Ma(r)king Places: The Monumental Mortuary Landscapes of Early Mycenaean Greece

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Abstract: This paper assesses the relationship of early Mycenaean tholoi with rock-cut chamber tombs, especially at the level of funerary monumentality from LH I to LH IIIA1. Studies on this subject in the Late Bronze Age tend to focus on particular sites or just on tholos tombs. The extant monumental chamber tombs, however, help bring to light some significant, and hitherto little observed, patterns with wider social implications at a regional and at an Aegean level. There is now good data to suggest that chamber tombs may not have been complementary to tholoi within a notional hierarchy of 'funerary types' or 'burial styles' in the early Mycenaean period. Funerary structures and their associated burials, whether in tholoi or chamber tombs, suggest complex social strategies on behalf of the tomb-using groups in a politically dynamic period for Aegean affairs. It is argued that funerary monumentality in tholos and chamber tomb architecture helped to create competing and complementing social narratives and long-lasting mnemonic landscapes that were important for materialising ideology and negotiating power in the early Mycenaean period.

Keywords: Monumentality, funerary archaeology, chamber tombs, tholos tombs, Mycenaean Greece

Introduction

From the early days of archaeological exploration, monumental architecture has played a crucial role in attracting scholarly interest and setting the foundations for the systematic study of the pre-classical past of Greece. Marvelled at as engineering wonders, interest in these structures soon shifted to the burials and particularly the, often precious, objects with which they were associated. However, in the last forty years, new approaches to the study of ancient architecture have developed alongside several period-, region-, site-, or artefact-specific studies, all of which have contributed significantly to developing a sharper resolution of regional attitudes to tombs and burials in the Late Bronze Age Aegean.[2]

As many papers in this volume highlight, the early Late Bronze Age (i.e. from the 17th to the early 14th century BC) was transformative socially, politically and culturally for the communities of the southern Aegean.[3] It is also at this time that tombs and burials underwent a significant transformation, which is characterised by architectural experimentation, the introduction and spread of new tomb types – most prominently the tholos and chamber tombs that form the focus of this paper – and new funerary practices.

Two are the most striking phenomena of this transformation: an interest in progressively increasing tomb size, which is also accompanied by an increase in the tomb's elaboration and the complexity of the layout; and the spiralling investment on behalf of those performing the funerals in the, often astonishing, quantity, quality, and diversity of objects with which they furnished certain burials. While the latter is not always easy to appreciate, not least because of extensive looting or disturbances to the assemblages from antiquity to the present day, the former – that I describe here as architectural monumentality – is a far more enduring reminder of the 'arms race' competition between communities across the Aegean to build larger and more elaborate funerary

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2 For two recent reviews on Late Bronze Age burials, see Galanakis 2018 and Papadimitriou 2018.

3 Wright 2004; Wright 2006; Wright, this volume.

structures to house their dead. Such a systematic and prolonged architectural monumentalisation is unparalleled in its geographical spread in the Bronze Age Aegean.[4]

A number of recent discussions have highlighted the social significance of architecture, and of the built space in general,[5] with tombs interpreted as material manifestations of social relations. This paper, inspired by these recent discussions, considers funerary monumentality as a proxy for identifying the development of shared cultural codes and craft practices and as another way for reconstructing multi-scale networks of interaction in the Late Bronze Age Aegean. In this paper I would like to compare chamber tombs to tholoi in early Mycenaean Greece – perhaps a rather odd choice for a topic, since a lot of the knowledge we have about chamber tombs derives from the later part of the Late Bronze Age, when this type spread widely, though unevenly, across the Aegean. Only a mere 2% of all known chamber tombs actually appear at present to have been built in LH I–IIA. On top of that, most of these tombs continued to receive burials in LH III, a practice that limits significantly our knowledge on how these early burials were treated and furnished. A better way to compare these tombs is actually afforded by their architecture and location in space – often the two best preserved features for tombs of this period.[6] In order to achieve a better comparison, I will focus on the most monumental tholoi and chamber tombs from LH I to LH IIIA1 and their connections – or not – in terms of form and elaboration, their location in space and their clustering patterns with each other.[7]

Properties of the 'Monumental'

Before moving to answering this question, it is worth assessing briefly the properties of the 'monumental'. The word 'monument' derives from the Latin *monumentum/monimentum,* which in turn comes from the verb *monere* (to remind). Sharing the same Indo-European stem, in Greek we find the word μνημείο, deriving from the verb μνάομαι/μιμνήσκω (to remember), the same as μνήμη (memory). In both Greek and Latin, the words μνημεῖο/μνῆμα and *monumentum* progressively became synonymous with the tomb itself.[8] Thus, in practical terms, the word 'monument' has a more flexible application referring to anything that can evoke memories (a memorial) and it need not be monumental in scale, magnitude and elaboration.

This powerful, though less tangible, element of the monumental lies in its ability to construct memories and subsequently mnemonic landscapes, as I have argued elsewhere.[9] Monuments encapsulate meaning and can bring to mind past lives, emotions, concepts, associations and experiences. This fusion of the natural and social landscape, of the past with the present, the interaction between individuals, communities and the land, is more vividly marked by the construction of monuments. As products of human workmanship, they serve as witnesses to and reminders of something memorable. In the funerary context, this aspect would have been most

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4 Architectural monumentality in the Aegean is certainly not restricted to the Late Bronze Age as several tombs and the palaces on Crete make clear. The Middle Bronze Age tumuli in mainland Greece were also impressive in size and, occasionally, in elaboration, enclosing an area of up to 500 m^2.

5 E.g. the proceedings of two international conferences (Maran et al. 2006; Bretschneider et al. 2007) and a series of independent studies, e.g. Galanakis 2009; Fitzsimons 2011; Brysbaert 2013.

6 The important work of Boyd 2014; Boyd 2015; Dabney 2016; Papadimitriou 2016, and Efkleidou 2019, has already covered some ground on this topic; see also Wright 2008 specifically on chamber tombs.

7 We must keep in mind that the appearance of these monuments has deteriorated significantly since they were built and there is also some uncertainty with regard to environmental and topographic changes that may affect the visibility of these monuments in antiquity (i.e. how they were actually seen in antiquity).

8 For references, see e.g. Liddell – Scott – Jones, s.v. μνημεῖον <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsj/#eid=70385>, and Thesaurus linguae Latinae, s.v. monumentum (monimentum) <http://publikationen.badw.de/de/thesaurus/lemmata#60245> (last access 11 Dec. 2020).

9 Galanakis 2011; The term 'landscape' is here understood as the engagement of people in particular places – 'meaningful, socially constructed places involving bodily and cognitive experience' (Wilson – David 2002, 6); on definitions of 'landscapes' see Taçon 2002.

clearly displayed during the construction of the tomb and its use for the funeral and post-funeral rites. In this respect, all tombs can be understood as monumental as they are able to set and keep individual and collective memories in motion, to evoke and maintain ideas and emotions, and to instigate collective attitudes and actions.

When examining monumental architecture in the Late Bronze Age Aegean, however, it is another popular definition that is commonly employed to identify and assess this phenomenon: 'grandly imposing'.[10] Several scholars have written about monumental architecture, following this definition, and its association with power – and the concept is not limited to one period or the Aegean for that matter.[11] Size and architectural elaboration[12] are the two most immediately and powerfully experienced properties of the monumental, especially when they "exceed the requirements of any practical function that a building is intended to perform" to use Bruce Trigger's oft-quoted definition.[13] The size and elaboration of monuments may instil awe, admiration and fear in the onlooker. In addition, the labour investment required for the construction of monumental tombs would have transformed the building site into a stage for the performance of power.[14] Specifically in the case of tholos and chamber tombs, the amounts of soil that would have come out during their excavation would have required management, which in its own right would have formed a 'grandly imposing' spectacle. At the same time, the impressive size of some of the most monumental examples would have continued to do so, during the performance of the funeral rites and probably also long after.

