

Transforming Expressions and Perceptions of Prestige in the Middle Helladic and Early Mycenaean Southwestern Peloponnese

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Abstract: This paper assesses evidence for the transformation of prestige expression in the southwestern Peloponnese during the early Mycenaean period (late MH–LH II) with special attention on the shift from patterns of elite behaviour observable throughout the MH period in the region, especially the kind of prestige conveyed by the construction and maintenance of funerary mounds or *tumuli*. It focuses on the appearance of novel perceptions of monumental prestige in architecture, such as the early employment of cut masonry, as well as the emergence of various types of built burial space, and particularly the *tholos* form (perhaps a local invention) and its role in the dramatic transformation of the funerary landscape of the region. Such novelties, apparently appearing in the southwestern Peloponnese earlier in comparison to other mainland regions, need not have a uniform explanation, as they might reflect cultural imports or local developments responding (or even contributing) to the formation of a new socio-political environment. These lasting innovations shaped basic elements of an emerging monumental prestige vocabulary that had a considerable impact in other regions of the Greek mainland and contributed, especially from LH IIA onwards, to the formation of a supra-regional ‘Mycenaean’ elite identity. In this regard, the broader social and ideological change that took place throughout the earlier part of the Late Bronze Age Aegean culminated in the adoption of what has been termed the *wanax* ideology, a kingship institution that is established by LH IIIB times, but whose first appearance on the Greek mainland can be plausibly associated with the formative stages of the palatial administrations established there.

Keywords: burial mound, tholos tomb, prestige/status expression, Bronze Age Messenia, Mycenaean

The purpose of this paper is to discuss changes in the expression of prestige that took place during the late MH and early Mycenaean period (LH I–II) in the southwestern Peloponnese. The region under study here is defined by the Alpheios River to the north and by the Taygetos Mountains to the east. ‘Elites’ are here defined as (formal or informal) groupings of social agents that are in control of what Michael Mann has termed the “sources of social power”, namely ideological, economic, military and political forces.² ‘Prestige expression’ indicates those archaeologically traceable ways in which such ‘elite groups’ chose to manifest their personae and place them within a symbolic scale of social worth.

Throughout this paper, an effort will be made to balance between two partly contrasting aims: on the one hand, to stress the special character of the evidence from the region under consideration; on the other hand, to show the relevance of such discussion for addressing broader issues regarding the emergence of the early Mycenaean culture.

Expressing Prestige in the MH Tumuli of the Southwestern Peloponnese

I propose to begin with some observations on the earlier MH background of such developments in the region. The first half of the second millennium BC seems to have been a period of considerable prosperity in the region. The number and density of MH sites identified in

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² Mann 2012, 22–32; cf. also Earle 1997, 1–16.

previous surveys,³ combined with the pollen record evidence for an episode of rapid human-induced deforestation in the area of the Osmana Lagoon in west-central Messenia⁴ in around 2000 BC⁵ are indicative. The approximate timing of this latter episode with the construction and use of an impressive burial tumulus in a commanding location at Voïdokoilia, Tumulus A,⁶ should perhaps be regarded as significant.

Burial mounds have been, at least from our own etic perspective, the most conspicuous feature of MH mortuary behaviour in the region. Throughout the southwestern Peloponnese, extensive and intensive surveys have revealed a landscape literally infested with mounds, most of which may be readily identified as burial tumuli of certain or probable MH date (Fig. 1).⁷ This evidence must be used with great caution, as actual excavation may alter survey data significantly. The revelation that the Kastroulia mounds concealed spectacular early MH⁸ burials instead of LH tholoi,⁹ and the evidence that the Pyrgaki-Tsouka mound, once rejected as being a natural feature,¹⁰ was indeed a re-used MH tumulus¹¹ are telling. For the time being, discussion must necessarily be limited to the better known excavated examples: Voïdokoilia (Tumulus A), Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis, Routsis (the Giorgiopoulos and Kalogeropoulos tumuli) in west-central Messenia and Kastroulia near Ellinika in the east.¹²

At this point, we should emphasise certain idiosyncratic features of southwest Peloponnesian tumuli. In theory, such apparently simple gatherings of earth and stone, being a most straight-

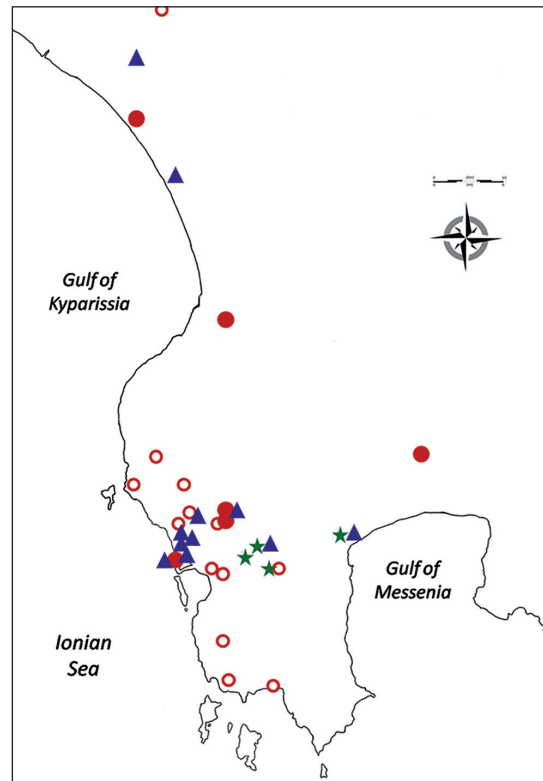


Fig. 1: Map of the southwestern Peloponnese showing the distribution of monuments discussed in the text.

● = excavated burial tumuli with multiple burial spaces;
○ = burial tumuli (insufficiently explored or identified through survey); ▲ = tholoi of late MH–LH I date;
★ = ‘complex tumulus’ with a variety of built burial spaces (small tholoi, periboloi, apsidal built tombs) (drawn and annotated by the author)

³ University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition (UMME): McDonald – Hope Simpson 1972, 133–136, Pocket-Map 8-13; Pylos Regional Archaeological Project (PRAP): Davis et al. 1997, 419–420, 434–439; for a further discussion of MH data collected by PRAP see Shelmerdine 2001, 118–119, 125; Iklaina survey: Cosmopoulos 2016, 203–204. The substantial rise in the number of sites from EH to MH has been commonly noted, although we need to acknowledge the difficulties in dating survey material within MH, as well as distinguishing similar material of early LH date.

⁴ This designation refers to the central area of the southwest subregion of the area surveyed by UMME (cf. McDonald – Hope Simpson 1972, 124, fig. 8-2).

⁵ Zangger et al. 1997, 588–589, with references.

⁶ Zavadil 2013, 587–590, with references.

⁷ We should readily acknowledge the considerable influence that the results of Spyridon Marinatos’ pre-UMME explorations, particularly his 1954–1955 excavation of the Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis tumulus (Marinatos 1957; Marinatos 1960), had on subsequent site identification, especially on later assessments of the significance of ‘multiple burial mounds’ by the UMME project (McDonald – Hope Simpson 1972, 120, 135–136).

⁸ I here deliberately avoid referring to distinct subdivisions of MH (I, II or III) as these might give the false impression that such entities have been identified cross-regionally. Instead, ‘early’, ‘mature’ and ‘late’ MH will be preferred. ‘Earlier MH’ will indicate phases that predate the Shaft Grave era.

⁹ Rambach 2007, 137–138, fig. 1; Rambach 2010, 108; Rambach 2011, 464.

¹⁰ Davis et al. 1997, 486–487, pl. 92b (pre-excavation assessment).

¹¹ Arapoyanni 2004; Hope Simpson 2007, 114–116, 118; Rambach 2010, 113, fig. 1α–γ.

¹² Zavadil 2013, 288–291 (Kastroulia), 530–531 (Routsis), 540–546 (Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis), with references. A previously unpublished plan of the Routsis-Giorgiopoulos tumulus appeared in Marinatos 2014, 105, plan 23.

forward way to mark any special place on the ground, were not a tomb type per se, but rather a manner of monumentalising single or multiple burial spaces. The latter often employed forms that continued to be used outside a tumulus arrangement, such as pit or cist graves. Such reasoning may be particularly applicable to a site such as the Asine East Cemetery (Argolid), with built cists constructed both inside and outside Tumulus IQ.¹³ Moreover, this approach could help us assess the extreme morphological variability among Helladic tumuli¹⁴ as the outcome of different (and possibly independent) regional or local responses to this basic rudimentary idea. However, west-central Messenia presents a somewhat different picture, where a specific type of burial space (the man-sized pithos intended for adult burials) seems to have been exclusively tied to the tumulus form. It would therefore seem arguable that these burial pithoi and the specific kind of tumulus they were placed in represent a coherent entity. Such distinctiveness of the local tumulus tradition seems worth stressing.¹⁵

Voïdokoilia A and Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis seem to belong to a common local type, so far unidentified outside the micro-region of west-central Messenia: low shield-shaped mounds of earth with stone capping(s) where man-sized funerary pithoi intended for adult burials had been inserted with their stomia facing outward in a remarkable radial arrangement.¹⁶ Tumuli¹⁷ in Peristeria-Kokorakou, Routsis or Divari near Gialova¹⁸ have featured the same association of man-sized MH pithoi with reportedly adult burials, whose consistency seems so far typical of west Messenia, although it reaches as far north as Peristeria-Kokorakou and, perhaps, Kato Samikon-Kleidi (Tumulus 3).¹⁹ However, other sites have preserved no clear traces of the neat radial arrangement and stone capping of Voïdokoilia A and Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis, although Peristeria-Kokorakou had a stone-built peribolos. It is quite intriguing that pithoi are so far absent from eastern Messenia, if Kastroulia is indeed typical of the local tumulus tradition.²⁰

All minor differences aside, the very construction of these tumuli poses interesting problems. There might be more to them than the commonsensical assertion that “it would take the labour of more than one family to construct them”.²¹ We should consider the number of EH II sherds recovered from the fills of the mature MH tumuli at Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis and Routsis (Kalogeropoulos

¹³ Dickinson 1983, 57; Petrakis 2010, 407 n. 22. For the most recent assessment of the evidence from the Asine tumulus see now Voutsaki et al. 2011.

¹⁴ Rutter 1993, 784, commenting on Müller 1989; Petrakis 2010, 407.

