Based on the finds and skeletons A. Lebessi suggested a special relationship between the persons buried in the two tombs, possibly a teacher and a young student. – LEBESSI 1996, 149–150. – DESBOROUGH, NICHOLLS, POPHAM 1970, 21–30.

All the fragments of figurines, the torso on the floor, the polos heads from Cremation 1 and Cremation 6 and in addition another polos head close to Cremation 4, bear characteristics of the group B or late Psi type according to French.<sup>93</sup> The painted decoration is faded and not discernible.

Besides the conulus found in Cremation 8, three other conuli were found independently of each other among the sherds which were concentrated near the cremation burials 8 and 9. They appear to be the same conical shape, in different sizes and in a variety of grey steatite. One of them (BE 17366) is slightly different in shape, having a convex base. This (BE 27366) is classified as type B according to Spyros Iakovidis<sup>94</sup> and type 1d according to the typology for the Tiryns material.<sup>95</sup> In this context their function remains problematic. Only the one (BE 27365) from Cremation 8 was found inside the cremation urn, the conulus BE 27364 was found near Cremation 9, which had been disturbed, and the remaining two at the burial place south of Cremations 8 and 9 at a distance of 1m. Conuli are found in settlements, cult places and tombs and they may have had various functions. Initially clay conuli were used as spindle-whorls and from the end of the fifteenth century onwards they were made of steatite as well and were also used as buttons or dress and curtain weights.<sup>96</sup>

The small group of only four conuli from the tumulus, dispersed at the surface (BE 27366, 27368, 27364), allows us to suggest a possible use as buttons on a shroud or a funeral dress. Their grey colour might be the result of the effect the high temperature had on the black steatite.

### Discussion

Cremation burials at Mycenae in LH IIIC Middle Advanced and early LH IIIC Late are an exceptional new burial custom and constitute a change after a period with inhumation burials. Such burials were deposited in numerous chamber tomb cemeteries from the early Mycenaean period onwards and although a use of fire has been attested, it was not only a fast burial procedure but also a means to clean the tomb and to make it ready for a new burial. The re-use of earlier chamber tombs is a common practice in LH IIIC and cremation burials were also placed in some new cut tombs. In most of the tombs the fire appears to have had a purifying role after the decay of the deceased and after putting aside their bones and offerings. In the Argolid fire did not play a part in the funeral.

93. FRENCH 1971, 135.

94. IAKOVIDIS 1977.

95. RAHMSTORF 2008, 126–129.

96. IAKOVIDIS 1977, 113–119.



On the contrary, at Chania a spectacular ceremony took place before the burial, in the form of a cremation of the deceased on a big pile of wood. A large quantity of material was necessary in order to achieve the high temperature needed for the burning of the human body. Wood is a valuable material for the region of the Peloponnese, largely used for cooking, heating, manufacturing pottery and metals and as building material. It is not abundant as in Northern Europe. At the same time, a monumental funeral construction of a stone tumulus with a circular cyclopean enclosure forms the cemetery of the cremation burials. A great deal of labour is also required to build and fill it with stones, a material which is not readily found in the plain. It is the first monumental construction after the great palatial public works of the LH IIIB period and the first great funeral building after the construction of the tholos tombs in the late 14th century BC. The lack of luxury is replaced by the monumentality, since the diameter of the circle (20 m) is very close to the dimensions of the Grave Circles A and B of early Mycenae.<sup>97</sup>

All the other tumuli are smaller. The largest example is the tumulus of Exalophos in Thessaly, which has a diameter of 20 m and is dated to LH IIIC too. The tumulus with cremation burials of LH IIIC Middle and Late periods at nearby Argos is also large and includes 52 burials, 16 inhumations in cist graves and 36 cremations. Its surface is estimated by the excavator to be more than 67 m<sup>2</sup> but it has been largely disturbed and its boundary is therefore unclear.<sup>98</sup>

The stone filling of the Chania tumulus is also exceptional for the Argolid where, from the Middle Helladic (MH) period to LH III, the tumuli were covered with earth and gravel, or clay and gravel as in MH Argos. Parallels to this constructional characteristic are found in Albania,<sup>99</sup> Epirus and in LH IIIC Late in East Macedonia, at Nevrokopi.