The element of reuse brings us to another important property of the monumental, that of endurance, which in the case of most Late Bronze Age tombs appears to be reflected in their successive use, over many decades and sometimes centuries, for multiple burials. Although visibility is often combined with size and elaboration as an important parameter for identifying architectural monumentality, this is hardly the case in Late Bronze Age Aegean funerary architecture. With a few notable exceptions, the fragmented geomorphology of Greece often hinders attempts to elevate the prominence of monuments outside their immediate vicinity. This is not to say that the location they occupied was accidental or unimportant. Tombs may have taken up a special place in the socio-political, natural, religious or even legendary/eschatological landscape. In this respect, location and landscape associations, rather than visual prominence in its own right, may have been more important in dictating the setting of a tomb, at least for the most part in the Late Bronze Age Aegean.[15] It is during the construction, initial use and perhaps certain post-funeral performances of and in the tomb that the community would have experienced the making of monumentality.

Like all aspects of architecture, monumentality is a social action. It needs builders and commissioners as much as it needs an audience. It thus depends largely on the experiences of the viewer and the participants, which may differ considerably through space and time, i.e. it is difficult to apply an absolute numerical value to monumentality since it is culturally specific and often based on the viewer's experiences.[16] Therefore, to consider a structure from an archaeological perspective as monumental is, to a large extent, a subjective, modern, analytical approach that depends on the existing data and the average size of tombs per period and per region. I would argue, however, that the examination of certain elements for identifying monumentality in Aegean Late Bronze

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10 As, e.g., given in a common reference work like the Oxford English Dictionary.

11 E.g. Renfrew 1973; Trigger 1990; Sherratt 1990; Bradley 1998; Scarre 2002; Thomas 2007; Scarre 2011; Thomas – Meyers 2012; Osborne 2014a (edited volume with numerous excellent papers on the topic of monumentality).

12 By 'architectural elaboration', I refer here to the employment of sophisticated building techniques (e.g. ashlar masonry) and the presence of additional features to the main core of the tomb (e.g. finely cut or built doorways, side chambers, benches, deep façades, and long dromoi).

13 Trigger 1990, 119.

14 Along the lines described for Mycenae by Santillo Frizell 1997; Santillo Frizell 1999; Mason 2007.

15 As I have argued elsewhere, Galanakis 2011.

16 Osborne 2014b, 3–4 and 13, where he advocates a relational approach to monumentality: "to see monumentality [as] an ongoing, constantly renegotiated *relationship* between thing and person, between the monument(s) and the person(s) experiencing the monument".

Age funerary architecture, such as the chamber area, the dromos length and the depth on the façade of a tomb, allows us to appreciate the scale of competition, the behaviour of different tomb types beyond our modern analytical boundaries and, perhaps more importantly, the role of form in shaping group identities.

Obviously, grasping the meaning of monumentality in antiquity is very difficult, as already mentioned. There can be no absolute definition of this term, only a relative one in the relationship that exists between a monument and the people experiencing it. One such relational viewpoint is afforded by the interest of, originally a few and progressively many more, tomb-using groups across the Aegean in increasing the size and elaboration of their funerary structures. As aptly phrased by Colin Renfrew, "competitive emulation is another form of interaction where neighbouring polities may be spurred to ever greater displays of wealth or power in an effort to achieve higher inter-polity status […] The magnitude of these gestures has to be measured along some scale, and the gestures are thus similar in kind."[17] Following this line of thinking, funerary monumentality in early Mycenaean Greece can be understood as providing one such standard of measurement encouraging competitors to make their efforts similar to facilitate comparison with those of others.[18] Monumentality can therefore be seen both as a social craft practice that produced and shaped shared cultural codes and common social values in early Mycenaean Greece, and a by-product of the competitive emulation that described the early Late Bronze Age societies in the Aegean.

Of Monumental Tholos and Chamber Tombs

As is well-known, chamber tombs share a close relationship with their built counterparts – the tholoi. Both emerged at a time of architectural experimentation and formed features of the wider changes that took place in mortuary practices, including the progressive separation of tombs from settlements.[19] They share a similar layout that served practical as well as social purposes and facilitated or created additional space for ritual action. Both types also evolved into the containers par excellence for collective burials and exhibit considerable diversity in terms of size, quality of construction and burial furnishings, which appears to suggest that – from the very beginning – they were employed by groups with uneven access to resources, materials, manpower, contacts and also display strategies.

Yet chamber tombs, because of their rock-cut nature, their overall smaller size to tholoi, and their development, especially in LH III when they vastly outnumbered their built counterparts, often take a back seat, as it were, in discussions about monumentality and its uses in the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean. As a result, we miss an important point in the transformation of mortuary practices: namely, how people chose to represent themselves and why – and the impact this representation had on the landscapes in which they lived. Despite some recent efforts, also in this conference, I feel that Pascal Darcque's plea in the *Thanatos* volume, to give more prominence to chamber tombs, should be followed more systematically if we are to better understand the multiplicity of uses built and rock-cut tombs served in the Late Bronze Age.[20] This plea is particularly important, in my view, in the early Mycenaean period when tholoi and chamber tombs competed well in the 'arms race' for architectural monumentality.

There are about 300 known Late Bronze Age tholoi in the Aegean, excluding the numerous LM IIIC examples. The average chamber area of all measurable Late Bronze Age examples is 23.50 m^2.[21] (Fig. 1) For the purpose of my discussion here, I will use this average as significant

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17 Renfrew 1986, 8.

18 Standardisation in material culture may also be understood as a social strategy that encourages comparison.

19 With the exception of Volimidia perhaps, prior to LH IIB, it is even difficult to speak of chamber tomb cemeteries.

20 Darcque 1987.

21 The median of all measurable Late Bronze Age examples is 12.56 m^2. For the early Mycenaean period, both the average (31.60 m^2) and the median (20 m^2) of measurable tholoi is higher than the whole Late Bronze Age measur-

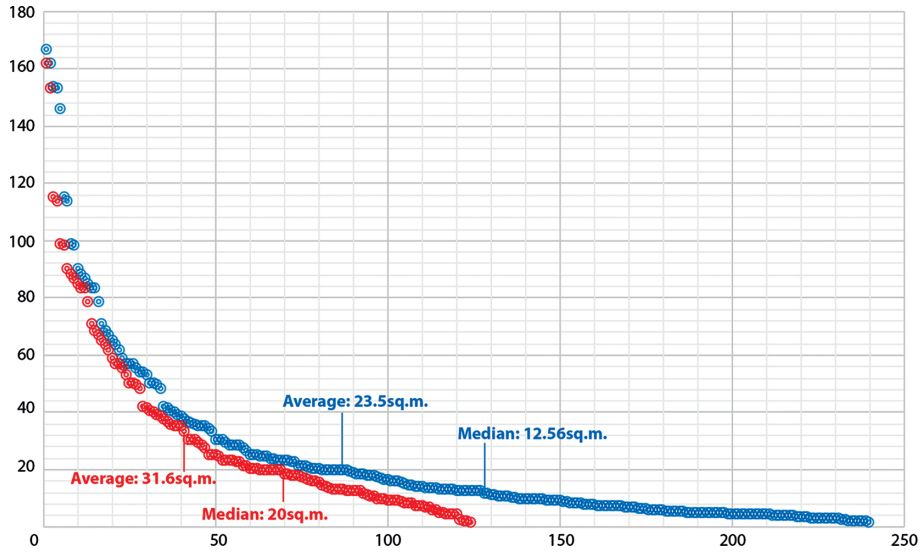

Fig. 1: Graph showing all measurable Late Bronze Age tholos tombs (in blue), excluding LM IIIC examples. The y-axis gives the chamber area in m^2. A blue dot refers to each of the 246 measurable examples (82 % of all known tholoi). Red dots represent only the early Mycenaean examples. Average and median chamber areas are also indicated (Y. Galanakis)

in defining monumentality in tholos architecture cross-regionally and also across the Late Bronze Age acknowledging, however, the obvious limitations and dangers this broad-stroke approach entails, not least as size is one of many elements in the construction and elaboration of a monument, and there are also significant chronological and geographical fluctuations. Of all known tholoi, 67 examples are above 23.50 m^2 – almost one out of every four extant tholoi. Most of them were built in the early Mycenaean period with a peak in LH IIA, when the average size of all new examples was 53.33 m^2. (Fig. 2)