¹⁵ This is not to ignore the occasional occurrence of pithos burials in tumuli outside this region, as in the tumulus of Aphidna in north Attica (where adult burials have been reported from the horizontally placed pithoi of the mound), Argos, Tumulus A (Oikonomou plot) and the tumulus from the Thanos plot to the East of the Aspis hill where burial pithoi with adult burials have been reported, Asine East Cemetery (Burial Pithoi 1971–7 and 1971–15 located within the formal disposal area represented by a peribolos, although formally outside Tumulus IQ), and the recent find of an EH III tumulus at Atalanti in Phthiotis (Central Greece) (Papakonstantinou 2011, 395–396, fig. 4a–b; Sarri – Voutsaki 2011, 435–436, fig. 3; Voutsaki et al. 2011, 451–452, fig. 3; Pappi 2012; Dickinson 2016, 324–325; Papakonstantinou 2018. However, the *consistency* of the association between tumuli and burial pithoi observed in the southwestern Peloponnese is not yet apparent elsewhere.

¹⁶ Certain features, such as the occurrence of a central built horseshoe-shaped structure and the existence of multiple stone cappings, are present at Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis and absent from Voïdokoilia, Tumulus A, but this can be explained by the different historical trajectories of the two monuments (cf. Korres 1982, 149–150).

¹⁷ Unexcavated or doubtful examples are not discussed here (for a list of burial tumuli from the region see Boyd 2002, 218, tab. 4).

¹⁸ Zavadil 2013, 364 (Divari), 499–500 (Peristeria-Kokorakou), 530–531, 534–535 (Routsis).

¹⁹ Papakonstantinou 1988, 148–149.

²⁰ I note (but resist the temptation to further discuss for the moment) that a differentiation between west and east Messenia in this important aspect of mortuary practice might be relevant to the later development and emic conceptualisation of the later palatial polity, as divided into two ‘provinces’ either side of the prominent feature recorded as **a₃-ko-ra-o* perhaps **/Aigolahon/* in the Pylos Linear B records (see Bennet 1995 for the currently orthodox account). I expand on this and other archaeological reflections on the Prepalatial history of the region in a future study.

²¹ Dickinson 2014a, 151.

tumulus) and the early MH Kastroulia tumuli.²² The remarkable amount of EH II sherds in the fills of these tumuli may have originated from the debris of underlying or, even more interestingly, *adjacent* sites of that phase. The construction of the early MH Tumulus A at Voïdokoilia over and from the debris of a EH II settlement indicates the deliberate choice of this location; still, we need to consider the implications of the probable transportation of EH II debris material to construct at least the fill of the Kastroulia tumuli: in this case at least, we may deal with an astonishingly energetic manipulation of past remains.²³ The situation in Papoulia and Routsis is somewhat less clear and only careful intensive survey in the environs of the tumuli (as well as future excavations) can give us a clue as to the probable source of the EH II material. However, it can already be argued that these tumuli were made of material carried from adjacent sites. That EH debris was exploited during the earlier MH period in the region is also suggested by the occurrence of pierced EH II ring bases (perhaps to be used as spindle whorls) in early MH contexts at the Nichoria settlement, a site that was not occupied during EH II.²⁴

Such consistent occurrence of EH II material in MH tumuli fills must be considered as significant. That such material was chosen (perhaps even dictating the location of the tumulus in the case of Voïdokoilia A) demands a radical reappraisal of the energy expenditure demanded for such monuments, and points to the MH significance of abandoned or ruined sites (perhaps emically perceived as ‘dead’ themselves) as appropriate resources for material for burial mounds.²⁵ We must assume a strong MH motivation for such activities, possibly resting upon a solid conceptual link between ‘dead settlements’ and the treatment of certain dead individuals that initiated such expenditure.²⁶

Besides construction, the offerings placed with the deceased were almost always minimal, even occasionally absent. Although we should always entertain the possibility that perishable offerings were (at least occasionally) also made, there have been occasional exceptions to such minimalism, even including metal items, such as the silver hair-ring and bronze knife from Burial Pithos 7 in Voïdokoilia A.²⁷ Still, nothing prepared us for the remarkable finds from the early MH Kastroulia tumuli, especially the undoubtedly elite burial (reportedly single female) from Tumulus II, Grave 2, accompanied by four bronze ‘double-axe’ pendants, two spindle whorls and no fewer than thirty vessels.²⁸ We should closely observe the association, attested very scarcely in the earlier MH period, between rich burials and exotica.²⁹ As the excavator Jörg Rambach observed, all three non-local vessels in Grave 2 of this tumulus are jugs.³⁰ Such an ‘upgrading’ of pouring vessels may be indicative of the importance placed on the role of the pourer in a feasting context: a token of the virtue of a true hostess, an ideal ‘mistress of the house’ (if the identification of the sex of the deceased is confirmed). We may note the similarities of this assemblage to that

²² Already noted by Marinatos 1960, 254–255, with regard to Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis and the Routsis tumuli; Chasiakou – Korres 2006, 740 (Papoulia, Routsis); Rambach 2007, 137, 139 (Kastroulia).

²³ Rambach 2007, 137, 139, estimated that 99% of the sherd material in the fills in the northernmost Kastroulia Tumulus I was of EH II date, and a similar picture is given regarding the fill of Tumulus II.

²⁴ Howell 1992, 18. The nearest site to Nichoria where EH II material has been reported is Velika-Skordakis, almost 2.5 km to the southeast (Howell 1992, 38 n. 7; Lukermann – Moody 1978, 102; surprisingly not included in the site register of the Nichoria environs survey: Lukermann – Moody 1978, 112).

²⁵ It is important to stress how different such burial tumuli are from the well-known case of the Lerna tumulus constructed over and from the ruins of the EH II ‘House of the Tiles’: the latter was apparently not intended for burials (so just commemorative?), and its construction has now been convincingly interpreted as a final episode in the life of the thriving EH II settlement of Lerna, rather than the very beginning of the subsequent EH III settlement (Banks 2013, 23–31).

²⁶ A similar conceptual link may underlie the (far less labour-consuming) choice to locate pit or cist graves in the ruins of abandoned buildings in MH sites of the Argolid (Milka 2010).

²⁷ Korres 1980, 356, fig. 9 (paralleled in the rich and reportedly male burial from Kastroulia, Tumulus II, Grave 3: Rambach 2007, 145–146, fig. 27).

²⁸ Rambach 2007, 141–145, figs. 10–24.

²⁹ An illustrative case of that link is apparent in the items placed in the so-called ‘shaft grave’ from Kolonna IX dated to the mature MH (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997).

³⁰ Rambach 2007, 147.

of Grave 2 (‘τάφος τῆς βασιλίσσης’) in Marathon-Vrana, Tumulus I (early/mature MH³¹), where eleven vessels were assigned by Spyridon Marinatos to a single female burial,³² including again two matt-painted jugs identified as Aiginetan imports.³³ With regard to the occurrence of pairs of spindle whorls in both assemblages, we may echo here Joseph Maran’s recent emphasis on the function of the latter as symbols of ‘domestic virtue’,³⁴ an interpretation that elegantly ties with the deposition of ceramic feasting equipment.³⁵

The Papoulia and Kastroulia tumuli have also given evidence for the ascribed status of certain deceased: the remains of young children in the Papoulia pithoi was mentioned by Marinatos,³⁶ and Georgios Korres found remains of children inside two matt-painted jars (Burial Jars 23–24) recovered from the outskirts of the tumulus,³⁷ one of them (Burial Jar 23) containing a plain cut-away jug.³⁸ Likewise, a plain jug and a kantharos accompanied a child burial from Kastroulia, Tumulus II, Grave 1.³⁹ Considering the reported age and sex of the deceased buried in the various multiple spaces of these tumuli,⁴⁰ a seemingly clear case can be made that specific kin groups, either nuclear (Kastroulia, Tumulus II) or extended families (Papoulia), were represented.

The Kastroulia burials, although definitely impressive, cannot be directly associated with the accumulation of wealth in burials that is observed from the late MH. Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier has famously argued that the sporadic ‘rich’ MH burials can suggest a linear, continuous development that was basically unrelated to broader Aegean developments, leading up to (and explaining) the Shaft Grave phenomenon towards the end of the period.⁴¹ However, comparatively rich burials, such as the one entered in Voïdokoilia, Pithos 7, or even evidently rich burials, such as those at Kastroulia, cannot compare well with the later MH and early Mycenaean burials furnished with

³¹ Pantelidou Gofa et al. 2016a, 56.

³² Although Marinatos’ identification of the burial as female is here accepted, we should note that recent study of the skeletal material from the Vrana tumuli has generated a more complex picture: a couple of bones located beside the skeleton of Marinatos’ ‘queen’ preserved in situ now suggest a second burial in the same grave (Pantelidou Gofa et al. 2016b, 51, 67, fig. 6). Moreover, Marinatos’ assertion that the burial belonged to a woman was not confirmed, as the sex of neither burial could be determined (Pantelidou Gofa et al. 2016b, 51).

³³ Pantelidou Gofa et al. 2016a, 47, 53–54, 67–68, figs. 10στ, 11α–γ (the larger jug had been previously reported as ‘Κυκλαδίζουσα’ by Marinatos). Another possible import in this assemblage is the Cycladic askos (Pantelidou Gofa et al. 2016a, 55–56, 69, fig. 12δ), another shape that might have a pouring function.

³⁴ Maran 2011, 286–288.

³⁵ Apparently, the same association can be followed into LH I in the Argolid, if one endorses Hartmut Matthäus’ interpretation of five gold-sheet ornaments from Shaft Grave III (Circle A) as gold-covered spindles, suggestive of the ultimate formalisation of these artefacts into true insignia, employing the elite medium then en vogue: gold (Maran 2011, 287–288, with references). There is an interesting recent twist: although Maran 2011, 287, on the strength of Karo’s final report, assumed that all three adult burials from this grave were females, the recent analysis of the skeletal material revealed that only one of the adult skeletons certainly belonged to a woman (Dickinson et al. 2012, 173–175). This new information would lead us to assume either that spindles were not gender-specific (i.e. that they might be associated with the probable male burials Λ and Ν in Grave III) or that all five examples should be associated with the only certain female burial hitherto identified (burial M in Stamatakis’ notes). Of course, the most interesting implication of this restudy of the skeletal material from Grave III has been that certain males could have been buried, under specific circumstances, with furnishings of less conspicuously ‘masculine’ associations, namely without weapons, demonstrating that “it was not an absolute social requirement that high-ranking males be given a warrior persona in death” (Dickinson et al. 2012, 175). The absence of weapons altogether from this grave must leave the possibility open that some of the gold-covered spindles might be associated with the male burials (Λ, Ν).