With regards to these two features of the cemetery, i.e. the monumental funeral tumulus and the expensive burial, we have reached the conclusion that, at Chania, the deceased had a high status in the social hierarchy and they belonged to a ruling class. On the other hand, we pose the question as to why they preferred to cremate their dead, while inhumation used to be the common custom at this time and the period immediately before it. The ordinary chamber tomb cemeteries either continued to use re-used or newly cut tombs to accept inhumation burials at Mycenae and everywhere else in the Aegean. At Argos cist graves and cremation burials are located side by side in the same tumulus and plot at the

cemetery of Tripolis street.<sup>100</sup> On and close to the acropolis of Mycenae single graves and pits were built in the ruins for inhumations with new types of grave markers like the Warrior krater of LH IIIC Middle, the Bird krater of LH IIIC Late and Tripods.<sup>101</sup> Depopulation occurred in the cemeteries and the settlements at Mycenae, so there would have been enough space for burials. One answer might be that they cremated their dead because they did not have to follow the rules and regulations of the previous strong palatial system. The people who had been depressed by the authority were free and independent, as was the case in the developing periphery. They learned new ideas through travelling and from travellers and then made their choice. At the same time new settlers were not prevented from exercising their traditional customs.

The burials of the preceding LH IIIB2 period present an austere character with a lack of non-perishable offerings. This might be attributed to the power of the central authority of the palatial system that had more interest in secular great works, such as walls, gates, water systems, roads rather than in monumental funeral buildings. As a result, the death and the afterlife took on a more spiritual character, thus preparing the way for the acceptance of cremation, even in its isolated appearance.

Certainly identified cremation burials appear sporadically in the Aegean during the palatial period (14th–13th BC) at the Dodecanese and the coast of Asia Minor.<sup>102</sup> In LH IIIC Early the first cremation burial is found in a bronze kalathos<sup>103</sup> accompanied by LH IIIC Middle cremations in pottery urns<sup>104</sup> in the chamber tomb at Spaliareika in Achaea. The cemetery of Perati presents a continuous case of cremations in chamber tombs during the entire LH IIIC period. At Mycenae cremation appears in LH III Middle, which was a period of prosperity, and a revival of the site with regards to artistic and building activities inside and outside of the acropolis. The Granary, an important building between Grave Circle A and the wall, was in use almost as long as the tumulus.<sup>105</sup> Only one burial postdates the destruction of this building caused by some indeterminable events of this period of turmoil. After a relatively short time the tumulus of Chania was no longer used, while at nearby

97. Circle A: diam. 26 m. Circle B: diam. 27 m. – PELON 1976, 115–136.

98. PITEROS 2001, 103, 114.

99. HAMMOND 1973, 189–197. – BEJKO 2007, 215. – GRAMMENOS 1981.

100. PITEROS 2001, 103. – KANTA 1975, 259.

101. FRENCH 2009, 152, fig. 1. – ONASSOGLU 1995, 27, 145–146.

102. JUNG 2007, 215–216.

103. PETROPOULOS 2000.

104. The earlier (LH IIIC Early) material like the stirrup jars offered there might not be closely associated with the burials that could be dated to LH IIIC Middle like the other cremations.

105. FRENCH 2002, 78–79.

Argos the number of burials of LH IIIC Late is equal to LH IIIC Middle (16 for each period) and the burial plot is heavily used.

To sum up: the cremation burials at Chania are a complete change in the burial customs of the 12th century. At Mycenae cremation was performed for the first time on the mainland both extensively and exclusively in a cemetery, while at Argos cremation occurred simultaneously with inhumation. Despite the laborious construction of the cemetery, the cremation burials themselves present an austere character without weapons, jewellery and valuable offerings, in comparison to the prominent warrior graves of the same period. Cremations were rare in LH IIIC Early everywhere in the Aegean area. A few cremation burials of this period are known from Perati and Achaia. Around the Mediterranean world they occur sporadically both in place and time, in periods earlier than LH IIIC, in the East, in Asia Minor, Syria, the Dodecanese, in the far North, in the Balkans, in Northeastern Italy and the hinterland of the Adriatic route. After their first appearance in the Argolid and in a few sites in Achaia cremations find a wider distribution in LH IIIC Late in the Western Peloponnese and Eastern Macedonia, Attica and Eastern Crete.

The chronological synchronism from the Argolid points to the Adriatic route for this funerary rite as it also functioned centuries ago at the end of the Early Helladic period. North Italy seems to have been the place of origin of cremation, since the custom was practiced there in the same way and the close relations of Italy to the Aegean have been indicated in many fields.<sup>106</sup> The Balkan origin is not proposed because there is no continuous evidence for cremations in Macedonia, situated between the Balkans and Southern Greece, before LH IIIC Late.<sup>107</sup> In the upcoming Iron Age every place dealt with the custom in a different way and its future practice developed independently. In the Argolid, it was no longer practiced except for sporadic use in the PG and Archaic periods.<sup>108</sup> On the contrary it was practiced in Ionian Attica from the Early Iron Age to 750 BC, but in the Doric Argolid inhumation was the common rule.

We cannot avoid considering the oral tradition of the epic poems which entertained the members of communal symposia of these times.<sup>109</sup>

The description of the pyre and funeral of Patroklos, a narration probably coming from Asia Minor and the Mycenaean palatial period might have influenced the burial

procedures of the time and facilitated the adoption of cremation.

Focusing on the urns, it can be observed that they were mostly liquid containers, shapes like jugs, amphorae and hydriai that were used for a long period as storage vessels in the domestic sphere. However, this custom of covering the mouth of the urn with a bowl or cup in upside down position is common, especially for the cremation burials in the Argolid. In the chamber tombs of Perati the urns were not covered, except for one with a piece of a coarse vessel as a lid.<sup>110</sup> In LH IIIC Late Elis and Achaia<sup>111</sup> the urns were covered by bases of kylikes.<sup>112</sup> All of these cremations were deposited in chamber tombs, where they were sheltered, while our cremation urns were buried individually in a collective mound. Although the lid as a shape existed then, it was not used for covering urns. Drinking vessels were preferred for this purpose. They are an indication of libations or rituals associated with water and its purifying power. In earlier periods cups and bowls in upside down position covered the urns in northwest Italy, which looks like it was the place of origin of this custom, which was also practiced during the LH IIIC Late period in Eastern Macedonia, Skopje and Palio Gynaikokastro.

It is most probable that the same popular beliefs were shared with relation to chthonian fertility rites, which were vitally important during a period of climatic change with long periods of drought.<sup>113</sup> Some offerings, in particular fragmented vessels, used for the ceremony of the funeral, are found outside of the urns. These ceremonies follow a traditional Mycenaean practice. There are no bronze vessels but there are fragments of locally made pottery imitating bronze fenestrated stands and incense burners of Cypriot origin. This is an indirect first appearance of Cypriot industrial products of prestigious character although the clay copies might have imitated local products. Besides a bronze ring inside an urn, no other bronze items that would attribute a high status to the dead were found. The symbolism of the metal presented by the deposition of three small precious heirlooms inside the tumulus indicates an attempt to claim the origin and the heritage of the glorious palatial past of Mycenae.

The burials at Chania have to be examined in association with the geographical position of the monumental con-

<sup>106</sup> EDER, JUNG 2005.

<sup>107</sup> JUNG 2007, 221–226. – HOREJS 2007, 293–306.

<sup>108</sup> PITEROS 2001, 117–118.

<sup>109</sup> DEGER-JALKOTZY 1994, 20.

<sup>110</sup> IAKOVIDIS 1970, vol. 3, pl. 174 no. 1252.

<sup>111</sup> MOUNTJOY 1999, 392–393, nos. 79–80, fig. 137. – PARLAMA 1971, 58. – PETROPOULOS, 2000, 75.

<sup>112</sup> Bases of kylixes had a second use as lids on vessels in domestic pottery.

<sup>113</sup> MOODY 2005.

struction in which they were deposited. The monument is situated in the middle of the plain, on the way to Argos, close to an earlier (LH IIIB2) destroyed settlement, close to water sources and enjoying good visibility – classical features of tumuli over centuries.<sup>114</sup> It served as a landmark for the control of the commercial route to Argos and Lerna and the cultivated area simultaneously. The function as a landmark has been assigned to the cemeteries of chamber tombs of the palatial period. This function continued even after the end of the use for burials in the form of the heroic cult. The ruins of the houses of the LH IIIB period (13th century), at a distance of 8 m, were a respected place and an acceptable neighbour of such a monument for over a millennium, when tumuli were raised over or close to destroyed settlements. This respect is transferred to the tumulus, which preserves its visibility and is venerated during the subsequent millennium as some Late Geometric, Archaic and Hellenistic finds<sup>115</sup> indicate.<sup>116</sup>

The act of venerating antiquities and of specifically establishing a cemetery at a place of a formerly prosperous settlement suggests that it is a claim of property over an abandoned plot or even proof that this area is an inheritance from ancestors<sup>117</sup>. The choice of the location of the Chania tumulus indicates a knowledge and continuous adaption of the traditional Mycenaean way of claiming the property of the land by clans and the long established habit of people building tumuli to construct their funeral monuments at a strategic position, by a road leading to an important resource, close to a river and over or close to a destroyed settlement. This practice is observed and is repeated extensively over the ruins inside and outside of the acropolis at Mycenae in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age.<sup>118</sup> It is likely that the proprietors of the Chania tumulus took all the advantages of its strategic position. Due to the revived commercial activities the road was much used. The fertile land was cultivated and we suppose that it produced wealth

as in the previous LH IIIB period. Despite all of these good developments, the tumulus was given up suddenly, without having been fully used in LH IIIC Late (early 11th BC). This certainly happened not without reason. A thick level of mud covered the plain completely, evidently the result of a flood. This reddish level is visible outside of the tumulus and over the nearby ruins from the earlier period. The great flood at Chania is one phenomenon of the climatic changes of this period. The same or similar events have left traces around the acropolis of Mycenae and at Argos where, after a flood in LH IIIC, draught animals and human beings of various age were thrown into a well.<sup>119</sup> The land turned unsuitable for cultivation and its prosperous proprietors had to move to another place. Obviously the tumulus was left behind, accessible, visible and undisturbed. At the end of the 8th century BC farmers came back, they cultivated the land and began to dedicate offerings to the monument. Whenever agriculture prospered in the area, the people became interested in claiming property rights and, therefore, offered dedications at the tumulus. In the 2nd century A.D. Pausanias mentions, in his description of Mycenae, the tomb of Thyestes on the way to Argos<sup>120</sup>. It is possible that he meant this tumulus, although the sculpture of a ram mentioned has not been found.

It can be concluded that the stone tumulus of the cremation burials at Chania, represents a multicultural phenomenon of the troubled LH IIIC period, created after the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system, when its construction, use and subsequent abandonment took place. Its identity is basically Mycenaean, as is attested by the exclusive use of Mycenaean pottery, locally manufactured following the fashions of the time and place, with parallels inside the acropolis of Mycenae. If there were new settlers from North Italy, they were integrated into the local population, they had adopted the Mycenaean lifestyle, and they were prosperous and participated in the ruling class. The introduction and the soon following abandonment of cremation as burial practice in the Argolid are characteristic signs for the unsteady living conditions during the 12th century. The whole picture at Chania cemetery mirrors the economic and sociopolitical situation at the end of the Bronze Age, the interaction of people moving through different regions in a troubled environment, without the general plan of a strong hegemonic power and a display of individual choice. Chania both looked back on a much appreciated past and, at the same time, forward to the upcoming Iron Age.

114. MÜLLER 1989, 33.

115. The small amount of pottery collected is characteristic of the type used for heroic cult at Agamamnoneion and elsewhere at Mycenae. The quantity of figurines and graffiti is evidence for an archaic heroic cult at the nearby Mycenaean ruins. Three Hellenistic bronze coins offered to the tumulus are the subject of a forthcoming paper in ΣΤ Επιστημονική Συνάντηση, *Το νόμισμα στην Πελοπόννησο*, Άργος 2011.

116. ANTONACCIO 1995. – ALCOCK 1991, 447–467.

117. In EH II (late 3rd millennium) a tumulus was erected over the ruins of the House of Tiles, while in the Early Mycenaean period two shaft graves were built into this tumulus. At Thebes, a tumulus conceals a destroyed building and a group of burials of the same EH II period (ARAVANTINOS 2004).

118. FRENCH 2009, 156 and fig. 1. – ONASSOGLU 1995.

119. KRITZAS 1978, 173–180.

120. PAUSANIAS, II, 18.1.



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