Although the interest in building large tholoi continued in LH IIB–IIIA1, especially outside the core palatial areas, the increase that is observed in the overall numbers of new tholoi contrasts sharply with the drop observed in both the numbers of new monumental examples and, more importantly, with the general drop in the chamber area of new tholoi built in this period. In short, in LH IIB–IIIA1, we may have more new tholoi built than ever before, but they are, overall, smaller in comparison to their LH IIA predecessors and there are now fewer monumental examples amongst them. With the exception of Atreus, Clytemnestra and Minyas, monumentality in tholos architecture dropped significantly across the Aegean in LH IIIA2 and early in LH IIIB, and appears to have disappeared completely by 1250 BC.

Apart from the hybrid Thorikos Tomb IV, which appears to blend elements of tholos and built chamber tomb architecture, all other known monumental tholoi dating to the end of the Middle Bronze Age or LH I are found exclusively in the southwest Peloponnese. It is during LH IIA that we see a spread of tholos monumentality to Analipsis in Arkadia, several sites in the northeast Peloponnese, and possibly also other Aegean regions. The regions added to this group in LH IIB–IIIA1 are Crete (mainly around Knossos), Achaia, Lakonia, Aitolo-Akarnania and Thessaly (mainly around the bay of Volos). Obviously a lot of these early monumental examples have been found looted, so it is very difficult to compare their assemblages and burial practices – yet in the vast majority of cases, what remains of their original assemblage suggests a good correlation between the size of these structures and the funerary elaboration of the burials they once

able corpus. The measurements shown here in Figs. 1–2 do not include the two recently discovered Tholoi VI and VII at Pylos.

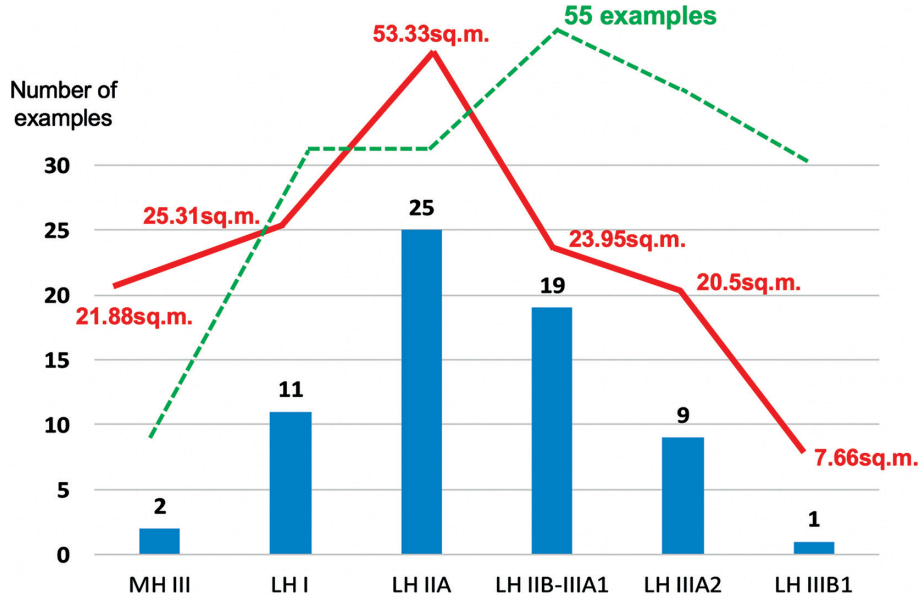

Fig. 2: Graph showing the number of examples of monumental tholoi (i.e. with a chamber >23.50 m^2) per period in columns. These columns are juxtaposed to overall examples of measurable tholoi per period (in green) and their average chamber area in m^2 (in red) (Y. Galanakis)

housed,[22] with all the different social gradations as the papers in this volume by Christine de Vreé and Michaela Zavadil make clear.

Chamber tombs are far more numerous than tholoi and this element has of course contributed to identifying this type as the burial receptacle par excellence for 'ordinary people', however one defines this term, from Christos Tsountas' day to the present. The c. 4000 known chamber tombs are attested in 18 Aegean regions and around 350 sites, though 82 % are actually concentrated in just seven of these regions, with the top-20 largest cemeteries yielding 53.50 % of the total number of all known examples.[23] The vast majority (97.50 %) were built during LH IIB–IIIC (and especially LH IIB–IIIA2). For c. 1500 of these examples (c. 40 % of the total), we have measurements available, mostly of the chamber area (significantly smaller when compared to the 82 % of tholoi, the measurements of which are more frequently given in preliminary reports). Despite noteworthy regional variations (e.g. in terms of number of chamber tombs per region and per site, and their size and quality of construction), no Aegean region has yielded an average chamber area >15 m^2, with the average in the Aegean being 7.86 m^2, i.e. three times smaller than the average of the Late Bronze Age tholoi (Fig. 3).[24] If we expand this analysis to the averages per site, this discrepancy is even more prominent.[25]

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22 Although smaller tombs may occasionally have been built in anticipation of fewer burials or for accommodating burials of children, there is enough data to suggest that the size of a chamber tomb was not limited by these two criteria: e.g. at Prosymna, while Tomb 52 was indeed small (3.85 m^2) and apparently yielded only two burials, the more sizeable Tomb 10 (11.57 m^2) also had two burials. Tomb 26 (24.21 m^2) apparently contained only five burials, whereas Tombs 45 (6.55 m^2) and 46 (5.31 m^2), though four and five times smaller, contained respectively 26 and 19 burials. These numbers are based on Blegen's skulls and skeleton counts (Blegen 1937, 93–97 [T 26], 116–117 [T 52], 197–200 [T 10], 218–220 [T 45], 221–223 [T 46]).

23 For the tholos tombs, I rely on my PhD work (Galanakis 2008) with updates. For chamber tombs, I started my own research by consulting the work of Spyridoula Kontorli-Papadopoulou (Papadopoulos 1975), the last major study in Aegean archaeology on chamber tombs across the whole of the Late Bronze Age Aegean. I have significantly updated this work with my own data collected as a Tytus Fellow at the University of Cincinnati.

24 Given that preliminary reports tend to record large(r) rather than small(er) chamber tombs, we must expect that the average per region and the Aegean as a whole is <7.86 m^2.

25 Certain clusters of chamber tombs at Mycenae feature averages significantly higher than the Aegean or regional average: e.g. Alepotrypa-Ayios Georgios: 37.84 m^2; Panagia-Epano Pigadi: 23.60 m^2; Kato Phournos: 23.42 m^2.