³⁶ Marinatos 1960, 255.

³⁷ Korres 1982, 142–144, 146–147, fig. 3, pls. 112β–113 (Burial Jars 23–24). These jars are typologically different from the burial pithoi that contained adult burials (Marinatos’ statement needs to be clarified as to the type of funerary container that included the remains of children).

³⁸ Korres 1982, 133, fig. 2γ, 147, pl. 113α.

³⁹ Rambach 2007, 139–140, fig. 3 left.

⁴⁰ Rambach 2010, 110–112 (Kastroulia, Tumulus II); Marinatos 1957, 314; Marinatos 1960, 255; Korres 1982, 138–147 (Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis).

⁴¹ Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997, 83–106. For criticism of this approach, see Voutsaki 1999; Maran 1999; Petrakis 2010; Maran 2011.

weapons and metal jewellery. The main reason is the extreme scarcity of metal items (and the overall paucity of non-ceramic items in general) in the burials of the earlier MH. This absence gains a special significance if one considers the importance of the production and consumption of ornamented weapons as well as precious metal vessels in the formation of the Shaft Grave ethos of mortuary display and competitive emulation.⁴²

The overall scarcity of grave-goods from MH burials need not be viewed as a direct reflection of the poverty (or even egalitarianism) of contemporary mainland communities; rather, it may be indicative of the radical difference between the value systems represented in the funerary assemblages of the earlier and later MH phases, separated by what I have elsewhere termed as the ‘barrier’, a point of radical change in the late MH.⁴³ As both Joseph Maran and I have independently argued, display strategies other than the deposition of valuable items were being sought by the earlier MH elites, of which the monumentality of the burial space (that is, the grave form and its overall setting), viewed as the tangible mark of conspicuous consumption of energy, was of primary emic significance.⁴⁴ Within such a value system and with the cautionary note that grave goods might have taken the form of entirely perishable items that left negligible (or overlooked) material traces, elaboration of the burial locus may have been the primary (and presumably sufficient) marker of status. Commenting on the absence of luxury grave goods in post-4000 BC Balkan tumuli, Douglas Bailey has suggested that “the grave-goods, and thus perhaps the actual event of burial, were a less significant component than was the creation, in the raising of a substantial, visible mound, of a living memory of the deceased”.⁴⁵ I wish here to argue that similar strategies were at play during the earlier part of the MH period. Such conceptions may also have underpinned the construction of tumuli accommodating poorly furnished burials in other regions of the Greek mainland. Still, we should emphasise the distinctiveness of the local tumulus tradition in the southwestern Peloponnese. This has repercussions, as we shall see, in our understanding of the MH background that formed the inevitable matrix of early Mycenaean developments in that region.

Another feature that seems to constitute a meaningful yet fundamental absence in earlier MH mortuary prestige expression is supra-regional (perhaps even supra-local) uniformity. A contrasting trend is indeed exemplified by the remarkable variability in form and mortuary practice of Helladic tumuli, whose category was once aptly described by Jeremy Rutter as “a diverse assortment”.⁴⁶ Such variability need not reflect the isolation of MH communities; mortuary practices (or at least their archaeological phenotypes) seem otherwise to be quite uniform, with pits and cists used throughout the mainland.⁴⁷ The diversity of MH tumuli may be symptomatic of the absence at this stage of a key feature of the late MH and early Mycenaean world: cross-regional inter-elite interaction and competition.⁴⁸ Elite behaviour and emic perceptions of how prestige was to be conveyed and received may still have been largely introvert and self-contained: the intended audience must still have been limited to the local communities.

These observations might somewhat modify the recent theoretical framework proposed by James Wright, whereby leading figures in MH society formed factions, informal groups gaining prestige from adventurous achievements conceived as belonging to the outskirts of communal life: hunting, warfare or even travel to exotic otherworldly places.⁴⁹ Wright’s factions, orbiting around such ‘Men of Renown’ or ‘Big Men’, are a valuable, thought-provoking concept that may help us approach the roots of Helladic leadership institutions, especially in the post-EH II era. It is likely

⁴² See Rutter 2012, 79–82.

⁴³ Petrakis 2010.

⁴⁴ Maran 1999, 539; Petrakis 2010, 409–413; Maran 2011, 285.

⁴⁵ Bailey 2000, 249.

⁴⁶ Rutter 1993, 784.

⁴⁷ Petrakis 2010, 408–409.

⁴⁸ Petrakis 2010, 412–416.

⁴⁹ Wright 2004, 70–73, on factions; Wright 2008a, 238–243; Wright 2010, 814–815; Wright, this volume; cf. also Dickinson 2014a, 150–152.

that new developments beyond such an initial ‘faction’ stage soon occurred, perhaps already during the early MH: forms of leadership that originated as opportunistic, charismatic and achieved (so inherently informal and unstable) swiftly became more formal, and status became ascribed, embedded in kinship structures that must have already been fundamental for Helladic social organisation.⁵⁰ If so, the emergence of burial tumuli throughout the post-EH II Greek mainland may represent the progress of such formalisation, while the establishment and proliferation of burial tumuli with distinct local (even endemic) features in the southwestern Peloponnese may indicate that communities in this prosperous region of the MH world were already in the process of developing a particular mortuary vocabulary that expressed the special status of specific kin groups.⁵¹

The Transition to ‘Mycenaean’: The Birth of New Forms and New Practices

However insightful, any generic description of the dramatic changes that took place during the late MH/LH I phases is bound to conceal the dramatic differences in the trajectories followed by different sites or regions. Let us first focus on regional ‘facts’ before we proceed to interpretations. In the southwestern Peloponnese, the most conspicuous feature of the archaeological record in late MH/LH I is what appears to us as the swift establishment of a seemingly ‘new’ mortuary landscape, where built open chambers were dominant in a bewildering variety of forms and arrangements. Among these novel forms, tholos tombs (or tholoi) are most prominent, and they constitute an architectural achievement that gained great popularity throughout the Aegean during the subsequent phases of the Late Bronze Age. The general ‘open chamber’ category (not entirely unknown, but certainly scarce before late MH)⁵² seems to reflect a widespread Helladic trend at the time: sizeable chambers can be (and have been) associated with the seemingly new practice of multiple burial, the practice of secondary treatment and the really novel demand to express status through luxury grave goods, especially metal artefacts.

It is in these grave goods, constituting an entirely new artefact world with little or no reference to preceding MH developments, that one sees the clearest hints of the extra-Helladic Aegean stimulation that was apparently needed to ‘push’ Helladic elite behaviour beyond the ‘barrier’, as it is widely acknowledged that this process cannot be explained in local terms alone.⁵³ Maran has recently described the emergence of the ‘early Mycenaean’ culture as largely the result of a “realignment of Mainland Greek societies towards a distant centre of political and, above all, religious power”,⁵⁴ plausibly one or more of the sophisticated south Aegean polities of the time.

⁵⁰ As argued before, the overall make-up of the deceased buried in certain tumuli (notably at Papoulia and Kastroulia) may suggest their interpretation as monumentalised burial grounds of specific kin groups. In later MH times, the adoption of collective tomb types, suited to repeated use in the long term, may suggest a further intensification of the emphasis placed on kin relations and their configuration within the specialised ritualised funerary space (Petrakis 2010, 407; cf. also Papadimitriou 2016).

⁵¹ The erratic occurrence of such ‘special’ burials in the earlier MH, especially the occurrence of a few of them outside tumuli (e.g. the Kolonna ‘shaft grave’; cf. also the distribution of non-ceramic offerings in the Asine East Cemetery: Voutsaki et al. 2011, 449–450, 453, tab. 4) may be used as an argument against the identification of the latter as the burial grounds of an elite (Dickinson 2016, 325). The reasoning behind this is sound, but is also, I would think, symptomatic of a (subtle or explicit) projection of ‘Shaft Grave era’ standards (namely the deposition of numerous non-ceramic items with the deceased) onto earlier MH evidence, with the latter – unsurprisingly – failing miserably. But the point made here is that such a projection may be inappropriate, if one considers the possibility that different standards (and correspondingly different notions and expressions of mortuary prestige) applied to the period preceding late MH.

⁵² As far as the southwestern Peloponnese is concerned, we must also note Rambach’s convincing interpretation of Kastroulia, Tumulus II, Grave 2, as a rock-cut burial chamber (Rambach 2007, 140–141; Rambach 2011, 469). The man-sized burial pithoi that were a popular funerary container in the west Messenian tumuli essentially exhibited the same properties as open chambers (cf. Boyd 2002, 56).

⁵³ Voutsaki 1999, 113–114; Wright 2010, 811–814; Petrakis 2010, 411; Maran 2011.

⁵⁴ Maran 2011, 289.

Such a process may be related to what Michail Bakhtin has called “intentional hybridity”, the conscious appropriation (through either acquisition or emulation) of non-local forms and practices deliberately chosen to bring innovation, shatter pre-existing states of affairs and produce new inequalities.⁵⁵ Inevitably, these had to map onto pre-existing value systems, but, in doing so, they – just as inevitably – expressed marked differences with what had gone before. The precise ways of appropriation of these alien elements have an obvious transformative potential that can be activated and realised only through the agency of local ‘recipients’. To quote Oliver Dickinson, “influence is not like influenza”.⁵⁶ As always, it takes two to tango.⁵⁷

Once more, the process might be described through a medical metaphor: the exotic artefacts and the unprecedented array of diverse materials now accessible to early Mycenaean elites were the new contrast media that enhanced our own (and thus hopelessly etc) ability to discern an already extant social hierarchy, and were directly injected into a value system, where funerary monumentality used to be the only such medium.⁵⁸ At the same time, they triggered a switch to forms of burial space that would both accommodate and restrict access to the locus of mortuary deposition, the context now deemed appropriate for the use of such valuable rare exotica. A more subtle development may have been the rapidly growing realisation that access to such items was something that elites could compete about, not just within the same micro-region or region, but also cross-regionally.

The switch to open chambers as the new type of burial space apparently did not have an absolutely uniform significance across mainland regions. It may be interesting to observe how certain types are more reuser-friendly than others, but, since such practicalities are not monopolised by specific types, we cannot explain in this way the popularity of the very specific tholos form in the region during the late MH and especially LH I.⁵⁹ Even so, we should note the remarkable diversity in funerary architecture in the region, in form, size, as well as arrangement.

The regional link between tumuli and tholoi is both clear and obscure in different ways. Let me explain this oxymoron phrasing: the concentration of almost all pre-LH IIA tholoi within the

⁵⁵ Bakhtin 1981, 358–361; Werbner 1997; Maran 2012, 62–64.

⁵⁶ Dickinson 1996, 67.

⁵⁷ A more systematic acquaintance between mainland leaders and the broader Aegean world may well have begun at the initiative of the south Aegean polities (on Crete or the Cyclades) and may have been channelled through specific sites that enjoyed a special intimacy with the ‘distant centre’ in question. The reason that triggered the intensification of such contact towards the close of the MH period need not be sought in processes that began on the mainland, but Helladic agency was necessary for the transformative potential of such contact to affect significantly the development of mainland communities.

⁵⁸ This is to argue against the suggestion that the need to express prestige was created in late MH times following the flow of exotica on the mainland that transformed the undifferentiated MH communities (Voutsaki 1997; cf. Petrakis 2010, 405–407; Maran 2011, 286–288). Nikolas Papadimitriou has recently independently argued that one main objective for the adoption of various types of collective tombs in the early Mycenaean period was “to increase the visibility of existing social structures ... [making] social groupings more transparent than before”, without involving substantial structural change (Papadimitriou 2016, 344, 349). This is not in disagreement with the position argued here, although we should add that changes in the expression of prestige have the potential to trigger major social changes in the long term: in the case of the Helladic world, one major consequence of the opening of local elites to the broader Aegean world was the adoption of a literate administrative system (whose shaping took place in a Cretan ‘matrix’), perhaps already in LH IIB–IIIA1 or at the beginning of the LH IIIA2 phase.

⁵⁹ Lolos 1987, 155–159, 165–195, 208–218, figs. 188–207, 216–226, 238–285, 298–319, 387–393, 408–409, 443–450, 459–464, 474, 476, 490–496, 502–507, 508a, 509a, 512–515, 519–571, with references (Koukounara 1–2, Koryphasion-Charatsari or Osmanaga, Voïdokoilia, Tragana-Viglitsa 1–2, Epáno Englianos IV and Vayenas ‘Grave Circle’, Routsí 1–2, Peristeria 3 and South Tholos, Kakovatos A, Kato Samikon-Kleidi, ‘Tumulús’ A, Makrysia-Prophitis Ilias); Davis – Stocker 2015 (Englianos IV); Lolos 1989 (Koryphasion); Murphy 2014, 213–215, fig. 16.2 (Vayenas Tholos or ‘Grave Circle’, the latter being a misnomer since this is a true tholos). Although Lolos 1987, 183, 214, considers LH I sherds found in Kakovatos A and Tragana-Viglitsa 1 as ‘intrusive’ or ‘stray’ settlement material, there is no evidence of LH I habitation in the vicinity of these tombs to substantiate such an interpretation. For a LH I (late) date for the start of Tholos A of Kakovatos cf. de Vreé, this volume. One should add the Romanos tholos recently excavated by J. Rambach, also first used in LH I (Zavadić 2013, 554, with references, add Rambach 2014).

very same region where tumuli were part of a strong MH tradition is a truly compelling point,⁶⁰ strongly suggesting the existence of an association (Fig. 1). However, the details of the ‘switch’ from the burial tumulus to the invention of the tholos tomb have so far remained elusive, and associations with both built structures within tumuli (notably the central horseshoe-shaped structure in Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis) as well as the (radially or irregularly arranged) burial pithoi have already been proposed by Korres.⁶¹

I must admit that I find the view of the tholos form as a late MH southwest Peloponnesian invention (whatever the initial spark might have been) that was adopted supra-regionally only later on,⁶² a solid basis for further discussion. With that in mind, one must accord special significance to the fact that, of all types of built and rock-cut chamber tombs that emerge during the late MH/early Mycenaean period, the tholos is the only form consistently associated with a mound heaped over its dome. This mound also played an important part in the stability of the entire structure. Maria Teresa Como’s recent analysis of the ‘membrane behaviour’ of the tholos dome has confirmed the role of the earthen mound as a compact outer ring contrasting sliding forces, especially in the upper part of the dome.⁶³ Being such an important static feature, therefore, the existence of a mound must be assumed for all tholoi, irrespective of its preservation at the time of excavation.⁶⁴

The implications of a consistent association between tholoi and mounds are of great importance for our topic. The employment of a form that necessitated the construction of a mound above it ensured the ‘phenomenological continuity’ of the landscape throughout the MH–LH

⁶⁰ This statement needs to be supplemented with comments on two finds of early tholoi from the northeastern Peloponnese. 1. Tholos Tomb 3 at Megali Magoula at Galatas in Troizenia is considered to have been constructed and first used in late MH or LH I, which is the possible date of some fragments of drinking vessels (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2015, 485–488, with references). However, if the tomb was an “entirely above ground” structure, “unlikely to have been fully vaulted in stone” and lacking a mound, as the excavator argues (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2015, 485–486), this is not a proper tholos. That said, however, similarities with the ruined condition of the Vayenas Tholos at Epano Englianos (once interpreted as a ‘Grave Circle’), may lead to an alternative interpretation of the tomb as a canonical tholos that has suffered much from later disturbance that included intense robbing of material, damage from cultivation or other uses (perhaps as a threshing-floor), together with the washing of most of the fill down the slope of the hill. It is not yet clear whether the late MH material cited was part of the original funerary assemblages on the floor of the burial chamber, although one might hope that the final publication of the assemblage will help us resolve such problems. 2. The tholos tomb of Kheliotou Mylos near Ancient Corinth (Kassimi 2015, 510–512) yielded some grave goods of certain LH I date (a Polychrome jug) or probable late MH–LH I date (a kantharos), but these were found along with two LH IIA palatial jars (used as containers of secondary burials) and could have been heirlooms. The excavator recently suggested that the Corinth tholos replaced an earlier late MH–LH I rich tomb, whose “burials were moved together with their burial goods in the burial pit of the tholos” (Kassimi 2015, 511; cf. Boyd 2002, 151, for a similar hypothesis regarding Vayenas). Unfortunately, the mobility of human remains and grave goods within the chamber as part of the so-called ‘secondary burial’ makes it extremely difficult to identify the exact provenance of the ‘secondary’ interments.

⁶¹ We should be cautious in our assessment of Korres’ sensational discovery that the LH I Voïdokoilia tholos had been built into the early MH Tumulus A as providing a tangible model for the actual emergence of the tholos from the central structure of a west Messenian tumulus: this sequence is hitherto unique within the micro-region of the Osmanaga Lagoon in west-central Messenia, so cannot be considered typical of this region or the entire southwestern Peloponnese in any way (cf. Galanakis 2011, 222). That the location of the Voïdokoilia tholos has little relevance to our assessment of the tumulus-tholos link is suggested by the fact that it is paralleled in the small tholos built within a (reportedly EH III) tumulus at Moschovi near Katouna in Aitolia (Kolonas 1995), a region where tholoi were a late and scarce adoption (LH IIB/IIIA1 onwards). For the perceptive idea that tholos tombs replaced burial pithoi as open chambers within burial tumuli see Korres 1996, 23–24; Korres 2011, 589–590 (cf. Boyd 2002, 56).

⁶² Davis – Bennet 1999, 114; Wright 2006, 58. The main arguments against the derivation of Helladic tholoi from Cretan circular tombs are presented in Dickinson 2011.

⁶³ Como 2006; personal communication.

⁶⁴ Although the absence of a mound is occasionally noted in preliminary reports, the significance of such an absence must be assessed only after considering aspects of the later history of the site. The example of the Vayenas Tholos (identified as ‘Grave Circle’ in the final report of the site), used as a threshing-floor in recent times, may be illustrative of how the appearance of the ruins at the time of the excavation should be carefully assessed.

transition and into the LH period. The image perceived by the viewer did not change significantly in the switch from a low earthen burial tumulus to the low tumulus that concealed a tholos tomb.⁶⁵ By appreciating the visual ‘convergence’ between the outward external appearances of tumuli and mound-covered tholoi, we may begin to properly comprehend the trend to locate tholoi close to earlier tumuli, even occasionally in pairs or groups (as in Tragana-Viglitsa, Routsis, Peristeria⁶⁶), as a deliberate attempt to reuse an old burial ground with a relatively minimal visual change and as an act of reverence towards the traditional mortuary landscape. The case of Voïdokoilia, where a tholos was built into a pre-existing tumulus, may also be partly understood in this context.⁶⁷ The tholoi could express the mastery of the new skills required and offer a suitable form that could receive new modes of elaboration (see below), while at the same time maintaining consistency with the centuries-old tradition of a tumuli-filled funerary landscape. With tholoi, change could be smooth while at the same time satisfying the new ethos of competitive display. From the outside, little, if anything, could betray the novelty. Tholoi could ‘camouflage’ under their mounds which were an already familiar image; but a proper appreciation of a well-built tholos, even an elaborate tholos, as well as the prestige conveyed by these qualities, were only for those limited few who had access to it. In contrast to the openly visible and apparently luminous surface of the mound, the new burial space was dark and accessible only through a single entrance. The new form emphasised the exclusivity of the new elite ethos and might also have been a spatial configuration of the newly-perceived distance between the group buried in the tholos (including attendants at the funeral) and those without legitimate access to it. Beside the spatial significance of this novel arrangement of the mortuary space, however, I would propose that the excellent equilibrium between tradition and innovation was the key to the success and proliferation of the tholos form within the southwestern Peloponnese. That the tholos was an immediate ‘hit’ is also clearly indicated by the swift emergence of emulations in the same region (Fig. 2).