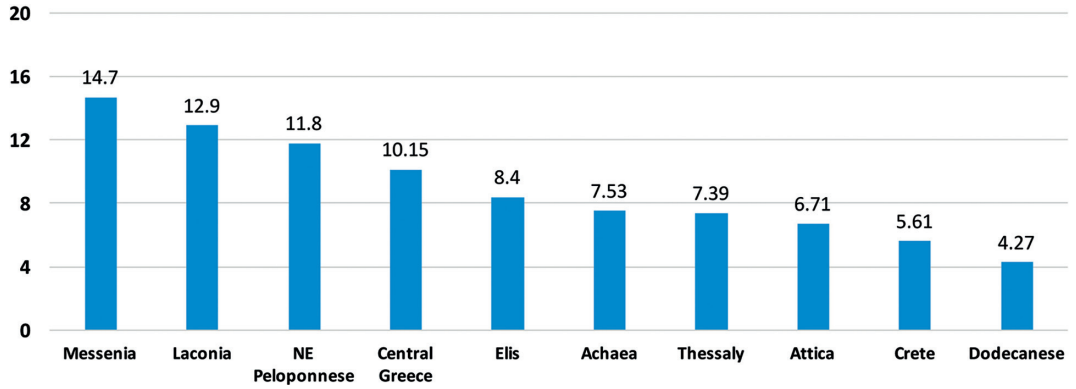

Fig. 3: Averages of chamber area in m^2 of measurable Late Bronze Age chamber tombs in the Aegean (c. 40 % of all known examples) (Y. Galanakis)

Can a cross-regional cut-off point, as it were, be identified for monumentality in rock-cut architecture? We could use the average of tholoi as a common standard – or the chamber tombs average that I have just mentioned. However, the observation made, some time ago, by William Cavanagh and Christopher Mee,[26] that there seems to be a distinct upper echelon of chamber tombs that most frequently display good quality of construction and elaboration is, I think, more useful for understanding monumentality in rock-cut architecture. Most of these upper echelon examples feature a chamber larger than 15 m^2, which in LH II–IIIA may indeed have formed one such 'common standard of measurement'. Yet as with tholoi, this 15 m^2, cut-off point should be treated cautiously and as a number of convenience for the purpose of a broad-stroke cross-regional comparative discussion on monumentality rather than as an absolute value.

From the corpus of chamber tombs for which measurements exist, some 210 examples are equipped with chambers with an area larger than 15 m^2.[27] These examples are attested in 69 sites in the Aegean in 14 different regions (Fig. 4). Very large chamber tombs tend to make an appearance early on, already in LH I, with almost twenty more examples added in LH IIA, including the largest chamber tomb known to date – Pellana Tomb 2 in Lakonia (c. 80 m^2). Interestingly, most of these early examples are tholoid in shape; that is, they look like a tholos in cross section,[28] a practice that may well relate to the social prominence afforded to this form by the built tholoi. It is, however, during LH IIB–IIIA1 that the construction of monumental chamber tombs gathers momentum (71 examples), by comparison to that of tholoi, with a good number of rock-cut examples across the Aegean now featuring very large chambers. Most of these LH IIB–IIIA1 monumental chamber tombs are equipped with rectilinear chambers with flat or pitched roofs, though tholoid tombs continue to be built. The construction of large chamber tombs continues in LH IIIA2 and early in LH IIIB, until in the 13th century BC architectural monumentality, as a whole, becomes a thing of the past in the funerary realm.[29]

While in Messenia the appearance of chamber tombs may have constituted an emulative reaction to tholoi,[30] outside the southwest Peloponnese these tombs are found – in limited numbers – before the earliest known tholoi were built: e.g. at Mycenae, Prosymna, and Kokla in

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26 Cavanagh – Mee 1998, 66, describe chamber tombs with an area >16 m^2 as belonging to a "distinct upper echelon".

27 At present these 210 examples stand for c. 14 % of all known chamber tombs for which measurements exist. However, as mentioned in n. 24, preliminary reports more often indicate the size of large(r) tombs than the size of small(er) tombs. This percentage may well be distorted, i.e. large(r) tombs across the Aegean stand for <10 % of all extant examples.

28 Iakovidis 1966.

29 For the recently discovered LH IIIA monumental tomb at Prosilio near Orchomenos in Boiotia see <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=6170> (last access 19 Nov. 2020). The Prosilio tomb is not included in the graph shown in Fig. 4.

30 Wright 2008, 147.

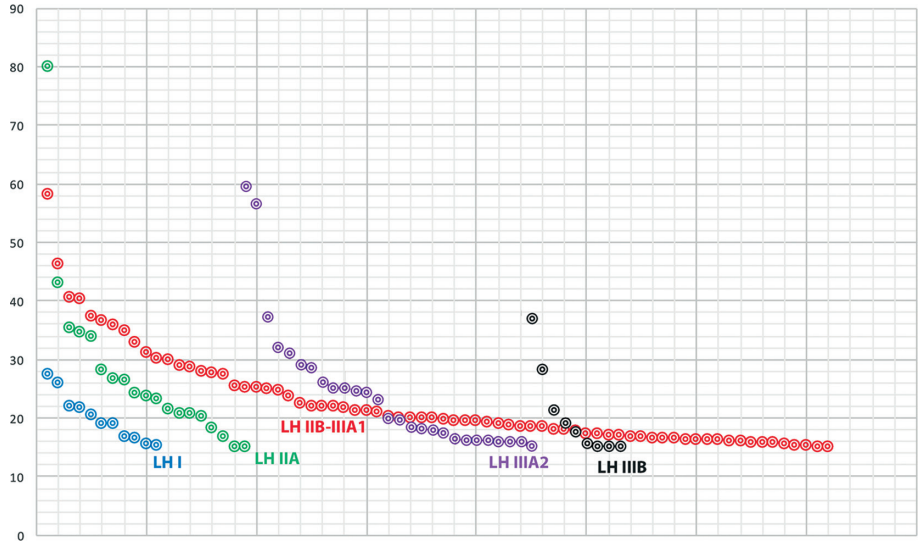

Fig. 4: Graph of monumental chamber tombs (i.e. with a chamber area >15 m^2) per period. Each dot represents an individual measurable and datable example (only 138 of the c. 210 extant monumental chamber tombs can be dated with any certainty). The y-axis refers to chamber area in m^2 with Pellana Tomb 2 marking the largest known example (c. 80 m^2) (Y. Galanakis)

the Argolid – and also at sites where no tholoi are as yet attested (e.g. at Epidauros Limera and Thebes and now also Spata).[31] With the exception of Pellana and Thebes, monumentality in LH IIA chamber tombs actually appears to become a trend of the northeast Peloponnese. Of the 45 LH IIA monumental tholoi and chamber tombs that we can assign to this period, 30 of them were built in the northeast Peloponnese. All in all, chamber tombs could do monumentality as much as tholoi in LH IIA – and there is reason to believe that at certain sites and regions, the monumental chamber tombs of LH IIB–IIIA1 represent expressions of power as much as tholoi did elsewhere. By LH IIB–IIIA1, monumental chamber tombs appeared in Achaia, Crete and Antheia in Messenia, while numbers also increased in the Argolid, Attica, Boiotia, Elis, and possibly also central Greece. Examples constructed during this period can also be elaborate, featuring fascias on the doors, side chambers and equipped systematically with long dromoi (>20 m long) and very deep façades (up to 10 m deep).

Similarly to tholoi, most of these monumental chamber tombs are frequently found pillaged. Despite this shortcoming, however, some general observations can be made: e.g. large chamber tombs that were built in LH I or in LH IIIB appear to display little correlation between the size of their chamber and its burial furnishings, whereas large chamber tombs built during LH II–IIIA show a stronger correlation between the quality, quantity and diversity of objects they once accommodated and their architectural elaboration (again with notable gradations in the wealth of these assemblages as noted above).

Although my discussion so far has been about the chamber size, the most visible part of these monumental tombs, for whatever length of time they stayed open, was not actually the chamber but the façade and the dromos that preceded it – both elements that in LH IIA, and in subsequent periods, became essential components of the most elaborate and monumental examples. For the rock-cut chamber tombs, a long dromos could indeed provide the necessary depth for the creation of a keyhole shaped passageway and of a deep façade equipping the tomb with an extra element of theatricality and the participants with a stronger transformative transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead. While these elements were not universally adopted, several

[31] Gallou 2009 (Epidauros Limera); Tzavella-Evjen 2014 (Thebes); for Spata: Stathi – Psallida 2020. I would like to thank Prof. Sevi Triantaphyllou for bringing the new Spata tombs to my attention.

tomb-using groups made use of them, achieving impressive results (especially in LH II–IIIA), from Tombs 15 and 505 at Mycenae to the Kastelli tombs at Thebes, to name but some of the most famous examples with impressive rock-cut dromoi, up to 35 m in length, and dramatic façades, up to 10 m deep.

In tholos architecture there is, frequently, a structural correlation between the height of the façade and the size of the chamber – that is to say, the bigger the diameter of a tholos, the taller its chamber and also the taller its stomion and façade. As a result, those who might not have been eligible to go inside a tholos could still get a pretty good idea of its monumentality by looking at its façade. What appears to be of no structural correlation in tholoi is the length of the dromos, a point to which I return below.[32]

In rock-cut architecture, however, there is no such structural inter-dependency: the size of the chamber is not *structurally* tied to the depth of the façade or the height of the stomion. Yet, in the most monumental rock-cut examples built in LH II and IIIA, we frequently find sizeable chambers being combined with deep façades and long dromoi, a correlation that resulted in these tombs achieving a similar visual effect to that of tholoi (especially if we take into account that some of these early tholoi also appear to have had their façade originally covered with plaster). Should we then interpret this effort to correlate these elements in rock-cut architecture as an attempt to emulate tholoi in LH II?

In my view, the key to answer this question lies in the dromoi of these tombs, which in rock-cut architecture do appear to correlate well with the depth of the façade; one such example is Tomb 505 at Mycenae, which was probably built in LH IIIA. That is to say that if the builders of monumental rock-cut tombs were to achieve a similar effect to that of tholoi from outside, they had to provide the tomb with a rather long dromos. I agree with Nikolas Papadimitriou[33] that the addition of the dromos to Late Bronze Age tomb architecture did not just fulfil practical concerns, but also provided the necessary space for ritual action and for the culmination of the funeral procession – both of these elements, practical and ritual, supported the social concerns of the tomb-using groups, who, by constructing deep façades and long dromoi, found another way to advertise power.

In this respect, tholoi and chamber tombs should be understood as mutually reinforcing types – similar groups of builders may have even been used in the construction of both; and occasionally expertise and knowledge from the building of one tomb may have been transferred to the construction of another (with the obvious disclaimer that tholoi are built, and require extra work, and chamber tombs are rock-cut). To use a phrase recently coined by Michael Boyd, some early tholoi at least may have indeed behaved as 'chamber-tomb imitating' in the early Mycenaean period – not only on a symbolic level, but also on a spatial, ritual and architectural level.[34] After all, architectural experimentation is one of the characteristic elements of the early Mycenaean period – and nowhere is this blending of tholos and chamber tomb architecture better exemplified than in the case of the Kokla tholos – a "hybrid between a tholos and a chamber tomb".[35]

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32 There appear to be, however, some notable regional 'traditions': e.g. a long and deep stomion was not of interest to the tholoi-using groups in Achaia and Aitolo-Akarnania where low, narrow, funnel-shaped stomia were preferred (Galanakis 2008).

33 Papadimitriou 2015.

34 Boyd 2015, 440.

35 Voutsaki 1995, 61.

To Carve a Tholos or to Build One?

The Kokla tholos was not the first tomb to be built at this site on the southwest edge of the Argive Plain. Two chamber tombs had already been built in LH I, and two more were added in LH IIA.[36] About 25 m from this cluster, the tholos was built in LH IIB.[37] From outside and – most remarkably – *also from inside*, the Kokla tholos would have given the impression of a monumental rock-cut chamber tomb (5.40 m in diameter). It was equipped with a very long, steeply descending, rock-cut dromos (23 m) and a very deep façade (7 m) (Fig. 5). The rock surface above the entrance was coated with a thick layer of clay and plaster, on which a painting of blue and red discs, with a zone of fine blue lines on a whitish ground, was found.[38] The stomion of the Kokla tholos, the dimensions of which are closer to those encountered in chamber tombs,[39] was a combination of built and rock-cut architecture: its sides were lined with stones and on top it was covered with a single lintel.[40] No built superstructure existed above it, only bedrock. The chamber, built of unworked flattish stones, was coated with a thick layer of clay, an element[41] only partly preserved but reinforcing further the rock-cut appearance of this structure. Clearly, what mattered for this tomb-using group was the construction of an impressive funerary structure equipped with a round chamber. This tomb, with a chamber area of 23 m^2, is just under the cut-off point I set earlier for defining architectural monumentality in tholoi; but it sits comfortably within the group of monumental chamber tombs. In LH IIA, at least, whether the tomb was built or rock-cut may not have been the biggest criterion for highlighting the social significance of the individuals buried therein.[42]

This attempt to develop common standards of measurement and appearance in early Mycenaean Greece was not limited to the blending of architectural and performative elements in tholos and chamber tombs, but also extended in the placement of these tombs in the landscape. Boyd[43] has convincingly shown, in my view, how the construction of chamber tombs far from the settlement may have pulled other tomb-using groups in that direction. In LH IIA, probably as early as the end of LH I, the monumental tholos appears to dominate over the small, crudely built tholoi, at least outside of the southwest Peloponnese,[44] as already mentioned above. However, a few large, well-carved rock-cut tholoid tombs may have notionally held the same significance as their monumental built counterparts at this early stage. At Mycenae, for example, the only prominent location without a tholos tomb (Alepotrypa – Tsountas' Kalkani) is dominated in LH II by some very large rock-cut tholoid tombs: Tomb 84 (7.14 m in diameter[45] with a deep façade, c. 6 m)[46] and Tomb 83 (8.20 m in maximum diameter). Carved on the slopes of the Alepotrypa cemetery, at the southwest end of the Mycenae funerary landscape and in a completely distinct location from all the other early tholoi at Mycenae, the location of these tombs welcomes visitors to the site, that is when approach-

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36 For the sequence of tomb construction and use at Kokla, see Demakopoulou 1993; Demakopoulou – Aulsebrook 2018.

37 I agree with the excavator, Dr Katie Demakopoulou, and Fitzsimons's date (2007, 101–102 n. 26) for the construction of the Kokla tholos in LH IIB or early in LH IIIA1.

38 Demakopoulou – Aulsebrook 2018, 121–122 and figs. 3–4.

39 Based on the published plan, c. 1.50 × 1.40 m: Demakopoulou 1990, fig. 2.

40 I would like to thank Dr Demakopoulou for providing this information to me.

41 This is, so far, the only instance where this element (the clay coating covering the masonry of a tholos) is attested.

42 I am of the opinion that the Kokla tholos was originally used for burials and that it was not a cenotaph. The fire on the floor may denote a final-act ritual in the history of use of the tomb; see Galanakis 2016a.

43 Boyd 2015, 438–442.

44 It is worth noting that the LH I tholoi outside the Peloponnese are hybrids and associated with coastal sites: Thorikos IV (a built chamber tomb behaving like a tholos or a tholos behaving like a built chamber tomb) and Magoula Tomb 3 near Galatas, which also appears to make an effort to emulate tholos architecture, hence the comparison by Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2015 of Tomb 3 with the Cretan circular tombs of the Mesara type.

45 Given as "6.90–7.80 m" in Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985, 239.

46 Based on Spyros Iakovidis' section published by Danielidou 2001, 162, fig. 1.

Fig. 5: The dromos and façade of the hybrid Kokla tholos tomb in the Argolid (courtesy of Dr Katie Demakopoulou)

ing it from the southwest.[47] Could these rock-cut examples have been the 'tholoi' of Alepotrypa in LH II?