Rock-cut chamber tombs clearly imitating tholoi (‘tholos-shaped’ or ‘tholoid’) appear at the extended cemetery of Chora-Volimidia already in LH I.⁶⁸ These are among the earliest chamber tombs on the post-EH II mainland, although their pioneering status is not as clear as in the case of tholoi.⁶⁹ That such emulation emerged close to Epano Englianos is easy to comprehend given the evidence for the remarkable size and early elaboration of the site, including the very early (late MH) construction of at least two tholoi there (Tholos IV and the Vayenas Tholos or Tholos V, occa-

⁶⁵ It is interesting to observe that almost entirely underground tholoi (such as those excavated at Kokla in the Argolid or Marathon in Attica) seem to be absent in the southwestern Peloponnese. It is not impossible that underground tholoi that may have lacked a covering mound emulated rock-cut chamber tombs. On the contrary, most (although not all) tholoi in the southwestern Peloponnese seem to have been *partly* underground, with only the upper part of the dome covered by a low mound, thus enhancing the resemblance to the low, shield-like burial tumuli of the earlier MH.

⁶⁶ Zavadil 2013, 559–566. In Tragana and Peristeria, however, the location is not particularly close. The (now destroyed) tumulus identified at Tragana-Kapoureika (Zavadil 2013, 601, with references) was located at a considerable distance from the tholoi at Viglitsa. Although the Kokorakou Tumulus (also now destroyed) was visible from the Peristeria hill where Tholoi 1–3 are located, the two sites are located on adjacent hills separated by a steep ravine.

⁶⁷ In the exceptional case of Voïdokoilia, additional factors may have been at play. The legitimacy of the group using the LH I tholos may have been achieved through the use of the same spot, intended as a “direct claim on behalf of the tholos-using group” to this specific commanding location (Galanakis 2011, 221; cf. already Bennet 1995, 596–597).

⁶⁸ Zavadil 2013, 308–358. Cf. Vlachopoulos, this volume.

⁶⁹ Wright 2008b, 147–148, has recently argued that rock-cut chamber tombs were an emulative invention that also took place in the southwestern Peloponnese. Unlike tholoi, chamber tombs also occur in LH I in other regions (Argolid: Prosymna, Dendra, Deiras, Schoinochori-Melissi; Lakonia: Epidauros Limera; perhaps Boiotia: Thebes-Kolonaki, Tomb 2), and their diversity in form already in this early phase may suggest that this type developed more independently in comparison to the tholos (Dickinson 1977, 63–64; Dickinson 1983, 64). That said, it should be noted that all certain examples of ‘tholos-shaped’ (or ‘tholoid’) rock-cut chamber tombs post-date the Volimidia examples (Mycenae in the Argolid, Pellana in Lakonia, Voudeni in Achaia), so that the sporadic attempts at tholos emulation can still be argued to continue an idea that originated in the southwestern Peloponnese.

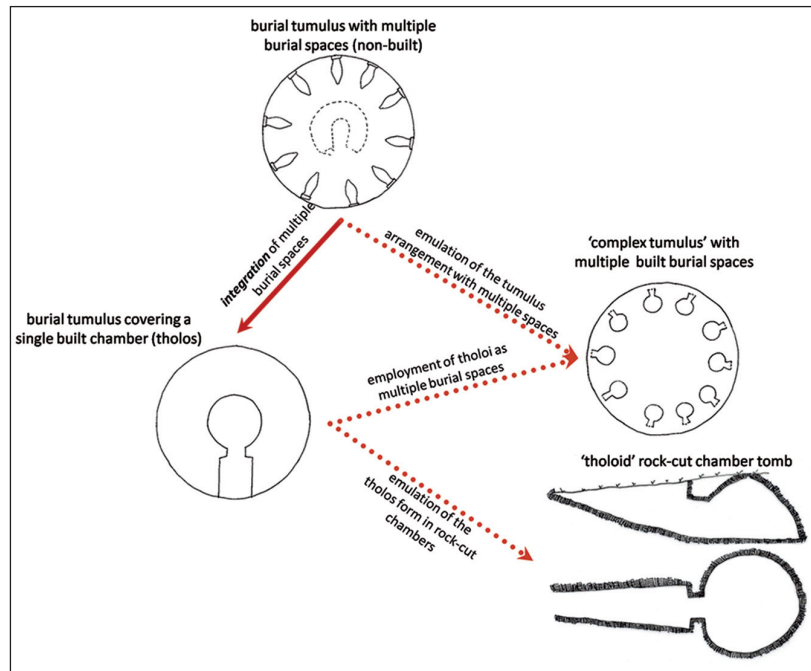


Fig. 2: Scheme showing the proposed derivation of the tholos from burial tumulus proposed here (solid line), as well as arising emulative phenomena (dotted lines). Drawings are schematised renderings showing types of monuments and not accurate renderings of actual monuments (drawn and annotated by the author)

sionally referred to as the ‘Grave Circle’).⁷⁰ This may well have triggered an emulative reaction by the groups who buried their dead in the Volimidia chamber tombs.

A similar emulative development can explain the so-called ‘complex tumuli’,⁷¹ so far most clearly represented by two examples excavated by Korres in the Koukounara region (Fig. 1). Certain artificial mounds closely follow the arrangement of the earlier MH tumuli with multiple burial spaces in the form of small (often crudely built) tholoi inserted into mounds as replacements for the earlier burial pithoi, either in a radial arrangement, as in the complex tumulus at Kaminia near Ano Kremmydia, or in a more irregular arrangement in two clusters, as in Koukounara-Gouvalari Mound α .⁷² In both cases, the emic conceptual links between burial pithoi and tholoi are quite clear. Similar is the cluster of five tholoi and one built apsidal tomb at Karpophora-Tourkokivoura (east Messenia), located very close to the Nichoria MME Tholos, although it is unclear whether these are located within an entirely artificial tumulus or an ‘accented’ natural knoll.⁷³ Besides these examples, however, the low tumulus with radially arranged built tombs of apsidal plan at Karpophora-Akones (Sambatziotis plot) (late MH/LH I–II)⁷⁴ shows that certain

⁷⁰ Zavadil 2013, 369–379; Davis – Stocker 2015 (date of Tholos IV). For the architectural history of Epano Englianos (including important discussions of the Prepalatial phases) see Nelson 2017 (also below). On survey data indicating the importance of Epano Englianos throughout the LH and its exceptional historical trajectory see Shelmerdine 2001, 114–117, fig. 2.

⁷¹ For the term, see Voutsaki 1998, 43. The term is practically synonymous with Michael Boyd’s “multiple-tholos mound” (Boyd 2016, 203–205).

⁷² Zavadil 2013, 264–273 (Kaminia), 464–479 (Koukounara-Gouvalari, Mound α), with references. The lack of a neat radial arrangement of the small tholoi on Koukounara-Gouvalari, Mound α , does not necessarily weaken its association with MH tumuli, as the arrangement of burial pithoi was also irregular in the case of at least one example, the Peristeria-Kokorakou Tumulus (Korres 2011, 586).

⁷³ Zavadil 2013, 431–438, with references; Boyd 2014, 192–196.

⁷⁴ Zavadil 2013, 429–431, with references (cf. also Lolos 1987, 154–155, figs. 186–187, on LH I pottery from Akones).

groups in east Messenia could follow the same trend without adopting (perhaps even deliberately avoiding) the tholos form. In the tumulus excavated by Marinatos at Chandrinos-Kissos, not far from Koukounara-Gouvalari or Kaminia, stone periboloi (co-existing with pithoi) may be seen as inexpensive alternatives to tholoi. Again, this tumulus seems to have been constructed after the invention of the tholos, during the LH IIA–IIIB period.⁷⁵

Their close resemblance in arrangement to MH tumuli and the small size of the tholoi has given rise to the idea that such ‘complex tumuli’ reflect the formative stage of tholos construction. This hypothesis is based on the logical assumption that the local invention of the tholos form must have moved through trial and error from structures of manageable dimensions towards larger and more elaborate examples.⁷⁶ However, such reasoning cannot be used to establish size and quality of construction as a chronological criterion. It is interesting that the Kaminia and Koukounara-Gouvalari small tholoi do not seem to be among the earliest such tombs in the region.⁷⁷ This pattern is strengthened by the fully published Karpophora-Tourkokivoura tombs, where only Tholoi 4 and 5 appear to have been used in late MH–LH I times.⁷⁸ The clustering of tholoi in these ‘complex tumuli’ was a long process, lasting (or, in the case of Tourkokivoura, even outlasting) the LH period. In ceramic terms, medium-sized but isolated tholoi, such as the Vayenas, Tholos V (d. 5.50 m) at Epano Englianos and Koryphasion-Charatsari or Osmanaga (d. c. 6 m), or even the large and elaborate Tholos IV (d. 9.35 m) at Epano Englianos, are among the first such structures on the mainland, and the first use of all three may already date to the close of the MH period.⁷⁹ Therefore, a two-stage adaptation of the tholos form, with small examples followed (however swiftly) by larger and more elaborate structures, does not seem to be supported by the evidence available so far.⁸⁰

Instead, if the aforementioned chronologies are at all significant, we may view the tholos tomb as an invention that was meant, from the very beginning and its very inception, to spatially integrate the physically separate burial spaces (including burial pithoi) within a typical Messenian tumulus into a single coherent chamber with restricted access. Such an approach would help us explain the occurrence of burial pithoi (alongside pits, cists or other burial loci) inside early southwest Peloponnesian tholoi, such as the Vayenas Tholos at Epano Englianos or the Peristeria South Tholos,⁸¹ as a continuity of a MH practice within a new spatial configuration, whereby the accessible and visible exterior of the tumulus has been turned outside-in, transformed into the closed, restrictedly accessible interior of the tholos. This radical change would reflect the grow-

⁷⁵ Zavadil 2013, 298–303 (see also Zavadil 1999).

⁷⁶ Boyd 2002, 56–57; Boyd 2014, 194–196; Boyd 2016, 203–204.

⁷⁷ Any such statement should be phrased with much caution, since relevant material is only known from Korres’ detailed (but still preliminary) reports, while excavation of both sites is incomplete. Summaries of the data available have been presented in Boyd 2002, 109–111, 232, tab. 37; Zavadil 2013, 479. In Kaminia, material pre-dating LH IIA was limited in Tholos 4 (Lolos 1987, 162–163, figs. 211–214). In Koukounara-Gouvalari, Mound α , LH I was better represented, but still only identified in three tholoi: Lolos mentions material probably dated to LH I from Tholoi $\alpha 5$, $\alpha 9$ and $\alpha 10$ (Lolos 1987, 166–168, figs. 230–236).

⁷⁸ Lolos 1987, 157–159, figs. 188–202; Boyd 2014, 193, tab. 15.1. Karpophora-Tourkokivoura Tholoi 2 and 3 were used in LH IIIA–B, Tholos 6 was used in LH IIIB up to the Dark Age I phase, while Apsidal Tomb 1 was apparently only used in Dark Age I.

⁷⁹ See Lolos 1987, 172–178, 184–194, figs. 241–278, 304–305 and 309–319 with references; see further Lolos 1989 on Koryphasion-Charatsari/Osmanaga; Davis – Stocker 2015 on Englianos, Tholos IV.

⁸⁰ Cf. Davis – Stocker 2015, 178.

⁸¹ Zavadil 2013, 374–379 (Vayenas Tholos at Epano Englianos), 514–516 (Peristeria, South Tholos), with references. Similar to Vayenas, the use of palatial jars as burial containers is also clear in at least one example from outside the southwestern Peloponnese, the tholos at Kheliotou Mylos near Ancient Corinth (Kassimi 2015, 510–512). The Kheliotou Mylos tholos bears another feature that may be considered as local to the southwest Peloponnese: an elongated depression that spans, in the case of the Corinth tholos, almost the entire distance from the entrance to the opposite wall of the burial chamber (cf. Petrakis, forthcoming). The concurrence of two ‘southwestern’ features strengthens the probability that the construction of this early tholos indicates the special connection of the local community with this region (possibly, but not certainly, within LH I, see above n. 60).

ing exclusivity of Helladic elite groups and the increasing significance placed upon participation in the funerary ritual.

If this perspective is correct, the formation of ‘complex tumuli’ such as Kaminia and Koukounara-Gouvalari, Mound α , can be viewed as representing a partial retreat (still within early Mycenaean, perhaps already in LH I) from the late MH tholos novelty, constituting a secondary adaptation of the tholos form by conservative groups of lower status who were still reluctant to move beyond the structure of the multiple tumulus as they knew it and into the new perception of fully integrated burial space represented by the tholos.⁸²

Competition and the Emerging Uniformity of Monumental Vocabulary in LH I–IIA

LH I is a period of great investment in mortuary display intended for inter-elite competition, expressed ceramically in the rise of a remarkable number of fine wares, of which the Mycenaean I style was only one.⁸³ Although local features and experimentations still occur and will never cease to be a feature of the LH mortuary record,⁸⁴ rich assemblages such as those from Peristeria, Tholos 3, the Karpophora Veves Tholos and Routsis, Tholos 2, display such similarities with contemporary Mycenae Shaft Grave assemblages as to suggest that pertinent elite groups already saw the need to establish certain commonalities; these latter generated cross-regional uniformity in an expressive material vocabulary, on which alone cross-regional competition could be based.⁸⁵

The plurality of rich and elaborate tholoi built in LH I has been commonly interpreted as evidence for the existence of many competing centres in the region throughout the early Mycenaean period.⁸⁶ This interpretation has been in consistent agreement with the findings of surveys, although we may also consider the possibility of micro-regional exclusive links (perhaps indicating special attachments or alliances?) that must have existed among elite groups within the southwestern Peloponnese. We may view the interesting distribution of the gold foil cut-outs in the shape of a seated owl that have so far only been found in Peristeria, Tholos 3 (two examples); Epano Englianos, Tholos IV (four examples); and Kakovatos, Tholos A (one example) in this light.⁸⁷

The dawn of LH IIA sees developments suggesting an unprecedented scale of effort to transcend regionalism and establish a pan-Helladic, shared elite monumental vocabulary, a further intensification of the trend that made its debut in the late MH/LH I. I will here boldly describe the occurrence of tholoi outside the southwestern Peloponnesian cradle in LH IIA as reflecting

⁸² The conservative character of the group associated with the Kaminia mound had already been noted by Korres 1977, 508. In the case of the rock-cut chamber tombs imitating tholoi at Volimidia, we may observe that these tombs were found by Marinatos to be arranged in ‘clusters’ (‘συστάδες’, see Marinatos 2014, 3, plan II, for an general plan of Volimidia). This feature may be influenced by the grouping of tholoi in sites such as Peristeria or within ‘complex tumuli’ although no tumulus-like arrangement is observable in association with any of the Volimidia tombs). Of course, the very existence of these ‘clusters’ remains to be confirmed by a thorough exploration of the entire site, in order to exclude the possibility of it being due to the chances of discovery or recovery.

⁸³ Let me maintain here, as I have done elsewhere (e.g. Petrakis 2016a, 49, 60 with endnote 1), a distinction between the Mycenaean I style and LH I as a chronological entity (phase or period) where many contemporary fine wares were produced and consumed (most notably, the so-called ‘Mainland Polychrome’ of likely Central Greek production). I am optimistic that it may not be too late to reintroduce this or any similar distinction, although I fully understand pessimistic concerns (as in Dickinson 2014b, 5, 14).

⁸⁴ For instance, gold masks seem only to occur with specific burials within the Mycenae shaft graves in LH I and apparently nowhere else. Bent swords (usually Type A rapiers) also seem to have been a regional feature of the southwestern Peloponnese already since late MH/LH I until at least LH IIIA (cf. Harrell 2016).

⁸⁵ Petrakis 2010, 412–414.

⁸⁶ Dickinson 1977, 92–93; Shelmerdine 2001, 125–127.

⁸⁷ Eder 2011, 109–110, 115–116, figs. 2, 4, with references. The LH I date of the Peristeria assemblage may suggest the date for the other less closely dated examples (the Kakovatos example may also date to LH I when Tholos A may have been first used, see above n. 59) and could support the notion of targeted associations among micro-regional elite groups.

a true diffusion of the type all over the Peloponnese as well as Attica, perhaps the outcome of cross-regional interaction between Messenia and adjacent mainland regions. Certain new tholoi constructed during this phase in Messenia (as well as in the Argolid, see below), express a new scale of monumentality, with exotic masonry styles making their debut on their most visible part: the façade.

Ashlar masonry, a style of patent Minoan origin,⁸⁸ appears now as a ‘mask’ in the façades of Peristeria, Tholos 1, and Antheia, both dated within LH IIA.⁸⁹ At approximately the same time, the same employment of ashlar in the façades of tholoi also appears in at least five examples outside the southwestern Peloponnese, namely the Aegisthus, Panagia, Lion and Kato Phournos tholoi at Mycenae, as well as Prosymna (Argive Heraion).⁹⁰ However, the background of this appearance of ashlar is different in the southwestern Peloponnese: in this region, unlike elsewhere on the mainland, as far as we know, ashlar may well have been employed by LH I in non-funerary structures at Epano Englianos, as Michael Nelson’s identification of reused cut blocks in LH I walls suggests.⁹¹ If these early dates are confirmed by a thorough study of the associated ceramic material,⁹² they would support the intriguing case that ashlar masonry was already available in the region by LH I, but, with one possible exception (Tragana-Viglitsa, Tholos 1, see below), was not employed in contemporary tholoi.⁹³

⁸⁸ Nelson 2007, 155–159; Nelson 2017, 304–305, 351–352.

⁸⁹ Zavadil 2013, 292–294 (Antheia-Makria Rachi), 502–504 (Peristeria, Tholos 1), with references.

⁹⁰ Fitzsimons 2011, 95, tab. 5.8, with references. All aforementioned examples share typological features that allowed Wace to assign them to the second group in his scheme of the structural development of Helladic tholoi. The Aegisthus tholos was long considered as featuring a ‘mix’ of features regarded as diagnostic of both groups I and II in Wace’s scheme (the lack of relieving triangle, and the employment of ashlar respectively). In order to reconcile it with his scheme, Wace assigned the ashlar ‘mask’ of the Aegisthus’ façade to a later architectural phase (noted as “Aegisthos II” in Fitzsimons 2011, 95, tab. 5.8); however, Yannis Galanakis has convincingly shown that the ashlar ‘mask’ and the rubble structure of the stomion of the Aegisthus tholos were constructed as parts of a single plan (Galanakis 2007). Moreover, the relieving triangle of this tomb was discovered during conservation work in 1997, making Aegisthus effectively a ‘group II’ tholos in Wace’s scheme. Of course, it has frequently been noted that this grouping has no chronological significance and cannot be applied beyond Mycenae (cf. Galanakis 2007, 243).

⁹¹ Nelson 2007, 151, n. 44; Nelson 2017, 306, 311–314, 349–350, 353–357. Such reuse occurs in pseudo-ashlar masonry, a building system defined by the combination of ashlar and rubble masonry. The pseudo-ashlar ‘circuit wall’ located on the southwestern edge of the hilltop (the Southwest Quadrant, Areas W 19 and W 20) and perhaps Walls SW58 and SW59 located underneath Court 63 may be dated to LH I (Nelson 2017, 349–350; cf. Blegen 1973, 11–13, 39, figs. 17–22, 72, 128–130, 140, 302, 306; Lolos 1987, 107–108, 128). This reuse of ashlar blocks should not be confused with the ashlar style masonry that occurs in LH IIIA structures at Epano Englianos (Nelson 2017, 318–328, 357–360, fig. 4.4). To the examples of pseudo-ashlar mentioned above we may now add the cut limestone blocks reused in the lower courses of walls of the recently excavated built tomb of the ‘Griffin Warrior’ at Epano Englianos (Davis – Stocker 2016, 630–631, fig. 3 below).

⁹² The treatment of this material in the final report is unfortunately not extensive. Only sherds from the long stretch of wall in the Southwestern Quadrant (Areas W19 including Trench 64-1, and W20) are illustrated (Blegen 1973, 11–13, figs. 128–130, 140). Lolos 1987, 107–108, notes that the relevant illustrations include both LH I and LH IIA material. The mixture of MH-looking (but possibly of LH I–II date), LH I and LH II material appears to be characteristic of most such contexts in Epano Englianos, and, although the density of earlier material in the deepest levels appears to be significant, there has so far been no comprehensive presentation or discussion of the stratigraphy of these tests (see Lolos 1987, 125–128, for general comments on early Mycenaean material from Epano Englianos). There were no identifiable floor deposits associated with the complex of pseudo-ashlar walls under Court 63 (Blegen 1973, 39, figs. 72, 306; Lolos 1987, 128). Given this state of affairs, it is likely that any reconstruction of the Prepalatial history of Englianos would require assessment of the evidence from the new excavations beneath the palace complex as well as throughout the ridge. Cf. Karapanagiotou et al. and Vitale et al., this volume.