Monumentality in chamber tomb architecture may have triggered the construction of more monumental tholoi and vice-versa in the northeast Peloponnese. At nearby Prosymna, for example, the round form appears to have been a key component of monumentality in LH IIA as rock-cut Tombs 2, 7 and 44 suggest. Until the construction of the built tholos, late in LH IIA or LH IIB–IIIA1,[48] these tholoid rock-cut tombs were the largest and most elaborate funerary structures at Prosymna. These examples were part of clusters of chamber tombs that were the richest at this site in terms of burial furnishings. Not only are these tombs finely built, they also feature very long, unlined, dromoi (17.25 m in Tomb 2 and 18.80 m in Tomb 44, thus comparable to the 18 m-long lined dromos of the tholos), deep façades (7 m in Tomb 2 and 6.30 m in Tomb 44, thus possibly also comparable to that of the tholos, which was equipped with a larger entrance[49]) and in the case of Tomb 2 a beautifully painted façade – a practice most likely first developed in the northeast Peloponnese – adorned with a spiraliform decoration[50] (Fig. 6).

The three Prosymna chamber tombs 2, 7, and 44 are also among the largest in the cemetery (only Tombs 25–26, built in LH I, are actually larger) with round chambers up to 25 m^2 (only the tholos has a significantly larger diameter 9.50 m and an area of 70.85 m^2). They were also built near the area of the LH settlement and at the opposite end from where the tholos was later built[51] (the opposite pattern really from the one I mentioned for Mycenae). The positioning of the tholos, away from the LH IIA monumental chamber tombs and on the road to Mycenae – whether for ritual or social reasons or both – highlights further, in my view, the ways in which the competition

47 Its use is dated by Danielidou 2001, 164, to LH IIIA–B, but may well have also been built in LH IIA when the construction of these tombs is more frequent. Tomb 70, also part of the same cluster, with a long dromos (8.30 m and possibly longer), and a diameter of 4.20–4.50 m may have been contemporary to Tombs 83–84 or a bit later. On the location of these graves, see Shelton 1995, 206–207, fig. 6. There is also the possibility of a further tholoid tomb, unreported by Tsountas, from the same area as the aforementioned tombs: 18 91/IG–KS of the Mycenae survey with a dromos 15.24 m long and a chamber 5.02 m in diameter (Shelton 1995, 207).

48 Fitzsimons 2007, 101–102 n. 26, correctly in my view, dates the construction of the Prosymna tholos to shortly after LH IIA, probably in LH IIB–IIIA1.

49 Length: 4.40 m × Width: 2 m × Height: 4.50 m when compared to Tomb 2: Length: 1.60 m × Width: 1.36 m × Height: 2.60 m.

50 Gallou 2005, 67–69; Sgouritsa 2011.

51 The Prosymna tholos actually belongs to the same architectural tradition as the Mycenae tholoi, as already noted by Wace – Holland 1921/1923, 330 n.1; for the special connection between Mycenae and Prosymna, see also Wright 1987; Wright 2006.

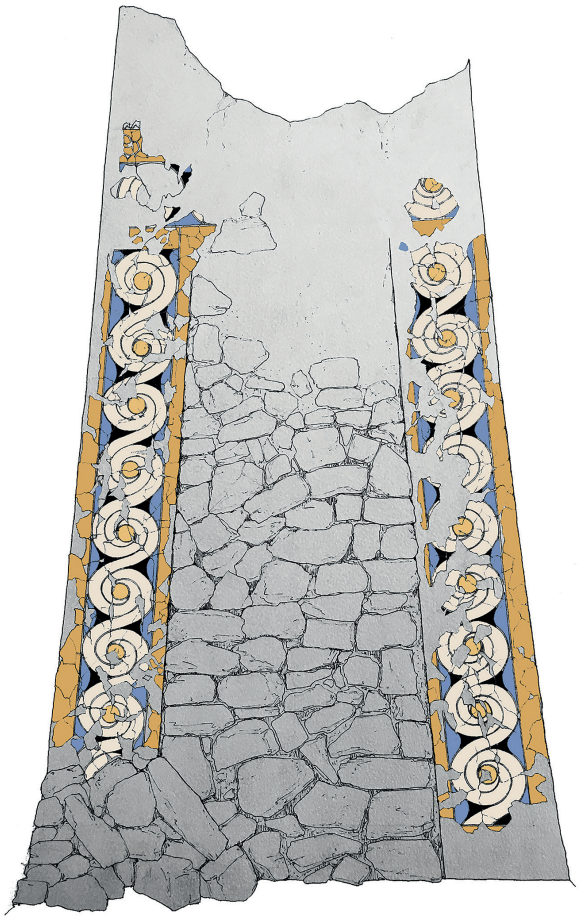

Fig. 6: The façade of Tomb 2 at Prosymna in the Argolid, digitally processed by the author. Original drawings (façade and painted frieze) by P. de Jong (Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati)

between tomb-using groups shaped LH II funerary architecture and the landscapes these groups lived in.[52] As Bernhard Steinmann has recently argued for Prosymna, the competition between these tomb-using groups may well reveal power struggle at a site and regional level before the consolidation of the palatial system.[53] Could the Prosymna tholos, built late in LH IIA or in LH IIB–IIIA1, denote a social change, perhaps even the incorporation of the site within the sphere of power of Mycenae?[54]

It is also during LH IIA, perhaps exactly because of this frenzy in creating bigger and more elaborate tombs, that another very distinct rock-cut chamber form now became consolidated, the rectilinear chamber with a pitched, arched or flat roof which equally featured long dromoi, deep façades and impressive burials (e.g. at Dendra and possibly also Mycenae),[55] indicating further the multiplicity of forms, techniques and levels of elaboration available for going monumental in the funerary context of LH II–IIIA mainland Greece, i.e. the period when 'complexity' became institutionalised in this part of the Mediterranean. The protruding mounds covering tholoi may have visually emulated tumuli; chamber tombs may have emulated tholoi or the architecture of the living (with their gabled roofs and side chambers). While tholoid tombs – built and rock-cut – continued to be built in LH IIB–IIIA, in monumental chamber tomb architecture one most frequently finds the rectilinear examples with a flat or pitched roof.[56] Perhaps alluding with its design to the idea of 'family' or 'community', in a metonymic way, their widespread distribution coincides with the expansion of chamber tomb cemeteries that by this time may well express what James Wright calls the institutionalisation of the funerary landscape within the new world of palace-based economy in the southern Aegean.[57]

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52 Proximity to the settlement or prominent (earlier) graves appears to have affected, in some cases at least, the placement of tombs in the landscape (e.g. Pylos and Mycenae). See also Karapanagiotou et al., this volume.

53 Steinmann 2020.

54 E.g. in a similar manner to that suggested by Bennet 1995, 599–601, for the MME tholos at Nichoria in LH IIIA2 as perhaps reflecting the expansion of the Pylian state in this part of Messenia.

55 See e.g. Zavadil 2007 and Galanakis 2016b, with additional references.

56 Though see also the idiosyncratic Voudeni examples (Kolonas 2009): e.g. Tomb 5 has a round plan and a tholos roof (LH IIB–IIIA1), while Tomb 9 has a rectilinear plan and tholos roof (LH IIIA2). Tombs 75 and 77, some of the largest in the cemetery and both probably built in LH IIIA1, have very long dromoi, deep façades, rectilinear chambers and pyramidal roofs with rounded corners. On labour investment in the construction of the Voudeni tombs, see now Turner 2020.