⁹³ The identification of a masonry system of Cretan derivation in Englianos as early as LH I might appear at first surprising, especially considering the “much weaker” Minoanising tradition in the southwestern Peloponnese in late MH (Dickinson 2014b, 6). However, we should always bear in mind that this picture is based on the assessment of the published Nichoria material and the lack of Lustrous Decorated antecedents to the Mycenaean I style there (Dickinson 2014b, 11); even if the *ex silentio* inference is strong enough as far as ceramic development is concerned (with no positive evidence for an independent development of a Mycenaean I style in the region), the

The apparent pioneering status of Englianos in the employment of cut masonry on the Greek mainland would seem to fit early in a sequence of Cretan-influenced styles observed in the early Mycenaean architecture of the site, including orthostate masonry (with one block from a wall recovered beneath Room 7 incised with a mason's mark) that may date within LH II.⁹⁴ Moreover, the cut poros blocks in the façade and stomion of Tragana, Tholos 1 (whose construction date in LH I is probable⁹⁵), suggest that this novel refinement in the entrances of tholoi may have been another highly eclectic southwest Peloponnesian novelty that might have occurred already within LH I.⁹⁶ However, the distinct treatment of the façade in a masonry style (often using poros ashlar blocks – with or without fascia) different than the rest of the stomion (often using conglomerate or hard limestone blocks), termed by Nelson as “two-part stomion construction”⁹⁷ does not seem to appear before LH IIA; at that time, it makes its debut seemingly simultaneously in the southwestern and northeastern Peloponnese.⁹⁸ Likewise, the use of conglomerate stone (a much more labour-consuming material than limestone) for the lintels of tholoi occurs principally in the Argolid (Mycenae; Prosymna; Kazarma), but has already appeared in tholoi built during the late MH to LH I in the southwestern Peloponnese (Tragana-Viglitsa, Tholos 1; Epano Englianos, Tholos IV; Kakovatos, Tholos A), even if the finest examples of such structures occur there in LH II (Peristeria, Tholos 1; Kambos).

There are two aspects of this development that we must comment on. First, the pioneering role of cut masonry in the southwestern Peloponnese, taking place already by LH I, certain in the case of monumental architecture for the living (Epano Englianos) and probable in mortuary architecture (Tragana-Viglitsa, Tholos 1) may suggest that the ashlar ‘masks’ in the façades of the Argolid tholoi can be explained as the result of a swift transmission of what began life as a specifically southwest Peloponnesian fashion; and that this transmission was powered by intense inter-elite interaction by the beginning of LH IIA.⁹⁹ Second, we may observe, in the southwestern

degree to which the limited Nichoria material from east Messenia can be considered a barometer of Cretan influence as a whole in the entire region can be debated. The remarkable and exceptional trajectory of Epano Englianos throughout the MH–LH periods, as inferred from survey material (Shelmerdine 2001, 113–115, fig. 2c–d), should not be underestimated. The penetration of Minoanising traditions may have never been as deep and extensive in the southwestern Peloponnese as it had been in Lakonia or the Argolid, even if the appropriation of Minoan imports and influences in the shaping of an elite artefact world there was of a comparable scale. However, at Epano Englianos Minoan influence was apparently exceptionally intensive by mainland standards throughout LH I–IIIA (Rutter 2005, 24–27, figs. 2–4; Nelson 2017, 353–360). How exactly this should be associated with the site's exceptional development through LH I–IIIB must remain debatable for the time being, but it should also be made clear that Englianos is at present atypical of the degree and character of ‘Minoan’ influence elsewhere in the southwestern Peloponnese.

⁹⁴ Rutter 2005, 24–27, figs. 2–4; Davis – Stocker 2016, 636–637; Nelson 2017, 351–352, with references.

⁹⁵ Lolos 1987, 183, mentions earlier material that also included “possibly LH I (Keftiu cup sherds?)” (cf. also Furumark 1950, 191 n. 4; Dickinson 1977, 62, 116: chapter IV, endnote 20), although he interprets it as “stray settlement-material”. However, material recovered and reported by Korres in the vicinity of the tholos originated in the sieving of discarded material from Kourouniotis' 1912 excavation of the burial chamber of the tholos (Korres 1980, 332–334; Korres 1982, 121–122). There is presently no evidence of LH I settlement around the tholos where such intrusive material might have originated (the closest securely dated LH I site being Tragana-Voroulia at a distance of 1.5–2 km from the Viglitsa tholoi), although evidence for EH activity around Tholos 1 has been reported (Korres 1982, 125; Lolos 1987, 183).

⁹⁶ However, the limited distribution of ashlar in the southwestern Peloponnese in LH IIA is certainly intriguing. So far, only Peristeria, Tholos 1, and Antheia feature such ashlar ‘masks’, while ashlar is, even more intriguingly, not employed even in the masonry of Tholos III at Kato Englianos, first used in LH IIA (Zavadil 2013, 366–368, with references).

⁹⁷ Nelson 2007, 146–148, figs. 1–2. Tragana-Viglitsa, Tholos 1, features cut poros blocks in the façade as well as the stomion walls (Korres 1978, 269, pls. 174γ, 176α–β) and, despite its employment of cut masonry, it should not be regarded as an example of “two part stomion construction” (Nelson 2007, 146 n. 23).

⁹⁸ The construction of Tholos 1 followed the demolition of the East House at Peristeria on whose ruins it was partly built. It is interesting that the latter event, in Lolos' analysis of LH I pottery from the region, may “conventionally be taken to mark the turn from LH I to LH IIA” there (Lolos 1987, 540).

⁹⁹ I would not generalise, however, to argue this was because “Messenia played a particularly important role in the circulation of Minoan-style artefacts to the rest of Greece” (Fitzsimons 2011, 95, citing Robin Hägg and Georgios

Peloponnese, a deliberately late switch in the investment of labour from the residential/ceremonial¹⁰⁰ to the mortuary realm, suggesting an unprecedented intensification of mortuary display in LH IIA, now employing forms of undisputed Cretan ancestry, in addition to independent innovations based on the local MH tradition (as tholoi may have been).

Such intensification of Cretan influence, considered perhaps the defining feature of LH IIA elite vocabulary cross-regionally, is also reflected in the dominance and repertoire explosion of the Mycenaean IIA style that out-rivalled virtually all competing fine wares.¹⁰¹ Among the new ceramic world of the LH IIA phase, monumental palatial jars were also broadly distributed across the Peloponnese with significant numbers recovered from elite burials in tholoi and chamber tombs in the northeastern and southwestern regions.¹⁰² This is certainly not the place to assess the degree to which the appropriation of Cretan forms by the mainland elites constituted an act of reinterpretation, an *interpretatio Mycenaea*. This would necessitate a much broader perspective than the one adopted in the present paper.¹⁰³ However, there are some interesting insights offered even by our limited outlook: the clear examples of the use of such palatial jars as burial containers in Vayenas Tholos V at Epano Englianos and the Kheliotou Mylos tholos at Ancient Corinth,¹⁰⁴ should lead us to at least consider the possibility that other occurrences of fragmentary palatial jars from no longer reconstructible assemblages placed in rich tholoi and chamber tombs may also reflect their use as burial jars, continuing the practice of placing adult burials in large ceramic containers broadly attested in the burial tumuli of the earlier MH period in the region.¹⁰⁵ The large number of palatial jars in Kakovatos, Tholos A, or Peristeria, Tholos 1, might receive a similar explanation. The crucial point, however, is the use of a broad range (beside the piriform palatial jars) of ceramic vessels as funerary containers in Vayenas as well as in Peristeria, South Tholos,¹⁰⁶ while Korres has advanced a similar interpretation for the jars found ‘embedded’ in the walls of the chamber of Kaminia, Tholos 3 (although this was found empty), as well as the matt-painted pithoi from Kaminia, Tholos 5, and Koukounara-Gouvalari, Tholos 2.¹⁰⁷ The possibility that the occurrence of palatial jars with rich burials in other regions of the Peloponnese and Central Greece may indicate the adoption of a southwest Peloponnesian practice that might

Korres), as this would be to play down the role of the southwestern Peloponnese to that of a mere ‘transponder’ of exotic fashions. As argued below, I find such ‘cognates’ in the monumental vocabulary of these different regions to be symptomatic of the intense interaction among regional elites within LH I–II.

¹⁰⁰ It is here assumed that the unidentified structure to which the cut blocks embedded in pseudo-ashlar LH I walls at Epano Englianos originally belonged had such a function.

¹⁰¹ A particularly well-illustrated case of a fine ware that went rapidly out of fashion after LH I was the so-called ‘Mainland Polychrome’ (for this and other contemporary varieties of bichrome and polychrome ceramics see Lindblom – Rutter, this volume). This class scarcely occurs in the southwestern Peloponnese, where it must be considered as imported, as may be the case with the Kato Samikon-Kleidi ‘Tumulus’ (actually tholos). A jug, as well as a few sherds from Nichoria and possibly Malthi (Kato Samikon jug: Lolos 1987, 298–299, figs. 490a–491, with references; the Nichoria material is assigned to late MH, but the stratigraphy is not very clear in the relevant deposits and a date in LH I cannot be ruled out: Howell 1992, 68). A bichrome pottery class now termed Light on Dull-Painted has been identified at Malthi and Nichoria and is suggested as a regional southwestern Peloponnesian product (Lindblom – Rutter, this volume).

¹⁰² Kalogeropoulos 2011.

¹⁰³ Most recent discussion in Maran 2011 (cf. also Kalogeropoulos 2015 focusing on Shaft Grave IV of Mycenae Circle A).

¹⁰⁴ Tylour 1973, 166, fig. 233.4a–c; Kassimi 2015, 510.

¹⁰⁵ Although Kalogeropoulos endorses the mortuary interpretation of (at least some) palatial jars, he argues for the East Cretan origin of the practice (Kalogeropoulos 2011, 210–212, 224–226). The strength of local MH tradition is downplayed, as is the significance of the ‘exception’ of the southwestern Peloponnese.

¹⁰⁶ Tylour 1973, 156–158, 159–166, fig. 233.1–2, 4–5; Korres 1979, 510–511, pls. 266β, 268β. It would be fascinating to consider the possibility that a MM III small pithos from Englianos, Tholos IV (Davis – Stocker 2015, 176, fig. 1), might also have been a burial jar. Fragments from at least one palatial jar were recovered from the stonion and chamber of the same tholos (Tylour 1973, 105, 111, fig. 196.2; Lolos 1987, 188).

¹⁰⁷ Korres 1977, 494, 506; Korres 1982, 128.

have accompanied the diffusion and adoption of what began life as a regional type of mortuary monument (the tholos) within LH IIA is certainly fascinating.¹⁰⁸

The recent (2015) sensational discovery of the built tomb of the ‘Griffin Warrior’ located near the entrance of Tholos IV at Epano Englianos, whose single male burial has been dated by the excavators within LH IIA, is bound to bring a gale of fresh air into the discussion of the mortuary landscape in early Mycenaean Englianos, and this prospect is further enhanced by the even more recently discovered Tholoi VI and VII northeast of Tholos IV.¹⁰⁹ The close proximity between the tomb of the ‘Griffin Warrior’ and the entrance of Tholos IV may suggest a special association between the robust male buried in the built grave and the elite group buried in the tholos. The suggested LH IIA date of this burial – whose astonishingly rich assemblage where ceramic items were absent seems to anticipate the ‘warrior graves’ or ‘burials with bronzes’ of the succeeding LH IIB–IIIA1/LM II–IIIA1 phases – is interesting in local terms too. LH II is a phase of great diversification of the burial locations around the acropolis of Englianos: the adjacent Tholos IV as well as the Vayenas Tholos V were both in use,¹¹⁰ while Tholos III in Kato Englianos and the Tsakalis rock-cut chamber tomb cemetery to the west of the later palace appear to have been first used during LH IIA.¹¹¹ Such diversity of burial grounds at the site, to which the ‘Griffin Warrior’ is a further impressive addition, may reflect the emergence of diverse elite groups aspiring to power (with varying degrees of intensity and success) at that time, contemporary with the employment of orthostate walls in Englianos,¹¹² as well as the rise of a shared Helladic monumental vocabulary forged by intense cross-regional elite interaction, as argued above.¹¹³

Moreover, it offers an opportunity to appreciate the dynamics of such interaction now observable across the early Mycenaean world, with elite groups from Boiotia to the southern Peloponnese now actively engaged in the formation of a common ‘material vocabulary’, within which individual components swiftly lost their regional flavour and an increasingly pan-Helladic ‘Mycenaean’ material identity was formed. Our difficulty in arguing for the existence of leader sites or leader regions may be symptomatic of the processes involved in the formation of this identity: this may have been based on the intense interaction among elite groups, including substantial collective activities with interregional membership, as well as exogamy.¹¹⁴ The latter hypothesis has at least now found firm support in the suggestion of a non-local (but still unidentified) origin for the high-status females buried in Mycenae, Circle A, based on strontium isotope ratio (⁸⁷Sr/⁸⁶Sr) analysis.¹¹⁵

In such an environment, the occurrence of different contributions made by different groups throughout LH I–II (and perhaps later on) must be acknowledged in any attempt to understand the

¹⁰⁸ It is interesting to consider the more limited occurrence of palatial jars in chamber tombs alongside Wright’s recent proposal (Wright 2008b, 147–148, see above n. 69) that the invention of the rock-cut chamber tomb took place in the context of the emulation of tholoi within the southwestern Peloponnese.

¹⁰⁹ Davis – Stocker 2016, esp. 635–636, on the date of the burial. For Tholoi VI and VII at Epano Englianos see <<http://www.griffinwarrior.org/tholos-tombs/>> (last access 30 Nov. 2020).

¹¹⁰ The fragments of a palatial jar from the dromos and chamber of Tholos IV (Taylour 1973, 105, 111, fig. 196.2; Lolos 1987, 188) may attest to the use of the tomb during LH IIA.

¹¹¹ Murphy 2014, 213–215, tab. 16.2. One is obviously eager to see how this picture may be further enhanced by the study of the newly discovered tholoi (see above n. 109).

¹¹² Nelson 2017, 304, 314–318, 350–351, fig. 3.26–31.

¹¹³ The choice to locate the single burial of the ‘Griffin Warrior’ close to the passageway leading from the Northeast Gate to the entrance of Tholos IV might reflect this individual’s attachment to – but, yet, non-membership in – the (kin) group using this particular tholos. However, given the preliminary character of the chronology of the ‘Griffin Warrior’ burial and the ongoing discussion of the history of use of Tholos IV and its recently discovered ‘companions’ by Sharon Stocker and Jack Davis, such a hypothesis may be considered tentative at best. For the intriguing suggestion that the individual buried in the ‘Griffin Warrior’ may have been an early Pylian /wanaks/ see Stocker – Davis 2020. For the introduction of the institution associated with this title see further below.

¹¹⁴ Petrakis 2010, 414.

¹¹⁵ Nafplioti 2009; Dickinson et al. 2012, 174, 181–182. One of these females may be identified with the good ‘mistress of the house’ associated with at least some of the five gold-covered spindles found in Shaft Grave III (Maran 2011, 287–288, see above n. 35).

formation and development of Mycenaean elite behaviour, although most details will remain etically invisible. Occasionally, we may be permitted glimpses into the identity of the agents responsible: the diffusion of the tholos during LH IIA (with or without the ashlar ‘mask’ refinement) may be assigned to the influential role of major elite groups based at Englianos as well as in some of its major competitors or allies at that time; in a similar manner, the concentration of virtually all known LH I rhyta in a few Circle A burials suggests the pioneering role of this specific elite group in the introduction and appropriation of this Minoan ritual implement during LH I and hints at the leading role of the Mycenae elite in the diffusion and adoption of rhyta elsewhere on the mainland during LH IIA, including Englianos, Peristeria and Psari in the southwestern Peloponnese.¹¹⁶

Epilogue: Transition to Palatial Mycenaean

What was anticipated by the swift diffusion and adoption of the Mycenaean I style (whatever its precise origins within the Peloponnese)¹¹⁷ in the southern Greek mainland during LH I, as well as the occurrence of similar funerary jewellery across the Peloponnese at that time, is further intensified in the next phase. The novel LH IIA ‘vocabulary’ displays the prevalence of Cretan influence in all its glory, although this is admittedly more visible in the northeastern Peloponnese, where the Mycenaean IIA stylistic explosion rapidly eclipses other fine wares that had flourished during LH I, such as the so-called ‘Mainland Polychrome’. The situation in the southwestern Peloponnese is still much less clear. Whatever the actual interpretation for the appearance or disappearance of specific pottery classes or other artefact groups, the closeness to Crete reflected by this ‘narrowing’ of influences is unprecedented and perhaps meaningful. In a bold attempt to read this intensification in political terms, I may be allowed to make a final observation. This unprecedented and far from superficial intimacy between Crete and the mainland during LM IB/LH IIA is the necessary prelude for the most dramatic change in the political make-up of the Hellenic polities that was to come. The adoption or adaptation of the *wanax* ideology, a constellation of ideas and practices regarding the ideals of rulership, would so far appear to be inextricably linked to the rise of the first literate administrations on the Greek mainland employing the Linear B script, whose formation can be plausibly dated somewhere in the LH IIB–IIIA1 range.¹¹⁸ It is largely due to the formation of a Cretan-based pan-Hellenic monumental display vocabulary that such a major institutional reform of cross-regional scale became feasible.

The new institution used the title /wanaks/,¹¹⁹ a term without a Greek or any other Indo-European etymology that may have been a Minoan loanword.¹²⁰ Unfortunately, the extensive discussion of the evidence that may positively support this hypothesis cannot be accommodated here.¹²¹ Accepting the hypothesis of such a major borrowing might just hint at the intensity of the intimacy between certain mainland groups and certain Cretan (especially Knossian) elite groups during the preceding phases. It is such intimacy that generated the necessary pan-Aegean background for the strikingly similar results of the reforms that led to the rise of the palatial institutions from coastal Thessaly to Crete during the next couple of centuries.

¹¹⁶ Petrakis 2016a.

¹¹⁷ Dickinson 2014b.

¹¹⁸ Our earliest textual documentation of the term may come from the ‘Room of the Chariot Tablets’ at Knossos, dated by Jan Driessen to the LM II–IIIA1 period (see Driessen 2000 for a comprehensive overview of this deposit, but Firth – Melena 2016 should now be consulted as well).

¹¹⁹ Spelled *wa-na-ka* in the palatial Linear B script of the palatial administrations and surviving in mostly literary use in the first millennium BC as *ἄναξ*, in the Late Bronze Age the term may have had a semantic range similar to that of English ‘Lord’.

¹²⁰ Palaima 1995, 131–134; Petrakis 2016b.

¹²¹ I have elsewhere argued (Petrakis 2016b) that the Linear B orthography of *wa-na-ka* and its derivative adjective *wa-na-ka-te-ro* /wanakteros/ ‘pertaining to the *wanax*’ shows a very persistent arbitrary orthographic vowel that may allow its possible interpretation as an ‘orthographic fossil’ taken over from the ‘parent’ system that the Linear B phonographic repertoire was based on. Such a suggestion has obvious implications for the origin of the title.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1: Map of the southwestern Peloponnese showing the distribution of monuments discussed in the text. ● = excavated burial tumuli with multiple burial spaces; ○ = burial tumuli (insufficiently explored or identified through survey); ▲ = tholoi of late MH–LH I date; ★ = ‘complex tumulus’ with a variety of built burial spaces (small tholoi, periboloi, apsidal built tombs) (drawn and annotated by the author)

Fig. 2: Scheme showing the proposed derivation of the tholos from burial tumulus proposed here (solid line), as well as arising emulative phenomena (dotted lines). Drawings are schematised renderings showing types of monuments and not accurate renderings of actual monuments (the tumulus with multiple burial spaces is based on Papoulia-Ayios Ioannis, see Korres 1980, 328, fig. 1; the ‘complex tumulus’ is loosely based on Kaminia, acknowledging the great diversity in this category; the ‘tholoid’ rock-cut chamber tomb is based on Volimidia, Tomb A8, see Marinatos 2014, 46, plan 16) (drawn and annotated by the author)