57 Wright 2008, who is correct in pointing out that we should not be looking at tholoi and chamber tombs merely as 'types' adopted solely in preference for a new style of burial. The adoption (and eventual abandonment) of these funerary forms across the Aegean must be more critically evaluated, not least as some tomb-using groups were eager to adopt them while others resisted or rejected them altogether. Yet, and while I accept Wright's premise

That tholoi and chamber tombs were more dynamically used in the service of social competition in early Mycenaean Greece might also be suggested by their infrequent coexistence (the Argolid in this respect forming the exception rather than the rule). While tholoi occasionally coexist with other tholoi, they are rarely found side by side with other graves, a pattern that does not appear to be just a bias of uneven archaeological research. For example, when they coexist with tumuli and built graves, tholoi not only post-date them but also constitute an additional form of elaboration – the next must-have type of grave, so to speak. One out of approximately ten tholoi in the Aegean appears at present to coexist, in the broader landscape, with chamber tombs (13 % of all known cases).[58] Even then, they are rarely found side by side – and almost three out of four monumental chamber tombs are found at sites where no tholos is as yet attested. Whenever this coexistence is observed, however, the tholoi are always the largest funerary structures, with only one exception: the tiny LM IIIA1 Armenoi tholos on Crete (4.30 m^2), perhaps the earliest tomb and only tholos in this massive cemetery full of chamber tombs, some of which are monumental. Yet the built nature of the Armenoi tomb and its early date of construction in the cemetery's sequence of use may have given it more social prominence than its size would suggest.[59] Caution is therefore needed when attempting to equate size with political power and social complexity with particular tomb types, consequently assuming that the construction of the monumental structures was undertaken solely on the basis of facilitating political subjectivity.[60]

Ma(r)king Mortuary Landscapes in Early Mycenaean Greece

Social dynamics, ideological and/or religious reasons may have all influenced the choice of tomb, with the various expressions changing position within this notional hierarchy of types across the Late Bronze Age and between the various Aegean regions. What we urgently need are more publications of cemeteries where the sequence of use of the various tombs can be established so that we can start grasping, with an even finer resolution, possible chronological nuances and different trends across space and time.[61]

Until a finer resolution is achieved, however, we can summarise the current situation in the following manner: monumentality in tholos and chamber tombs in early Mycenaean Greece provided an impressive stage for funerary performances and the common standards of measurement needed by some groups to make their efforts similar in order to facilitate comparison with those of their competitors. Standardisation – in funerary architecture and practice – should therefore not be equated, necessarily or exclusively, with the end of social competition or even the formalisation of the palatial system. What this standardisation may reveal is the strengthening of shared codes and values, a process that in mainland Greece started already in the Middle Bronze Age. This emulation and standardisation should, therefore, be understood not as linear or stemming from one source – but rather as the result of cross-regional contacts. Take, for example, the possible

for a fundamental realignment and reorganisation of socio-political and economic relations also affecting funerary forms and practices (alongside perhaps religious/cosmological changes), at the same time I am not entirely convinced that chamber tombs spread (only or exclusively) as a 'family burial receptacle' par excellence across the Aegean. While this interpretation may hold true for some regions (e.g. northeast Peloponnese), it may not be enough for explaining the adoption (or lack thereof) of these tombs in other areas of the Aegean (e.g. Crete, Dodecanese, Thessaly, etc.), where we may be dealing with different social agendas and groupings.

58 Monumental chamber tombs are often found in clusters and rarely in isolation.

59 On the Armenoi tholos: Papadopoulou 1997.

60 I do not think, for example, that Thebes and Chania, where monumental chamber tombs are attested but as yet no tholoi, were less 'palatial'. The dynamic use of tomb forms is underlined further, in my view, by sites with tholoi, housing rich and elaborate burials, but so far no monumental examples of chamber tombs (e.g. Englianos, Tiryns, and the Volos area to mention but a few notable cases).

61 For some recent studies in this direction, see Fitzsimons 2007; Boyd 2014; Boyd 2015. On labour investment, especially in the construction of chamber tombs, see Turner 2020.

imitation of the tholoid form from Messenia to the Argolid, perhaps via Arkadia and Lakonia, as LH IIA examples at Palaiokastro and Pellana suggest (both sites also forming connection nodes between regions). In addition, in the northeast Peloponnese at least, the monumental frenzy of LH IIA may have produced the form of the rectangular chamber tomb (frequently with a rock-cut gabled roof) which was copied (also in a monumental form) across most of southern and central mainland Greece. This frenzy, however, should not be understood just as a matter of fashion; but as a process involving the adoption and adaptation of material expressions conducive to generating particular actions (e.g. in relation to the funeral) and compatible with (pre-)existing or emerging cosmologies and social practices.

Monumentality emerged and came into the service of competing groups more systematically than ever before at the end of the Middle Bronze Age/early Late Bronze Age in the Aegean. Although the tholos became, in certain regions (e.g. the Argolid) and certain sites (e.g. Mycenae), the ultimate tomb type for elite display and the competitive conspicuous consumption of regional and pan-Aegean elites, at the same time it may not have gone uncontested early in the Late Bronze Age with chamber tombs also frequently displaying elements of monumentality and an attempt for magnitude and elaboration. In some other regions (e.g. central Greece) and sites (e.g. Thebes, Chania, Pellana), the chamber tomb may indeed have retained its monumental character even in LH IIB–IIIA1 and also late in the Late Bronze Age. It is the heavy emphasis of Mycenaean scholarship on the Argolid and Messenia that has shaped and blurred our understanding of how tomb forms were used in the long Late Bronze Age in the Aegean and we need to move beyond this model.

We treat tholos and chamber tombs as analytical categories. We still often forget that these are our modern categories and that within them there is great diversity in terms of their popularity across the Aegean, their chronological distribution and prominence, and also in terms of their architecture – from small and crudely built tholoi to monumental chamber tombs. Although, for example, in the Argolid tholoi are consistently monumental and chamber tombs show greater variety in size, elaboration and the burials they contained, in other regions tholoi display an equally impressive level of variation with chamber tombs being at times more energy expensive and more monumental, e.g. at Armenoi on Crete or at Voudeni in Achaia, where chamber tombs are more monumental than the local tholoi.

The clearly articulated door jambs, occasionally decorated with carved fascias or painted, the frequent employment of long dromoi and deep façades and of well-carved round or rectangular chambers, with further embellishment (e.g. benches, gabled or tholoid roofs, side chambers, doors, etc.), speak in favour of a shared and widely recognisable 'architectural style' of power in chamber tomb and tholos architecture – a style that, although not limited to large tombs, appears to have found its most elaborate expression in the most monumental examples. The three regions that appear, based on the extant record, to have most profoundly shaped the funerary architecture of the Late Bronze Age Aegean are the southwest and northeast Peloponnese and Crete. Although inspiration for the tholos and the chamber tomb may well have originated in Messenia, it was the competition between regions and communities that helped shape the material culture of the Late Bronze Age. The development of a distinctive style ('Mycenaean') can thus be seen as a result of the interaction, competitive consumption and social transformation of Aegean societies to palace-based economies.[62]

Following this line of thinking, material uniformity and diversity in the funerary record can be interpreted as representing social and regional strategies for the promotion of specific social identities and their agendas – i.e. two different sides of the same coin. It is within the framework of architectural traditions and craft practices that I propose to interpret the funerary monumentality of the Aegean: shared by some, rejected by others and possibly deemed very difficult by

[62] On the meaning of 'Mycenaean', see Bennet 1999; Sherratt 2005; Mac Sweeney 2008; also Preston 2000, Vol. 1, 57–75.

most (because they lacked the knowledge, or the people/logistics, or the materials or they were not allowed to do so, or any combination of the above). The sharing also extends to burial practices to the point that we often find specific artefactual types and categories of objects included in these most elaborate, monumental and richly-furnished tombs as if these tomb burying groups were following a checklist of things that had to be included in an elite burial.[63] The replication of certain architectural forms and practices appears to have become for certain members of society an important aspect of their socio-political discourse and a point of measuring 'competitive emulation'.[64]

Tombs in the Late Bronze Age Aegean became the façade and setting, the ideal theatrical backdrop, for the performance of elaborate funerary ceremonies and acts of power. Depending on their context, the many landscapes of chamber tombs and tholoi appear to reveal complex social strategies in a politically dynamic period for Aegean affairs. Shaped by, and also shaping, the politics of the time, monumental tombs, with their use and reuse, created competing social narratives and long-lasting mnemonic landscapes that by LH IIIA2–B were engrained with the palace-based economy and its ideology for most regions in the southern Aegean. In my view, the aforementioned analysis re-affirms the existing notion that there is no clear-cut equation 'tholos' = 'king' and 'chamber tomb' = 'ordinary people'. While in specific regions, tholoi and chamber tombs may have acquired an institutionalised function, in other areas local practices and social concerns appear to have affected their numbers, appearance and use.

Conclusion

Monumental architecture shaped the visual world of the Aegean for the entire Late Bronze Age, both in areas that were to become part of palace-based states, and also in areas that were adjacent to, yet not fully integrated by these states.[65] Monumentality, in the world of the living and the world of the dead, is probably the most consistent feature in the material culture of the period under examination – one that, I would argue, would have been recognisable and legible among communities from across the different Aegean regions, especially from LH IIB to LH IIIB. Funerary architecture, and the associated burials, was shaped to a large extent by the interaction of social groups that strove for most of the early Late Bronze Age to establish their power and prominence over their competitors by outdoing them. Although the very act of building a monumental tomb or performing a rich burial may not have sufficed for achieving this goal,[66] both may have helped provide a visual and material testimony of the shared ideology/cosmology that was emerging in the Aegean.

In this paper I have attempted to develop a threefold argument: first, that 'monumentality' can be understood as a meaningful emic category that helped to provide a standard of comparison for those involved in its production (and use), whether in a local, regional or supra-regional context. Secondly, we need to be careful about the meanings we ascribe to modern tomb 'types' ('tholos' versus 'chamber' tombs), not least because in the early Late Bronze Age their social significance (perhaps also ideological/religious) may have been more fluid than we have previously envisaged, both possessing the potential for monumentality and ma(r)king places.[67] Moreover, how these funerary forms were perceived and what their social significance might have been for the people

63 As shown by the detailed study in Zavadil 2013; also Darcque 1987.

64 Along the lines of Renfrew 1986, 8, mentioned at the start of my article.

65 E.g. Arena 2015.

66 Acheson 1999 and Wolpert 2004 correctly remind us of the importance of warfare and violence in the emergence of the Late Bronze Age mainland polities; for an excellent narrative on the transformation of early Mycenaean societies, see also Wright, this volume.

67 To paraphrase here the 'marking and making place' of David – Wilson 2002, which is also a characteristic element of monument construction.

in the past needs to be understood relationally: first at a site and then at a regional level. Thirdly, the construction of monumental funerary structures, whether tholoi or rock-cut tombs, should not be understood only or exclusively on the basis of power politics, as is often the case; but also, as affirmation of participation of the tomb-using groups in shared symbolic systems.

By extension, the progressive standardisation in the form and use of these tombs, and here I am referring to all examples not just the large ones, can potentially be understood as an index of social proximities and relative degrees of social connectedness, i.e. of networks and 'traditions' with which these tomb-using groups were involved. They can be read, therefore, as signs of competition and participation, which I see as key drivers of the societal makeover early in the Late Bronze Age. That these symbolic systems may have existed prior to their materialisation and the changes we observe in funerary architecture is indeed a possibility and an aspect that requires further investigation as, undeniably, we focus on material expressions and what is visible; and we often forget that the negotiation of relations needs not be conducted materially and is often archaeologically invisible. If that was indeed the case, can we then perhaps hypothesise that people chose through the progressive standardisation in funerary practices to also standardise the ways their conception of the world around them was materialised (ideologically/cosmologically)?

While no two landscapes can ever be the same (let alone because of the people, flora, fauna, and monuments that live in them) and despite regional variation all the way to the end of the Late Bronze Age (from tomb type popularities to differences in artefactual frequencies and practices), this progressive standardisation that is observed in material culture eventually also extended (by the 15th–14th centuries BC) to include much of the mortuary landscapes of central and southern mainland Greece. Where once many mortuary landscapes could be experienced across the mainland, developments in the early Mycenaean period, as described in this paper, appear to have also paved the way for the progressive visual standardisation of the world of the dead, particularly with regards to the marking, and therefore making, of mortuary places; a phenomenon most notably witnessed in those regions that were later to fall under direct palatial control and/or influence.

Visible or not after the funeral, these monuments would have been hives of activity during their construction. Given how demanding some of the most monumental tholoi and chamber tombs were in their making, it becomes clear that their presence in the landscape was felt for a long time – for as long as their construction lasted, and in some cases probably also afterwards, while new burials and commemorative rites may have enhanced further the mnemonic value of these monumental tombs of the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean.

As a final note: tribute should be paid to the workforce responsible for these monumental tombs. For some of these tholoi and chamber tombs considerable labour was required, which might well have extended beyond the confines of individual sites with all the implications this parameter may have had for state formation, as recently noted by Rodney Fitzsimons.[68] Yet even when we think, say in LH III, that we have the tombs of 'ordinary people' – the small and crudely built tholoi and chamber tombs or the pits and cists – even then, I think, we should not assume that these tombs include the whole range of the population, let alone the actual builders who built these awe-inspiring structures and transformed the landscapes of Mycenaean Greece forever.

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[68] One way forward may well be to take Fitzsimons' (2014) energetics approach to Late Bronze Age tomb building a step further, and beyond the remit of shaft graves or tholos architecture, by adding to the mix the monumental chamber tombs: e.g. Pellana Tomb 2 would require the extraction of c. 445 m^3 comparable to the Kokla 'tholos' and the top-25 largest tholoi. Tomb 505 at Mycenae would require c. 710 m^3, a figure comparable to the mass required to be extracted prior to the building of the Prosymna tholos (for Pellana Tomb 2: Spyropoulos 1998; for Tomb 505 at Mycenae: Wace 1932, 12–18). On the application of the energetics approach to Late Bronze Age Aegean architecture, see also Brysbaert 2015; Harper 2016; on the approach in general, see Abrams 1989 and Abrams – Bolland 1999. For chamber tombs and architectural energetics, the work of the Set-in-Stone project has started yielding important results: Brysbaert 2018 (for an introduction); Turner 2020.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1: Graph showing all measurable Late Bronze Age tholos tombs (in blue), excluding LM IIIC examples. The y-axis gives the chamber area in m^2. A blue dot refers to each of the 246 measurable examples (82 % of all known tholoi). Red dots represent only the early Mycenaean examples. Average and median chamber areas are also indicated (Y. Galanakis)

Fig. 2: Graph showing the number of examples of monumental tholoi (i.e. with a chamber >23.50 m^2) per period in columns. These columns are juxtaposed to overall examples of measurable tholoi per period (in green) and their average chamber area in m^2 (in red) (Y. Galanakis)

Fig. 3: Averages of chamber area in m^2 of measurable Late Bronze Age chamber tombs in the Aegean (c. 40 % of all known examples) (Y. Galanakis)

Fig. 4: Graph of monumental chamber tombs (i.e. with a chamber area >15 m^2) per period. Each dot represents an individual measurable and datable example (only 138 of the c. 210 extant monumental chamber tombs can be dated with any certainty). The y-axis refers to chamber area in m^2 with Pellana Tomb 2 marking the largest known example (c. 80 m^2) (Y. Galanakis)

Fig. 5: The dromos and façade of the hybrid Kokla tholos tomb in the Argolid (courtesy of Dr Katie Demakopoulou)

Fig. 6: The façade of Tomb 2 at Prosymna in the Argolid, digitally processed by the author. Original drawings (façade and painted frieze) by P. de Jong (Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati)