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## **BURYING THE PALACES ? IDEOLOGIES IN THE SHAFT GRAVE PERIOD\***

### ABSTRACT

The 'Shaft Grave Phenomenon' is often seen as a straightforward development caused by increased access to precious ('prestige') items. It shall be argued here that it rather mirrors a gradual transformation of the self-identity of the mainland élites. The Shaft Grave chiefs strongly took over symbols from Crete, where the palatial élite had a strong religious connotation. This points to the conclusion that the mainland élite tried to establish a more sophisticated *system* of religious control, unlike the individual and personal cult visible in the MH burials. They realized the potential *institutionalized* religious authority had as a means of domination, connected with complex and standardised systems of representation, centralization and administration of cult, and tried to introduce this idea to the mainland. However, the symbols had to be modified and translated into a language mainland people would understand, and placed in contexts traditionally used as arenas of social display. These contexts were different from the ones the symbols originally were associated with, since on the MH mainland the grave (as opposed to the Minoan palace) was the place where transcendental ideas were articulated through material actions and expressions.

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\* This paper is a revised version of my 1998 M.Phil. dissertation at the University of Cambridge. During my time in Cambridge I received very useful advice from my supervisor Prof. Colin Renfrew and from Dr. Sophia Voutsaki. Prof. Joseph Maran, University of Heidelberg, commented on this paper after the dissertation was submitted and also made some very helpful suggestions. Therefore, it is probably only the remaining weaknesses and faults of this essay that are entirely my own. As a considerable time passed between the writing of the thesis and the revising of the manuscript, it was attempted to include the relevant literature that appeared within.

## INTRODUCTION

Excavated for more than 120 years, the Grave Circle A at Mycenae is still a unique phenomenon. Of course, since Schliemann telegraphed to the King of Greece that he “gazed upon the face of Agamemnon”, the scholarly debate about the graves has lost much of this enthusiastic vigour and withdrawn from this romanticism in favour of a more ‘academic’ approach. But the fascination this burial place exerted on Schliemann has never totally ceased. The exceptional number, variety and beauty of the grave goods associated with these six graves is still breathtaking, even for a modern, museum-seasoned observer. Strange enough, then, that these items were deliberately buried in the ground, hidden from the eyes of a Middle/Late Helladic population whose normal burials scarcely indicate a familiarity in dealing with such precious objects. Must these people not have been even more impressed by such an amount of wealth? Supposedly yes. But if yes, why were the items hidden? Or rather, why were they not used to impress people by displaying instead of burying them? But does burying mean hiding, and has display to be continuous to impress? Maybe not.

In the following it will be suggested that the findings of Grave Circle A at Mycenae are not explainable as a further elaboration of élite funerary display alone. This would underestimate the rôle the objects and their iconography played in the self-conception of the Shaft Grave élites. They had a *meaning*, which was not only their use for conspicuous consumption during the burial. They instead expressed what the members of the élite thought of themselves, were used as a means of internal classification and reorganisation and of projecting a particular image of themselves to their environment. An analysis of the grave goods and their system of deposition can thus help us to identify different aspects of the self-identity of the people who placed them with their dead, in other words, their world-view or ideology.

It will be shown how a particular aspect of ideology (namely symbols connected with what is commonly labelled as ‘Minoan religion’) was used to support and express the social inequalities in the Middle/Late Bronze Age of the Greek mainland. In order to do this, reflections of ideological behaviour in the richer graves of the late Middle Helladic world and the contemporary evidence of the Aegean will be traced and compared to Grave Circle A of Mycenae. The focus will not be on the value of the objects placed with the dead, but on the overall ‘character’, i. e. in this context the ideological content, of the assemblages. Do they just reflect processes of social stratification, and accumulation of wealth, or can one detect further features which

point towards changes in the world-view of the mainland population at the transition to Late Helladic/Mycenaean times? And if yes, how and why is this caused<sup>1</sup>?

## **ON IDEOLOGIES, RELIGION AND SYMBOLS**

First some words on the definition of the term ‘ideology’ in this paper. The notion of ideology as ‘false consciousness’ as introduced by Marx<sup>2</sup> bears some major problems for its use in archaeological research. In the works of Engels and Lenin<sup>3</sup> the Marxist conception became replaced by a more general notion of ideology as a class ‘Weltanschauung’, world-view, consisting of all products of thought (‘ideas’) of this group. This introduces the idea of a plurality of group-ideologies, inherent in a society at one given time. Ideology becomes a concept which covers the whole range of social and political thought, whatever its origin, function or validity.

According to Althusser<sup>4</sup>, the essential character of ideology is only intelligible through its structure - individuals ‘live’ in ideology by participating in certain practices. It appears as a certain representation of the world which links individuals with their conditions of life and with others, and thereby secures cohesion among people and between people and their activities. In class based societies, ideology receives a further function, as a means to maintain domination of one class over the others. Its emergence and development are viewed as governed by certain factors and following an inherent logic or pattern. However, how the individual is contributing to an ideological concept, and how it may change through time, was ignored. Within the recent postmodern debate, this problem received new interest.

Giddens<sup>5</sup> developed the notion of the active participation of individuals in the emergence and change of structures. The nature of these structures, underlying every society, encompasses all levels of human life, from everyday practice to belief systems. It therefore is very similar to ideology, and indeed can be largely equated with it. The individual, although part of an environment governed by structures, is not totally determined by them, and can change them by means of agency. But an ideological system cannot be created and maintained by an individual, it surpasses the

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<sup>1</sup> There has been some debate on these questions, most recently in the papers of Nordquist 2002 and especially Whittaker 2002. The present essay shall be dealing exclusively with the Shaft Graves, but proposes major changes for the whole early Mycenaean society.

<sup>2</sup> Marx 1947.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Larrain 1979, 76f.

<sup>4</sup> Althusser 1977.

<sup>5</sup> Giddens 1984.

level of the individual and becomes a phenomenon characteristic for groups of people, sharing the same life-style and -conditions. They develop a common understanding of the world and their place in it. These understandings become an important part of the spiritual being of the individual (its 'self') and group identity, and therefore have to be expressed. They can be articulated through language and gestures, but also material items, style and art. By expressing their world-view through actions or items, man create some kind of 'ideological landscape', an environment whose appearance is shaped by and filled with material traces of the ideologies behind it.

For ideas are expressed by material objects, these objects are a vital part in the world-views of social groupings - and in this respect they can be regarded as symbols. A careful analysis of these symbols, their associations and relations should thus enable us to track down contents of the ideologies operating in a given society.

Hodder defined symbols as the 'secondary connotations evoked by the primary associations and uses of an object or word'<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, a strict general distinction between object and symbol cannot be drawn. Only in cases where the object is clearly not suited for the purpose the form was originally invented for it is fairly certain that the symbolic value of these objects was their predominant (if not sole) function. In those cases the 'secondary connotation' becomes the primary function, made possible by the fact that the utilitarian value of the form has a wide social significance and broadly evokes certain mental associations, ideas of where to place the objects in the ideological framework of social relations. Social relations and symbolic schemes thus have to be seen as mutually dependent<sup>7</sup>. Symbolism is deeply embedded within practice - and hence ideology.

Some words on the relationship between cult, religion and ideology should be added here. When one considers, as it is done in this essay, ideology as the whole complex of ideas about the world inherent in society, cultic or religious beliefs must be part of ideology. But these beliefs have a specific dimension: They encompass the notion of something supernatural, a force which has no tangible essence and cannot be manipulated by human action<sup>8</sup>. The problem is to distinguish between expressions of supernatural and profane ideas, as they are inextricably linked and cannot easily be divided<sup>9</sup>. One should however distinguish between cult and religion: While cult can be regarded as the actions taking place to communicate with the supernatural sphere,

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<sup>6</sup> Hodder 1982, 11; 1990, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Gosden 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Spiro 1966, 91.

religion instead has to be regarded as the framework of ideas about the supernatural, shared by groups and institutionalized<sup>10</sup>. Cult can take place in several different contexts, and is not necessarily connected to a fully conceptualized religious system with standardized expressions. It is this standardized system of representations and appearance that can show whether a cult is part of a religion or not<sup>11</sup>. Both cult and religion may be used by certain groups to gain superiority over other social groupings, but whereas, in my definition, cult may be governed by individual ideas about the supernatural and carried out by laymen, religion is a fully fledged system of beliefs about the supernatural sphere and its relation to the present, a system consisting of stories, myths, normed symbolism and cultic actions administered by officials (whether part- or full-time - essential is that those people should know about the system of myths and stories, as well as about the correct way to proceed when communicating with the supernatural sphere). So cult may be linked to certain single objects of special importance, whereas religion is backed by a conceptualized system of symbolism. Of course, the appropriation of and control over unusual items and materials by certain groups or individuals may provide them with a rather diffuse cultic authority<sup>12</sup>, but to my mind it is only also the development of stories and myths and the appropriation of a normed way to proceed in cultic actions that allows us to speak of a cultic action as being part of a religion.

I will now turn to the examination of the Aegean in the Shaft Grave period and, by analysing the archaeological evidence, try to detect the world-views of certain groups, their main contents and their change through time. Moreover, reasons for and modes of operation of these changes will be suggested.

### **A SHORT CONSIDERATION OF MH MAINLAND SOCIETY**

The MH is normally seen as a period of general decline after the promising EH beginnings (with its supposed social stratification processes visible in the corridor houses) and before the splendors of the Shaft Grave period and the following Palatial era on the mainland. It seems that the MH population is hardly visible in the archaeological record, and its lifeways only seem to be inferable from their poor and scanty burials. There is hardly any evidence giving information about what the people

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<sup>9</sup> Rappaport 1971.

<sup>10</sup> Durkheim 1965.

<sup>11</sup> Renfrew 1985.

of the MH mainland did during life: only a few settlements, no ‘communal’ buildings like the corridor houses may have been, no evidence of large workshops or other social activities. What has been examined, though, was the existence of interregional networks also in the MH period<sup>13</sup>, and it has rightly been stated that some innovations that were further developed in the Mycenaean time originated in this poor and rather uninteresting phase.

In terms of social organization the MH society therefore is difficult to describe. The supposed beginnings of social stratification came, as said above, to a sudden and for the archaeologist still mysterious end. After the era of the corridor houses, any consideration of MH society has to be based primarily on burial evidence. But also here a uniform picture is hardly discernible. Rather, burial practice varies to a considerable degree, both in terms of grave architecture and grave offerings<sup>14</sup>. At Asine, Nordquist suggested that this diversification was a result of the fact that the society of this small hamlet was all related to each other. This made possible individualization at the funeral, while in larger societies this process would be superseded by the accentuation of the membership to a certain social group<sup>15</sup>. In fact the general trend to collective burial is a marked feature of MH practice, probably mirroring the increasing importance of kin or family ties. Thus, also in MH society a certain segmentation of society occurred, if not yet based on social strata (separated by influence, power, rule, authority, wealth etc.) then on lineage. But also this process of social stratification at least at the end of the MH seems to be visible in the archaeological record, namely in the shape of the monumentalizing tendencies accompanying the funeral. When the use of tumuli increased this might well be the expression of a certain claim to power or excellence/prestige. Thus, status was initially and primarily in this phase based on kinship. Based on the chronology and distribution of the tumuli that reach back to early MH times, Cavanagh and Mee<sup>16</sup> suggest that they indicate some degree of social stratification as well as regional political fragmentation. This might also be visible e.g. in the early-middle MH horse burials accompanying the dead of the Argive tumuli of Dendra, Mycenae and other

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<sup>12</sup> Bellah 1970, 29-31.

<sup>13</sup> See references in Nordquist 1995, 201.

<sup>14</sup> When Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 133 state that there is a „unity of burial practice though most of MH Greece” this has to be seen in context with the preceding era, when funerary practice was even more diverse.

<sup>15</sup> Nordquist 1990, 38.

<sup>16</sup> Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 34f.

examples of the same kind<sup>17</sup>. Still, the lifestyle of the normal MH population must have been rather simple. All the more then, social identity may have been expressed at the occasion of the funeral.

The existence of grave goods indicates symbolic behaviour and thereby certain ideas about afterlife already emerging in this period. The crucial question might be, whether the symbolic activity at the funeral was guided by religious ideas or even fixed rituals. The latter does not seem to have been the case, in fact we have no evidence of religious institutions at all in this period<sup>18</sup>. As Carol Zerner puts it: “in burials of the MH and early LH periods at Lerna there is very little evidence of standardized or ritualized practices”<sup>19</sup>, and “evidence of any ceremony by the grave or of any cult of the dead for a longer time after the burial is even scarcer”, as Nordquist may add<sup>20</sup>. She has shown that the MH population at Asine was capable of all essential everyday activities needed for subsistence and even possessed medical skills - but apparently no organized cult system<sup>21</sup>. There are no signs of any religious activity that required permanent cult installations or other paraphernalia. No specialized equipment related to cult was found. Although village life and agricultural practice must have been organized along some kind of seasonal calendar that certainly will have included feasts, e.g. of harvest, and thereby had some ritual connotations, the strongest archaeological evidence for the existence of spiritual ideas is actually provided by symbolic activities, i.e. the offerings, at the occasion of the funeral<sup>22</sup>.

Infant mortality was high and the average life expectancy rather low (some 30-35 years). Thus the MH societies had to deal with death quite frequently, and in a small hamlet where people knew each other and privacy was rare, death was a social event, maybe even a threat to the whole community and its persistence and therefore an occasion of confirmation as well as challenge of the social order - the burial was the arena. But apart from that, it was also the place of mourning and sorrow – the carefully buried children at Asine, hardly having developed a social persona during life that explains their grave goods, do not show competition for status but grief.

At the end of the Middle Helladic period, however, the settlement pattern of the mainland shows interesting features. Former habitats were changed in favour of

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<sup>17</sup> Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990a, 101f., although almost all other horse burials are of later date (LH).

<sup>18</sup> Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 134.

<sup>19</sup> Zerner 1990, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Nordquist 1990, 39.

<sup>21</sup> Nordquist 1987.

<sup>22</sup> Nordquist 1987, 91ff.

stronger fortified and more easily defensible sites, while using the old settlement as a cemetery. Maran sees that as an indication of the formation of a social ‘class’ able to decide for a change of address of the whole village society<sup>23</sup>. At the same time a new type of settlement seems to emerge: Small hilltop settlements, often fortified and apparently covering the period of MH III to LH I/II. These settlements, termed “frühmykenische Burgen” by Lauter, are frequently fortified, like in the case of Kiapha Thiti on Attica, and sometimes show a central and prominent building that might be interpreted as the house of a local ruler or official and his/her family<sup>24</sup>. The evidence of these early Mycenaean ‘castles’ is rather scarce, but regarding the fact that also the exceptional graves, especially the Grave Circles of Mycenae, indicate the emergence of at least local élites it seems persuasive that in the late MH social stratification was largely established on the mainland, although maybe still at a crucial stage of its self-definition.

This suggestion is also supported by the aforementioned burial evidence. In most of the small village societies some kind of chief or chief family group seems to have developed, and maybe competition for this position was still open to almost every member of society, since social stratification was just at the beginning. Thus in the MH we face egalitarian groups that especially in the later phases of this stage show the strong tendency to social stratification and the development of early chiefdoms, not yet institutionalized and not determined by existing lineage ties or ‘dynasties’. Those ‘chiefs’ and their families might be the people who were buried in the first tholoi and the early shaft graves<sup>25</sup>. The basis (or at least the expression) of their authority will be explored on the following pages.

## **IDEOLOGIES OF POWER AND GENDER IN THE MH MAINLAND**

Elaboration and display are on the mainland MH period apparent in the mortuary sphere, whereas the settlements hardly show any outstanding features<sup>26</sup>. At certain places in the southern mainland, mainly at locations where later the Mycenaean palaces were erected, some groups start to distinguish their dead from those people

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<sup>23</sup> Maran 1995, 68ff. – without showing traces of a general impoverishment (as suggested by Kilian) of the associated society (see also Dietz 1991, 293f.).

<sup>24</sup> Lauter 1996, 80ff.

<sup>25</sup> Both the tholos tomb and the shaft grave are now generally believed to be internal mainland developments rather than foreign influences, see Voutsaki 1998, 42ff.

<sup>26</sup> Dickinson 1994, 59f.



buried in ‘normal’ graves (see Nordquist 1990) and equip the tombs with ‘richer’<sup>27</sup> assemblages, exceeding the normal standard of no or very few ceramic goods<sup>28</sup>.

Symbolic activity in the context of graves is a subject difficult to tackle. Why is a growing number of graves in the transition of MH to LH increasingly equipped with goods<sup>29</sup>? And why does this apply only to a certain ‘segment’ of the total burials of this time, and there is no clear separation of this segment in terms of gender and age groups (traditionally the most important categories subjected to archaeo-sociological research)? But which ‘segment’ of society (transgressing gender and age categories) is represented by these graves? Possible categories could be social strata as well as lineage/kin/family groups, those two being most difficult to disentangle. But those groups may well also have different qualities, like shared belief systems or ideologies. Nordquist<sup>30</sup> rightly remarked: “If [grave] goods had been needed for the well-being of the dead in the afterlife, surely everybody could afford a coarse cup, a whorl, or a bone awl.” Exactly. Why then is it only a small percentage of the graves that shows so little ‘investment’?

As stated above, regarding grave goods there are always several possible reasons for their placement with the dead, e.g. the existence of certain eschatological ideas, personal grief and the will to leave personal items to the deceased, as well as competition for social status. Surely all of these reasons would lead to the cultic action of equipping the grave with goods, while only the first would encompass the notion of supernatural ideas. Being able to discern these different reasons is almost impossible. In this case, I argue that it actually would be wrong to do so, since the first and the third reason are inextricably interwoven. Although some offerings might have a rather secular character, others indicate the emergence and conscious instrumentalization of supernatural ideas. That cultic action was carried out at the graves was stated above – action that was waiting to be channelled and normed along the lines of a religious system.

Nordquist has shown that even in the graves exclusively equipped with pottery, certain patterns of vessel combinations may suggest the increasing rôle of feasting and

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<sup>27</sup> Often the term ‘rich’ also applies to graves generally equipped with any or more ceramic goods than usual.

<sup>28</sup> On the general scarceness of grave goods in MH cemeteries see Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 31.

<sup>29</sup> And it is in early Mycenaean times that child graves for the first time are supplied with richer goods, Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 111. 129.

<sup>30</sup> Nordquist 1987, 105.

especially (ritual?) drinking<sup>31</sup>. The graves equipped with pottery and further goods normally occur in clusters, and are often divided from the rest of the cemetery by means of a surrounding wall. Some of them are tumuli, but others clearly differentiate themselves by other features, mostly the grave offerings<sup>32</sup>. The definition of ‘rich’, therefore, was mainly referring to the exceptional character of the grave goods, untypical compared to the usual graves and exceeding the graves ‘only’ equipped with pottery<sup>33</sup>. Even a few ceramic offerings may indicate the membership of a certain group regarding it important to equip their dead with items for the afterlife – in this sense, ‘cultic’ items.

However, in the context of this paper exclusively dealing with graves by far exceeding the normal ceramic offering practice, beyond the cultic implications of grave goods further implications restricted to these exceptionally equipped graves will be sought. All of the graves examined in the following seem to have belonged to also economically outstanding social groups.

Within archaeological research, the focus in analyzing grave goods has for a long time been on seeing the burial customs and grave goods as reflections of if not the real but the ideal living society or ‘social structure’<sup>34</sup>. Ritual or religious connotations of the goods and their implications for changes in the socio-religious superstructure are only rarely suggested<sup>35</sup>, easily understandable as the reference to ritual and religion in past archaeology was often used quite literally as the *deus ex machina* for every not straightforwardly explainable phenomenon. But still: Only because this solution seems easy does not mean that it has to be dismissed, especially when minute examination of the evidence is not able to undermine but rather hardens it<sup>36</sup>. But back to the burials themselves:

The most prominent and best excavated assemblage belonging to the group of exceptional graves in the Aegean in late MH times is certainly the Grave Circle B at Mycenae<sup>37</sup>. The group of 26 graves was surrounded by a wall and can be dated into

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<sup>31</sup> On the basis of pottery finds in the graves Nordquist 2002, 130ff. rightly stresses hospitality (*philoxenia*) as an important factor in late MH elite society.

<sup>32</sup> The list of exceptional burials given here might, if one also takes into account the architecture of the graves, be enlarged a lot.

<sup>33</sup> cf. Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997, 104.

<sup>34</sup> Morris 1987.

<sup>35</sup> Exception is van Leuven 1989.

<sup>36</sup> And in fact, as an explanation for different grave assemblages, i.e. the regional variation in the distribution of Mycenaean figurines, Cavanagh 1998, 113 has recently suggested varying religious beliefs of the ordinary people. Similar ideas now concerning the construction of the graves are expressed by Dietz 1991, 277.

<sup>37</sup> Mylonas 1964, 1972-73.

the late MH/early LH period<sup>38</sup> (grave P is excluded here, since it was rebuilt later). The exceptional number of graves, as well as the fact that they have not been robbed, enables a detailed analysis of the self-conception of the people buried here and/or those who buried them. Therefore this grave group will serve as the appropriate starting point for the present discussion. After that, the results of this analysis will be compared with the findings of the other contemporary exceptional graves of the mainland. In order to make the material more accessible, the grave goods were organized in various categories and the results presented in a table, arranged according to the period of burial and the sex of the bodies. This data is mainly derived from Dietz<sup>39</sup>, as well as the information about the grave goods and their ascription to the skeletons in case of multiple burials.

For reasons of lucidity, the grave goods were divided into five different groups. This may bear some inherent problems regarding the characterization of single objects, but was inevitable in order to present the material in a concise form. The first group consists of all kinds of vessels, open and closed shapes, ceramic and metal. This is termed ‘symposium-set’. The term may seem exaggerated in consideration of the fact that pottery is very rare in the earliest graves, but it will be shown that the later burials and the overall character of the assemblages justify it. Also knives are included in this group, because of their obvious use as cutting tools and their possible rôle in feasting. Moreover, it does not seem to be appropriate to classify them as weapons, since there is no scene in the art of the Aegean Bronze Age where knives are used in combat or even worn by armed men. The second category is labelled ‘adornment’, under which are subsumed all objects of body- or dress-ornamentation, mainly diadems, gold sheets of various shapes and beads. The contents of the ‘warrior-set’ are weapons, regardless whether of aggressive or defensive character. After having set up these categories, it was indispensable to also include a category for unusual objects which did either not fit into the previous classifications or seemed to be of special importance. In order not to ignore these items, they are listed under ‘other’. The last category, ‘imports’, mainly overlaps with the first one, but can generally include items of all categories. This category was set up to show the development of external relationships and incorporation of objects of foreign origin in the world of the Shaft Grave people (*Table 1*).

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<sup>38</sup> Graziadio 1988, 1991; Dietz 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Dietz 1991.

During the first period of the use of Grave Circle B the graves of this area do not differ from other contemporary graves in terms of offerings. The interments are poor, with hardly any grave goods. But then certain patterns seem to emerge: In MHIIB and LHIA female burials were introduced into the Grave Circle. Diadems occur in every sex and age group, also the number of ornaments increases considerably, and they are especially associated with women. Already half of the graves, regardless of the sex of the dead, now are equipped with imports from the Cyclades.

The latest phase of the use of Grave Circle B seems to show an inversion of the processes operating in the previous phases: more women than men are buried in the circle, and whereas the assemblages of the men are rather poor, the female assemblages continue to be very rich. Interestingly, neither of the men wears a diadem. Imports are now very common in all graves.

Regarding what has been said in the previous chapter about the possibility of reading group ideologies out of the archaeological evidence, the attempt will be made to outline the self-conceptions of the users of Grave Circle B of Mycenae.

As for gender conceptions, from MHIIB onwards some classifications are taking place: Men are associated with a set of tableware in which drinking vessels prevail and the preparation or distribution of meat (see the knives) is emphasized. Their military force is stressed by weapons (mainly swords and daggers<sup>40</sup>, but also arrowheads). Interesting is also the occurrence of toilet articles like tweezers. This points to the emergence of a warrior ideology for high status males in this time<sup>41</sup>. The stone axe of Neolithic type in grave B may even indicate that this ideal was already older, but now for the first time articulated in the mortuary sphere.

The grave goods of the women suggest that they were engaged in different activities: Closed shapes are common in their ceramic assemblages, possibly indicating their responsibility for the preparation of the action, rather than taking part in the drinking rituals themselves (or in a different way). Domestic activities are furthermore indicated by the cooking pot in grave  $\Xi$ , a form which later also occurs in the epichosis of other female graves (O). The fact that children were generally placed

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<sup>40</sup> Daggers may have also been used for rituals, i e. in the context of sacrifice (as suggested by some scholars, see Whittaker 2002, 154 footnote 34) – but iconographic evidence for this suggestion is lacking.

<sup>41</sup> Similar to the one Treherne 1995 attests for later periods in Europe.

together with women may lead to the conclusion that childrearing was considered as a solely female task.

The children of this group were part of these stereotyped rôle models: The child in grave I was accompanied by an electrum spindle-whorl, and the girl in grave  $\Xi$  received the same amount of ornaments as the richest contemporary women. It is also worth mentioning that all of the children placed in the Grave Circle seem to have been girls.

These gender conceptions and characterizations that became visible in MHIII B seem to have become cemented in LHIA. However, the number of imports grows steadily, and now the first objects of Minoan origin occur.

All of the individuals are separated from their contemporaries by items which seem to have served as status markers, indicators for the general membership to this group (e.g. the diadems). According to the precious items deposited in the graves, they surely have to be regarded as a social group of some wealth and status, i. e. an élite. Angel<sup>42</sup> emphasized the unusual tallness and strong build of the skeletons, indicating that their economic position and lifestyle must have been different from that of the normal MH population. Thus an élite seems to have been established already before the elaboration and categorization occurred, an élite which now increasingly expresses the status of its members in burial consumption. One of the reasons for this elaboration and conscious expression is almost certainly connected to the realization of conspicuous burial display as a means to express and legitimize status claims. But the fact that the objects are deposited in the graves and thereby made inaccessible for further display does not only have to be explained as a kind of sacrificial destruction in the competition for status. They might as well have served for the purpose of the well-being of the deceased during their existence in the afterworld.

But it shall certainly not be argued here that the system of deposition does not reflect realities of the existing social order in the living society: The categorization of the dead according to their gender, which does only make sense if these categories also existed during life, indicates the emergence of social and personal ideas about ideal lifeways within the élite groups<sup>43</sup>. It is noteworthy that in Grave Circle B far more men than women are buried, and that their ideal of a warrior lifestyle is accentuated much clearer than the rôle of women. Therefore it is suggested that in this phase it was especially male status that secured membership to this group, and that women

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<sup>42</sup> In Mylonas 1972-73; see also S.K. Manolis and A.A. Neroutsos in Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997, 169ff.

seem to be involved in a rather secondary way, as providers and preparers of symposium-like drinking activities. In the transitional phase from MH to LH there is an increasing association between the women and children, which from birth on seem to have been introduced in these gender conceptions.

Examination of the other extraordinarily equipped graves of this period in the mainland suggests that the same processes seem to apply throughout the entire mainland: in the MHIII/LHI transitional phase there is an expression of élite identity in burial display (*Fig. 1 and Table 2*).

In the region of Elis, illegal excavations at Makryssia, Profitis Elias, uncovered the

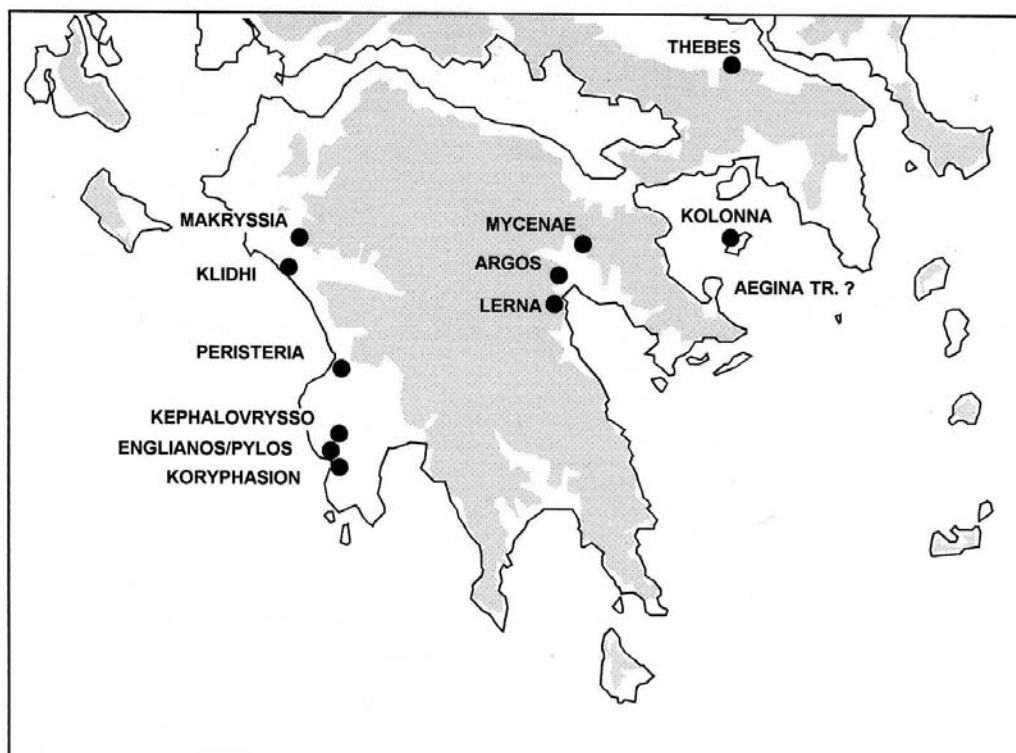


Fig. 1: Locations of extraordinary graves

remains of burials located within a small tumulus, tholos or grave circle<sup>44</sup>. Although not scientifically excavated, more than 20 clay vessels and several bronze items are known to come from this site. The grave goods indicate that the tomb was erected early in the Mycenaean period, possibly even in Middle Helladic times, and used until LH III.

Just c. 10km further south at **Kato Samiko Klidhi**, the poor remains of a small tholos (sometimes interpreted as a grave circle) situated at the Triphylian coast have been

<sup>43</sup> As shown e. g. by Shennan 1975; Treherne 1995; Sørensen 1997 for other complexes.

<sup>44</sup> Themelis 1968; Schachermeyr 1974; Iakovidis 1981; Boyd 2002 no. 48, 191f.

unearthed<sup>45</sup>. The disturbed tholos (mound 5), probably erected in MHIII, was in use even until LHIIIC. Especially the three shaft graves within the structure yielded rich finds: A boar's tusk helmet, and several bronze items. The remains also include possibly imported Keftiu-cups showing parallels to late MMIII vases. This points towards an assemblage that originally consisted of considerable offerings, with at least sets of drinking vessels as a fixed component.

At **Peristeria**, northern Messenia, the MH-LH transitional phase faces the burial of several 'rich' assemblages<sup>46</sup>. The finds associated with the shallow 'shaft grave' (MHIII-LHI) as well as the remains in tholos III (MHIII-LHIIA) and tholos II (LHI-IIA) attest the existence of some originally very precious assemblages. The numerous parallels of the uncovered objects to the finds in Grave Circle A, however, suggest their use rather in late LHI times.

A second cluster of extraordinarily equipped graves is situated in the area where the later **palace of Pylos** was built. At least two of the graves show the typical appearance of warrior assemblages: The graves of Volimidhia/Kephalovryso (I)<sup>47</sup>, where the association of grave goods to the respective inhumations is not quite clear but can generally be dated to MHIII, contained numerous flint arrowheads, a whetstone and several knives along with numerous pots, spindles and fragments of ivory. The badly preserved so-called 'grave circle' at Pylos<sup>48</sup>, originally presumably a tholos<sup>49</sup>, contained two late Helladic-early Mycenaean assemblages of extraordinary character. With pit 3 were associated several swords, daggers and knives, boar's tusks, ivory pommels and other fragments of ivory, obsidian and amber. Also bronze pins, silver and bronze vessels and Minoan pottery was found. Pit 1 just contained one sword, but many items of personal (funeral) adornment, such as ivory pins and four silver half diadems. In the looted tholos of **Koryphasion**<sup>50</sup>, possibly one of the first tombs of this kind, fragments of pottery, a silver vessel, and a pyxis of Egyptian porcelain are certainly indicators of its former wealth, but cannot show whether the same categorisation as in Mycenae took place. The same is true for the equally looted tholos IV at **Englianos**, where nevertheless several small objects of gold foil were recovered

<sup>45</sup> Yalouris 1965; Schachermeyr 1974; Boyd 2002 no. 45, 186-189.

<sup>46</sup> Iakovidis 1981; Marinatos 1965; Schachermeyr 1974; Boyd 2002 no. 35, 167-174.

<sup>47</sup> Marinatos 1964; Schachermeyr 1974; Iakovidis 1981; Boyd 2002 no. 23, 138-147. A chamber tomb used in MHIII-LHIIIC (Kephalovryso 5) contained whetstones, boar's tusks (not sliced to use in helmets) and a serpentine axe head.

<sup>48</sup> Blegen *et al.* 1973; Matthäus 1980, 31f.

<sup>49</sup> As Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 51 as well as Boyd 2002 no. 24 (tholos V), 147-152 suggest, while Dickinson 1989, 134 favours a tumulus.

during archaeological examination. Indeed, the large amount of gold leaf found under the lowest layer led to the suggestion that the floor was originally covered with gold leaf.

Some other scattered findspots of exceptional burials of the Shaft Grave period occur throughout the Peloponnese and the mainland. A cist (or shaft) grave in **Thebes**<sup>51</sup> clearly reflects the warrior image.

Relatively close to Grave Circle B, the tumuli of **Argos**<sup>52</sup> contain some exceptional graves, with precious jewellery and ceramic as well as metal vessels, often accompanied by swords and daggers. The looted shaft graves of **Lerna**<sup>53</sup> just yielded two fine cups of Helladic tradition, but also one conical cup, a form very common on Crete in MMII-LMI. Their architecture and placement nevertheless suggests their use as tombs for outstanding members of the community.

An ensemble nearly identical to the ones of Grave Circle B of Mycenae was found in an undisturbed shaft grave on the **Kolonna hill on Aegina**<sup>54</sup>. A full set of weapons is accompanied by a gold diadem. Since the Kamares ware jug also found has its closed parallels in MMII Crete, this may be one of the earliest shaft graves<sup>55</sup>. The mysterious Aegina treasure<sup>56</sup> may indicate Levantine or Egyptian connections of the island in the MH period.

With the sole exception of Makryssia, all of the undisturbed extraordinarily equipped graves of this period indicate that the processes outlined for Grave Circle B of Mycenae were operating all over the mainland, as well as on Aegina<sup>57</sup>. The special burial areas suggest that social exclusion was an important factor of the lifestyle of MH high status groups. The continued use of these exclusive burial places and the increasing custom of multiple burials indicates a stronger emphasis on the collective<sup>58</sup>, especially membership to this high status group, and child burials show that once these intra- and intergroup categorizations were established, more emphasis

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<sup>50</sup> Kourouniotis 1925-26; Blegen 1954; Lolos 1989; Boyd 2002 no. 16, 125.

<sup>51</sup> Kilian-Dirlmeier 1995, 49; 1997, 83.

<sup>52</sup> Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990.

<sup>53</sup> Caskey 1955; 1956; Dickinson 1977, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Walter 1981; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1995; 1997.

<sup>55</sup> Dietz 1991, 277. 298; Hiller 1989; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997.

<sup>56</sup> Gates 1989; Higgins 1979.

<sup>57</sup> In his recent investigations, Boyd 2002 could show that also in Laconia (Analipsis, Epidauros Limira; nos. 52 and 59) and at other sites in the western Peloponnese further rich graves might have been erected in the MH-LH transitional period. Most of them were in use for a long time span, though, and are not listed here.

<sup>58</sup> This seems to have been a general trend in late MH times, see Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 34.



was placed on descent and family or lineage ties<sup>59</sup>. At least three processes can be discerned: 1) a clear separation in burial ritual of the high status individuals from the normal population; 2) the women associated with high status men share certain signs of membership of the group with them (diadems, drinking vessels), but seem to have performed different activities - women seem to be associated rather with domestic tasks and are excluded from the weaponry of the warrior assemblages. Children were part of these gender classifications; 3) the uniformity of the picture over wide areas of the Peloponnese and the mainland indicates that at least the warrior ideology of men was shared interregionally, and it is likely that contacts between these groups were existing<sup>60</sup>. The knives and drinking vessels suggest that communal feasting within and between these peers was of high importance.

We are facing an increased will to display the self-conception of the recently established mainland élites at the end of the MH period, played out in the funerary sphere. At the core of this lies the ideal of the male warrior, showing his strength and excellence through weapon sets. It seems that these élites were largely of local character, but intra- and intergroup activities like communal feasting was used to strengthen their position.

### **IDEOLOGIES IN THE TIME OF THE ‘MINOAN THALASSOCRACY’**

Having outlined the ideological concepts of mainland communities, this paper will now turn to the examination of the contemporary island world of the Aegean, in order to compare the results with the developments in Grave Circle A. The main focus will be on Crete, which in this period is commonly regarded as the leading force in the Aegean<sup>61</sup>.

Unlike the development on the mainland, the élites on Crete find other means than conspicuous burial display to express their status and exclusiveness: the ‘First Palaces’. They emerged as a new architectural form in MMIB at several sites in Crete, mainly at the sites of the later New Palaces, at Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia<sup>62</sup>. During

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<sup>59</sup> Although the recent attempt of Musgrave, Neave and Prag 1995 to reconstruct family ties within the Grave Circle B is to my mind methodically questionable, since it is based on too many not clearly verifiable steps.

<sup>60</sup> Other warrior graves of MH date can be found at Thebes, Lerna, Asine and maybe some other places, although the dating is not always easy to establish, see Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 27 and further bibliography.

<sup>61</sup> Hägg and Marinatos 1984.

<sup>62</sup> MacGillivray 1994; Branigan 1991.

MMIII, a major earthquake horizon occurs throughout entire Crete, destroying all of the 'First Palaces'. The 'Second' or 'New Palaces' are far better known, and their main features seem to have been closely similar to that of their predecessors<sup>63</sup>: they all possess a very similar orientation corresponding to the four cardinal points of the compass, a western and central court and four wings. Although their size and architectural complexity, as well as the elaboration associated with them suggest important socio-political functions, this cannot have been their sole use. It is important to note that these big complexes were erected in the middle of existing settlements, and that there is a general lack of associated fortifications. Large public-gathering facilities constitute a vital element, with the west courts accessible from outside, while the access to the central courts was more restricted. Storage areas are a feature of all the palatial structures, within (west magazines) and outside ('kouloures' in the west courts). They are clearly associated with the palaces and were both object of greater (west magazines) or lesser control (granaries). These features indicate that the 'palaces' were far more than elite residences, but had a much wider social and economic significance, functioning as redistributive centers. But especially in the 'New Palaces' a strong emphasis seems to have been put on another aspect of 'palatial' life: the administration of cult.

When considering this, one must not forget the cause of the destruction of the 'First Palaces': Earthquakes are phenomena external to human influence, and have always been associated with supernatural forces. It is unlikely that this was different in the Bronze Age Aegean. The vast destructions that occurred on Crete in the transition to the New Palace period are likely to have affected the religious ideas of all the communities throughout the island, all equally stricken with the results of what may have been perceived as divine displeasure. A reinforcement of ritual action, as a means of communication with the supernatural, may have been employed to calm down the divine forces. Therefore, the palaces as places of communal cultic festivals<sup>64</sup> may have achieved an even more significant rôle in society, and with them the people carrying out these rituals, i. e. the spiritual leaders. Communal socio-economic functions were still a vital part of the palaces, but they probably became even more ritualized and socially important. Also rather personal cultic practice seems to have been centralized - the old rural shrines, as well as the peak sanctuaries and sacred caves, were gradually superseded by palatial shrines, showing the potential religious

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<sup>63</sup> cf. Hägg and Marinatos 1987.

authority now bore for those who controlled it<sup>65</sup>. The picture of a strongly hierocratic society emerges, with an élite with strong religious connotations as a major base of their power, dominating the political and cultic life in the Neopalatial period<sup>66</sup>. Examination of the rich iconographic tradition, developing on Crete during that time, supports the process outlined above. Human figures now were increasingly depicted on seals<sup>67</sup> and wall-paintings<sup>68</sup>. It seems important in the context of this paper that according to the storage facilities as well as to the (partly later) pictorial program of the palaces this cultic life seems to have revolved to a large extent around seasonal (agricultural) festivals featuring communal (although possibly intra-élite) consumption of foodstuffs, drink and maybe also ritual feasting<sup>69</sup>. The frescoes of Knossos show large amounts of people, all of which seem to be participants or spectators of what has convincingly been interpreted as public festivals of cultic character<sup>70</sup>.

It is also important to note that the main figures on the scenes are of both sexes, indeed women seem to possess a greater significance than men. They are also differentiated from the rest of the figures by their activities, gestures and costume. It is still very much disputed whether these figures are depictions of divinities, members of a priesthood or high status individuals/kings<sup>71</sup>. Indeed, it is exactly this ambiguity that is important for my account, for it indicates that religious and secular power at this time on Crete were inextricably intermarried. The palatial élite developed a costume that was very similar, if not identical, to that ascribed to divinities.

Precious adornment is not straightforwardly a sign for divinity, as the discussion about the divine or political status of figures like the Lily Prince<sup>72</sup> or the standing figure on the Master Impression from Khania may illustrate (see below). The ‘Mistress of Animals’ in Akrotiri, Xeste 3 is one of the few depictions where the context strongly suggests the identification as a goddess<sup>73</sup>. In terms of adornment she

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<sup>64</sup> Gesell 1987; Marinatos 1987a.

<sup>65</sup> Peatfield 1987, 1990; Gesell 1985; Rutkowski 1986.

<sup>66</sup> Hiller 1987.

<sup>67</sup> Yule 1980; Dickinson 1994, 188ff.

<sup>68</sup> Immerwahr 1990.

<sup>69</sup> The central importance of communal feasting at least in the smaller palaces of the Neopalatial period is indicated by the recent excavations at Galatas; Rethemiotakis 1999, 20ff.

<sup>70</sup> Boulotis 1987; Cameron 1987; Davis 1987.

<sup>71</sup> cf. Rehak 1995.

<sup>72</sup> For the new interpretation see Niemeier 1987.

<sup>73</sup> Dumas 1992, fig. 125-126. I am referring here to one of the Akrotiri frescoes not only because of the iconography, but also because the dating of the Knossian frescoes is still very much disputed.

is surely an outstanding figure in Aegean art, but it is especially her association with the griffin that supports the assumption of her being a goddess.

It seems that in the absence of other indicators like gesture, rich ornaments and adornment is one of the main characteristics of religious authorities in Minoan contexts. A dividing line between mortals and immortals cannot be clearly drawn. This strengthens the picture of a hierocratic society, in which the high status individuals are very closely connected to the gods, and the two levels can only be distinguished in clear contextual depictions.

It was suggested that epiphany of divinities was a major element in Minoan cult<sup>74</sup>. These epiphanies must have been carried out by religious officials, who were in charge of these cults and knew how to proceed. This implies that cult on Crete was organized in an institutionalized system, and can be addressed as a religion in the sense of Durkheim, i. e. with a central organisation and full-time officials. The high status individuals were associated with the palaces, and established a socio-political system based on cultic ceremonies which seemed to have followed certain rules. The places where these institutionalized cult action took place were the so-called palaces, like the supposedly seasonal festivals in the west courts indicate<sup>75</sup>. This means that the élites on Crete at least in the Neopalatial period achieved a very strong religious component.

Contrary to the mainland, therefore, the main element of the self-identity of the élites on Crete was not military force (although this does not mean that they were not engaged in military activities) but the association between the élite and the divine forces, played out by means of cult administration, i.e. religious control. The élite members wear costumes which make them difficult to distinguish from divinities. Women seem to play an important rôle in this system<sup>76</sup>, they are often depicted and seem to occupy the high status position in their own right, since association with males are rare, and if both genders are shown in one picture there is no clear predominance of one of them. All this points to a system of institutionalized cult activity, which especially in the Neopalatial period and after the decline of the old rural shrines seem to have become centralized and strongly connected with the palaces. This institutionalized religious authority and ideology seems to have been a

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<sup>74</sup> e. g. Hägg 1986; Niemeier 1986.

<sup>75</sup> Marinatos 1987a.

<sup>76</sup> Waterhouse 1974, Marinatos 1989.

very successful means of domination on Crete at the transition from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age, a time when the Minoan culture ascended to the most influential power in the Aegean<sup>77</sup>.

## **THE PHENOMENON OF GRAVE CIRCLE A AND THE ‘CONVERSION’ OF WARRIORS**

It is these two different élites sketched in the previous chapters, with their different self-conceptions lying at the roots of their domination and completely different means of expressing their status, one has to bear in mind when approaching the phenomenon of Grave Circle A.

With Grave Circle A<sup>78</sup>, a new élite burial place was found in Mycenae (probably first restricted to men, while women were still buried in Grave Circle B). In all its features, this new circle seems to be a continuation of the earlier Grave Circle B and correlates with the general social trend of higher burial investment taking place throughout entire Greece in the LH period<sup>79</sup>. But contrary to the gradual development towards richer assemblages in the older circle, Grave Circle A represents something like a quantum leap (*Table 3*).

The old male ideology now is played out with much greater emphasis. The interments continue to be characterized as warriors. The items belonging to their warrior set become more numerous and precious, and further elements were added: the toilet articles were used further and elaborated (tweezers, combs, razors, mirrors), helmets made of boar tusks were now equipped with ornaments, breast plates occur, and many of the swords and daggers are now decorated not only with precious pommels, but also with hilts of precious materials and high craftsmanship. The fact that not all of them were only items of power and display (i. e. mere symbols) is shown by the presence of whetstones. Thus fighting and competition must have still been a vital part of the power basis of these élite.

Also the iconography of the objects shows this. Figural depictions now become much more common, and it is mostly men who were depicted. They are always shown either engaged in warfare or hunting. This ideal of the man as a powerful hunter and warrior is beautifully expressed on the inlaid blade of a dagger from Shaft Grave IV

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<sup>77</sup> Marinatos 1995.

<sup>78</sup> Karo 1930-33.

<sup>79</sup> See Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 41. 55.

(Karo 394): The lion, on one side of the blade shown as the mightiest terrestrial animal, a powerful hunter, is on the other side confronted with human hunters, and now the predator itself becomes prey, inferior to the power of man (i. e. the élite engaged in these hunting activities). On other items the heroic fight man against man is depicted, like we know it from Homer's *Iliad* where the Trojan war is basically reducible to a series of duels between the leaders of the Achaean and Trojan troops. Both points to the development of an agonistic ideal, situated at the core of the male ideology in this period at least at Mycenae. Such scenes are depicted on the seal rings of grave IV, both of which seem to have belonged to the women of this grave.

All this may be seen as an enhancement of the previous tendencies, but not structurally different. Also in terms of the collective character of the tombs the graves of Circle A do follow a general LH pattern, although maybe marking a transitional stage from single to multiple burial<sup>80</sup>. But one element may be a sign for the beginning of a change in the self-conception of the group which placed their dead in this circle: the existence of a rhyton already in grave II, a genuinely Minoan shape, used primarily in cult<sup>81</sup>.

Also other components in Grave Circle A indicate the addition of a further component to the power basis of the Shaft Grave élite: When examining the exclusively male grave V, the costume of the deceased comes much closer to what has been identified in the Minoan world as the outfit of high religious authorities. The duck necklace of the 'Mistress of Animals' has already been mentioned, and it certainly has the closest parallels in material culture in the necklace worn by the northern skeleton in grave V, consisting of pendants of antithetical eagles. Also other Minoan depictions clearly show that high status men were also associated with largely the same costume the men in the Grave Circle A wore: For instance, the so-called Lily Prince of Knossos, a figure which has recently been reinterpreted by Niemeier as a god<sup>82</sup>. He is wearing a necklace as well, and similarly to the 'Mistress of Animals' seems to be connected with a mythical beast, this time a sphinx. An even better example may be the male figure on the 'Master Impression' from Khania - he is wearing an elaborate necklace, consisting of several pendants of not clearly identifiable shape<sup>83</sup>. Moreover, he wears

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<sup>80</sup> See Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 41. 131. Chamber tombs remain extremely restricted until LH IIA (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 48).

<sup>81</sup> Koehl 1981; one could possibly argue that in the previous phase the askos as a pouring vessel may have had the same function; but this is disproved by Rutter (1985), who cannot identify clear cultic associations for this type of vessel.

<sup>82</sup> Niemeier 1987, figs. 24-26.

<sup>83</sup> Hallager 1985, figs. 10-11.

armlets and his hair is long (as the one of the Lily Prince) and well kept. The well-kept hair is surely something to which also the Shaft Grave people directed a lot of attention, as indicated by the precious combs. But more importantly, many of the male dead of grave IV and V wore gold-plated belts and armlets, in the Cretan world associated with people shown in religious contexts.

The close orientation towards Minoan élites may become even more apparent when one takes a closer look at the women. Their wealth increased rapidly in Grave Circle A, and may even exceed the one of men. And they are associated with even more depictions that place them in close connection to the religious authorities of the Minoan area, which, it has to be remembered, seem to have been largely women. It is only in grave IV that women are directly associated with men in one grave, and this may be a reminiscence of the previous times, since Dietz<sup>84</sup> sees this grave as the earliest of the whole circle and the canonical placement of the dead in east-west orientation is not yet fully realized. Moreover, the women in this grave are rather poorly equipped, although richer as in Grave Circle B, and the presence of the rings with depictions of male hunting and fighting closely associates them with male ideology. But in grave III (and later in grave D), in which three women and two children were interred, these women seem to have become more independent of the male power. They are associated with objects that are equal in wealth (the amount of gold in grave III is even considerably higher than that of their male counterparts in grave V<sup>85</sup>) and richer in iconography and symbolism than the male graves. The skeletons are almost buried in gold, most of it in the form of small ornaments of thin gold sheet. More than 700 of them were found in this grave. Additionally, two of the women had large golden diadems beside their heads (Karo 1 'crown'; Karo 3). In fact, most of the offerings in grave III are of Minoan character<sup>86</sup>. But interestingly the women do not seem to become authorities in entirely their own right: This may be indicated by the scenes of male activities of warfare and hunting accompanying the women in grave III as well as in grave IV. They also maintain activities of the previous periods, their rôle in childcare indicated by the children interred with the women of grave III, and maybe also by some very small diadems of grave IV, which would only have fitted on the heads of children. Furthermore, their rôle in feasting seems to stay the same, as indicated by the vessels associated with them. And

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<sup>84</sup> Dietz 1991, fig. 78.

<sup>85</sup> Karo 1930-33, 166ff.

<sup>86</sup> Karo 1930-33, 256.

weaving probably still must have been one of their main tasks, too. But all in all, their position seems to have become more important, not least indicated by their massive presence in relation to the male interments in Grave Circle A, contrary to their small number in Grave Circle B.

Also the decoration of many of the single objects placed in this and the other graves has clear parallels in the Minoan culture. The numerous gold sheet ornaments are mostly decorated with rosettes and other abstract ornaments like spirals, but also sheets in the shape of Minoan shrines occur (Karo 26, 242-244). Furthermore, many of them are worked in the form of octopodes (Karo 30, 31) lilies (Karo 23, 24), 'goddesses' with or without birds (Karo 27, 28, 75), griffins and sphinxes (Karo 29, 47, 48), birds (Karo 43, 44), butterflies or even bull's heads with a double axe (Karo 353-354), motifs clearly of Minoan origin. The bull also is evident in the form of a silver rhyton (Karo 384), a cult vessel. But the iconographic system of Crete seems to have been modified on the mainland: The bull is replaced by other wild animals, and (as foreshadowed by the sword Δ-277 in Grave Circle B) lions take a preeminent rôle in the animal depictions.

Thus, when having a closer look at the iconography, one can see a lot of motifs that are new in Helladic art. Asking where these motifs occur in the Minoan world, attention is immediately drawn to the palatial frescoes, all of which are generally thought to depict religious scenes<sup>87</sup>. And the fine garments (or shrouds - for the high quality of the textiles in Grave Circle A see Karo 228) of the dead of Grave Circle A are decorated with figural golden ornaments or appliques, which Marinatos<sup>88</sup> on the basis of the Knossos frescoes regards as exclusively restricted to deities or high priestesses and -priests. Contrary to the Shaft Graves, women seem to play a greater and more important rôle than men in figural depictions on the islands, as already stated in the previous chapter. Minoan high status women are commonly regarded as figures connected with strong religious authority<sup>89</sup>. When comparing the figural depictions from the Crete and Thera with the women buried in grave III in Mycenae, it seems that these individuals were largely equipped with exactly the high status costumes of the Minoan world<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> Marinatos 1993.

<sup>88</sup> Marinatos 1993, 62f.

<sup>89</sup> See especially Reusch 1958.

<sup>90</sup> Even the golden scales in grave III may be connected to a combination of religious authority and profane tasks: The ideal of high status women on the mainland was largely connected with the production of fine textiles, as witnessed in the Grave Circle B and the Homeric poems, as well as the great emphasis on production of textiles by the later palatial economies, employing a largely female



One element in the male burial costume nevertheless remains somewhat enigmatic: the golden masks, which only have an electrum parallel in Grave Circle B. It has to be stated that the mask from Grave Circle B is of a totally different appearance to the ones from Grave Circle A, and may have been inspired by Cycladic motifs<sup>91</sup>. Although beauty in life and death was emphasized in the warrior ideology, the gold masks are a new phenomenon. Not designed as portraits, they rather had a theatrical effect, maybe in order to create awe in the spectators<sup>92</sup>. They may well be an enhancement of the idea of beauty, may even carry divine attributes<sup>93</sup>, but the origin of this idea cannot be found in the Aegean, since predecessors (and even successors) lack in this region. Only in Egypt gilded faces on sarcophagi of rich and outstanding members of the community, occurring already in the 12. and 13. Dynasty<sup>94</sup> and not yet exclusively restricted to the pharaohs<sup>95</sup>, give slightly earlier and contemporary parallels. The only comparable gold mask in the Aegean is of later date, and of a different character: the small mask from Phylakopi<sup>96</sup>, found in the sanctuary.

It is important to remember, though, that most of the objects decorated in Minoan style and buried in Grave Circle A are not of Minoan, but of Helladic origin, i. e. are products of indigenous craftsmanship. These objects were therefore not acquired by means of trade or exchange of prestige items between the Cretan and Mycenaean élite groups, but purposefully made by the Shaft Grave people themselves. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that they just randomly took over motifs and costumes from the Minoan world and used them without any knowledge of their original function. It is rather likely that they chose motifs and symbols, as well as habits and means of personal expression from the Minoans that would also mean something to them, and serve as a means for personal expression for themselves as well. It is rather easy to forget about the original meaning of an object or motif if it is acquired by trade from another culture, for then one is not aware of the meaning of this object in its original

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working force. That saffron and also purple were dyes of high value and status is documented by Homer (e. g. Iliad VIII, 1 - the goddess of morning is dressed in a 'saffron robe', and other references collected by Bichler 2007, 32-34) and the direct connection of the 'Mistress of Animals' with it; the essence of these precious substances must have been weighted with such fine scales as are imitated by the golden ones in grave III. Alternatively some scholars suggested that scale symbolizes the weighing of the soul after death, the *psychostasia*, and therefore an eschatological concept; see Vermeule 1964, 298 and Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 53.

<sup>91</sup> Kopcke 1976.

<sup>92</sup> Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 109; Musgrave, Neave and Prag 1995, 119f.

<sup>93</sup> Cavanagh 1998, 105.

<sup>94</sup> Taylor 1989, 24.

<sup>95</sup> LÄV<sup>2</sup>, s. v. Mumie, 214 (Sternberg).

context. This could well lead to a secularization of formerly cultic objects, for instance. But if one purposefully chooses objects and motifs that are foreign to the own cultural environment but have a prominent and distinct meaning in adjacent cultures and imitates them, it is not simply intended to introduce or transport the mere shape of these objects, but also at least partly their connotation, i. e. their symbolic value.

It is hard to believe that the early Mycenaean just liked the shape of bull's heads, double axes, butterflies and Minoan shrines. It seems difficult to imagine that through contact to the Minoan world they all of a sudden discovered the rhyton as a useful secular pouring vessel, or realized that things just look nicer if you decorate them with figural depictions. If Minoan iconography really is packed with religious allusions, as many people believe, then also the Shaft Grave people must have known about that. Secularization is a process that may happen quickly or rather slowly, but it is very unlikely that an élite - we are not talking about inward-orientated, plain people here but about a 'ruling class', whatever its dominance may have looked like, who also seems to have managed to establish contacts to far more remote areas like Britain (the amber necklace of grave O) or the Near East (the stag-shaped silver vessel of grave IV), although maybe via mediators - whose contacts to the other culture are well attested by actual imports and who are geographically that close together would have been unaware of the religious symbolism of the motifs, objects and costume they chose to take over from their contemporary neighbours. They must have known about this religious component, and why would they take over those symbols if they were not willing to use them?

One must not forget another important point: The idea of displaying wealth is certainly not a genuinely Minoan one. But in the Helladic mainland this idea is being (re)introduced not earlier than in MHIII, as the exceptional graves analyzed above indicate. It seems not very likely that the objects placed in these graves all came to the mainland immediately before their burial and the MH population did not know bronze swords, for example. Rather, it was not customary to equip the dead with offerings for the afterlife at that time. As the few ceramic offerings in the MH graves indicate, there probably was no taboo preventing people from placing items with their dead, but apparently the MH population did not feel the need to make their deceased fit for afterlife. So either there was no clear and widespread eschatological conception, or

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<sup>96</sup> Renfrew 1985.

the afterlife was believed to be of a nature that did not demand further treatment of the corpse or measures concerning the burial. This was gradually changed by the late MH groups above addressed as élites. And at the transition to LHI, especially the people in Mycenae stressed, beside their martial ability, the possession of items acquired by international contacts (the amber necklace and the ‘chanting priest’ seal). Especially the chanting priest seal indicates that already the first contacts to Crete were probably with the palatial élite<sup>97</sup>. It is very likely that the MH population (and first the élites) got into touch with complex eschatological concepts through the contact with the Minoan culture. And here religion was tied to the ruling class and a major base of their domination. That some kind of ‘official’ religion influenced at least in its cultic settings by the Minoan world was introduced to the Mainland in early LH times was recently shown by Whittaker by the analysis of the Mycenaean ‘peak sanctuary’ of Kynortion<sup>98</sup>.

If one might still argue that this taking over of symbols and costumes associated in the Minoan world may have rather been a secularization of items in Minoan context associated with religion, there is more evidence that in this period, and indeed in the Shaft Graves themselves, certain supernatural ideas take shape: Whereas the first dead of the maybe earliest grave IV were placed in north-south orientation, soon a canonical east-west orientation was established. This is clearly different from the various, not standardized placements in earlier periods. Also at least most of the stelai recovered by Schliemann had their figural face orientated towards the west - this standard orientation is not attested for those of Grave Circle B or examples from other places<sup>99</sup>. I did purposefully not include the stelai themselves in the discussion of the iconography of the graves, since most of them in my opinion may well have been made at the occasion of the later rebuilding of the circle<sup>100</sup>. The remains of animal bones and ashes at the foot of these stelai may therefore be rather later signs of an ancestor cult, and cannot be forcefully used to argue for a new and increased esteem of the Shaft Grave dead. But the ‘altar’ found over grave IV with a hole for libations

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<sup>97</sup> Wright 1995, 70.

<sup>98</sup> Whittaker 2002, 153-156.

<sup>99</sup> Schliemann 1878, 90.100.102; Laffineur 1995.

<sup>100</sup> Most of them are made of the same white kind of stone as the evidently later constructed surrounding wall, a stone which had to be transported from some distance. There is also evidence that the original stelai had to be (re?)moved when the wall was erected - I suggest that maybe the reddish stelai made of poros may be original ones, since they also show a different style and craftsmanship; but

and the niche between grave I and IV with remains of MH and LHI sherds<sup>101</sup> clearly indicates some kind of cult or worship of the dead of Grave Circle A immediately after their burial<sup>102</sup>. Also the graves themselves bear evidence for cultic actions: ashes, charcoal and the blackened stones recorded by Schliemann for the floor of grave IV are signs of sacrifice<sup>103</sup>. Clear and new conceptions about the afterworld thus seem to be directly connected with the dead in Grave Circle A. Another hint to a new form of treatment of these dead may be Schliemann's 'mummy'<sup>104</sup>, the northern interment in grave V: If it really was preserved at the time of discovery in a way that can be compared with mummies, one has to assume that certain measures were taken by the bereaved in order to preserve the body.

Moreover another fact seems striking: The apparent development of a taboo concerning the graves, applying to Grave Circle B as well as A. Unless we assume that both Grave Circles were immediately forgotten (what is certainly not true for Grave Circle A since its surface was rebuilt in LH IIIB), it is most remarkable that these graves were not looted in antiquity as happened to other monuments like the prominent tholoi. This escape might be due to fortunate chance regarding the span of remembrance of the circles: When the underlying ideology and the LH successive and guarding religious authority was in power, they may have been the focus of some kind of ancestor and maybe also religious *heros ktistes* cult<sup>105</sup>, but after the decline of the validity of these ideological structures as well as the according social order (i. e. in the age of the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces), due to their compared to the tholoi rather moderate visibility they might have been forgotten.

It seems extremely unlikely that an enforcement of cultic action, connected with the development of a standardized burial custom, and the appropriation of religious symbols by the MH elite of Mycenae are independent processes, incidentally coinciding in one and the same burial monument that in the following centuries of the Mycenaean palace period was certainly object of commemoration.

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while this cannot be certainly proved, I exclude all of the stelai, although they would have supported the present argumentation.

<sup>101</sup> Karo 1930-33, 12.19.

<sup>102</sup> Also the contemporary tumuli of Argos seem to have been the focus of ritual action from their erection, see the 'libation structures' discovered (Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990, 82). Some features at Asine might indicate that cultic action after the burial might have been a common MH practice, but this is far from certain, see Nordquist 1987, 105f.

<sup>103</sup> Karo 1930-33, 36.

<sup>104</sup> Schliemann 1878, 340ff.

<sup>105</sup> Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 115.

## CONCLUSION

Considering the striking similarities between figures of high status/religious authority in Minoan art and the dead buried in Grave Circle A, we have only two possibilities: Either one has to thoroughly rethink the identification of the rôle of the figures in Minoan contexts and strip them of their religious functions, or one must acknowledge a far wider ideological significance of the processes taking place in Grave Circle A than previously suggested. In this paper, I have argued for the latter.

The power of the MH élites was connected to their ideology as warriors and hunters. The medium they used to express and claim their status was burial display<sup>106</sup>, since architecture was not developed in the way it was on Crete and in the East. Indeed, their self-conception did not necessarily need elaborate architecture. The contact of the élites to areas abroad, in the times of Grave Circle B mainly with the Cyclades, was in the process of extension of Minoan contacts followed by an acquaintance with the established system of élites in Crete and maybe also Egypt and the Near East<sup>107</sup>. Aegina may have functioned as the main mediator<sup>108</sup>. When the mainlanders encountered the powerful élites around the Mediterranean, they realized the potential of religious authority and tried to incorporate these aspects into their ideology. But since there were structural differences in the nature of domination between the mainland and the other regions (lack of architecture and the connected palatial organization), the mainland élites could not take over the ideological system as a whole. They would have had to change their entire identity to take over every aspect of the élites of the foreign countries, thus probably alienating themselves to their subjects. So, they took over the material symbols and costumes of these religious élites, especially of the hierocratic society of Crete<sup>109</sup>. High status and religious authority were inextricably linked in the Minoan world, and not just by means of diffuse cultic knowledge and the possession of mysterious or magic items or substances from far away, like the amber on the mainland may have been. It was not only a mere transition of the Minoan objects into a purely secular context. The point is that the mainlanders *knew* about the religious authority of their counterparts, and that

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<sup>106</sup> Voutsaki 1993; 1995; 1997.

<sup>107</sup> Also in terms of architectural forms the Mycenaeans mainly depend on local traditions, but now monumentalize them in the style of the major powers of the eastern Aegean (Hittites, Egyptians) and consciously use them to transfer messages of élite power, see Frizell 1997/1998.

<sup>108</sup> Niemeier 1995.

is exactly the reason *why* they took over the symbols - they wanted to claim a similar authority for themselves<sup>110</sup>. In the course of this appropriation especially the position of women was empowered, not surprisingly regarding the fact that females seem to have played a far more important rôle in Minoan religion than men. But it seems that the men were always able to maintain a somehow more prominent position in official life on the mainland. This seems visible in the assemblage of the women in grave I lacking the martial aspect of the male graves expressed by the almost exceedingly large number of weapons and feasting equipment. But apart from also taking part in the feasting, early Mycenaean women seem to have been more than just childrearers and weavers: The golden scales might indicate their authority in the trading or evaluating of precious substances (saffron or purpur)<sup>111</sup>, and the cult of a ‘warrior goddess’ in the Cult Centre of Mycenae<sup>112</sup>, as well as the strong position the priestess *e-ri-ta* and other priestesses occupy in the Pylos texts<sup>113</sup> may be more than just a reminiscence of the empowerment of the Shaft Grave period.

The taking over of symbols and iconography associated with religious authority (maybe including the prominence of women) and their connection with mainland traditions (funerary display, hunting, fighting) is what happened in the Shaft Graves. The symbols were easy and convenient to take over and modify, the deeper rooted structures of tradition then changed under this influence over the long term. In this respect, what the Shaft Grave people of Mycenae did was a ‘burial of the palaces’, or rather of the connected idea of religious power. It took about another century of manipulation until a modified system similar to the Minoan was completely established in a way that it seemed to fit mainland demands. This process led to a gradual transformation of the mainland élites and their embedding in a palatial economy, a process probably larger than foreseen by the Shaft Grave people themselves<sup>114</sup>. The social stratification of the mainlanders, in MH times only locally developed and in its early stages, was further pushed by the incorporation of religious

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<sup>109</sup> For the role of palatial architecture in the religious and political authority of the Minoan élite see Panagiotopoulos 2006.

<sup>110</sup> Although to address the dead of Grave Circle A as a ‘priesthood’ (van Leuven 1989, 200) in my opinion presses the evidence too far – and in fact ignores the strong MH component of the graves, still very much present in the warrior set of the male burials.

<sup>111</sup> Or, alternatively, mirror the eschatological idea of the *psychostasia*.

<sup>112</sup> Dickinson 1994, 291ff.; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996.

<sup>113</sup> cf. Dyczek 1994, 136f.

<sup>114</sup> But in this context it is interesting to note that it is in exactly this transitional period when the mound over the House of the Tiles at Lerna was disturbed by two shaft graves – it seems likely that these people either wanted to take over or destroy the status and authority probably connected to this

authority. This might have been made easier by the fact that in both mainland traditions and Minoan cult administration communal feasting seems to have constituted a vital element. The élite as cult personnel, similar to the Cretan palaces, established a wider regional hierarchy, with local rulers now possibly featuring as the *basilei* or other officials in the later Linear-B-texts.

But also the Minoan system did not remain unchanged, and at a point of time when the mainland developments were still in operation, the martial ideology of the Shaft Grave people had already left its traces (an ‘ideological reflux’, if not an actual conquest) on Crete<sup>115</sup>. Thus in the Shaft Grave period the mainland faces an élite that was materially and politically established, but ideologically in a period of change.

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building that after its destruction was carefully covered by a mound (for the dating see Dietz 1991, 285f.).

<sup>115</sup> E. g. warrior graves occur as early as LMII, and may be connected with the villas emerging at the same time. The close relations between late bronze age Crete and the mainland, especially in terms of ideological exchange, have recently been pointed out by Maran and Stavrianopoulou 2007.

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**Table 1: Grave Circle B**

	grave	sex	symposium-set	adornment	warrior-set	other	imports
MH IIIA	Λ 1	m	-	-	-	-	-
	Λ 2, skel. 1	m	1 jar	-	-	-	-
	Λ 2, skel. 2	c	1 cup, 1 jug	-	-	-	-
MH IIIB	H	m	1 cup, 1 kantharos, 1 goblet, 2 jugs	-	1 dagger	-	-
	Λ, skel. 1	m ?	4 goblets, 1 knife	4 gold diadems	1 arrowhead	-	-
	Z	m	1 cup, 1 kantharos, 2 goblets, 2 jugs	-	1 sword (with ivory pommel)	-	Cycladic jug
	Δ, skel. 2	f ?	-	-	1 sword ?	-	-
	I	m	4 goblets, 4 jars, 1 jug, 1 amphora	triangular gold sheets (at wrist and loins)	1 sword (with ivory pommel), 1 dagger, 2 pairs of tweezers	-	LDW amphora
	N, skel. 1	m	1 gold cup, 1 silver bowl, 1 bronze jug, 1 knife; 1 alabaster pyxis ?	2 gold diadems, 2 gold buttons, 1 pc. of gold sheet (from spear ?)	1 sword, 3 daggers, 1 spearhead, 1 helmet (? , 4 boar tusks found), 5 ivory pommels	-	-
	B	m	4 goblets, 3 jars	2 pcs. of gold foil around the upper left arm, 1 electrum band on the pelvis	1 dagger	Neolithic stone axe	Cycladic jar
	N, skel. 2	m	1 bronze bowl, 3 jars, 1 hydria	1 gold diadem (collar ?)	1 sword with ivory pommel, 1 dagger with alabaster pommel, 1 pair of tweezers	-	Cycladic jar
	Ξ, skel. 1?	?	1 silver bowl (?), 3 goblets, 1 kantharos, 2 jugs	-	-	cooking pot	-
	Υ	f	6 goblets, 1 jar, 1 askos, 1 amphoriskos	2 gold diadems (on skull and shoulders), 3 finger rings, 3 bronze pins (1 with rock crystal head), 2 bronze and silver earrings, beads, faience plaques	-	-	Cycladic askos, Aeginetan jar
I	c	1 silver cup, 1 cup, 1 kantharos, 1 jug	-	-	electrum spindle whorl	-	
Ξ, skel. 2 (girl)	c	2 goblets, 1 askos, 1 jug	4 gold diadems, 1 gold ring, 2 gold bands, 1 silver pin, bronze pins, beads (of faience, semi-precious stones, gold, rock crystal)	-	-	LDW amphora	
LH IA	Γ, oldest interments (3)	?	1 gold cup, numerous ceramic vessels, 2 knives	1 gold diadem, 1 gold girdle, 1 scabbard ornament in gold	2 swords, 2 daggers, 1 spearhead, 1 comb	-	-
	Λ, skel. 2	m	3 cups, 1 jug, 2 jars, 1 hydria, 1 knife	3 gold ornaments (probably belonging to a sword-belt)	1 sword, 2 daggers, 1 spearhead, 28 arrowheads	-	Cycladic jar
	Π	m	3 goblets, 1 jug	-	-	-	-
	Γ, skel. 1	m	1 gold cup, 1 bronze cup, 1 cup, 1 jug, 2 amphoriskoi	8 beads (of electrum, glass paste and rock crystal), seal with singing bearded man ('Minoan priest' ?)	4 swords, 2 daggers, 4 pommels (of alabaster and ivory)	electrum mask	Minoan jug, seal
	Ο, skel. 2	f	1 bowl, 1 askos	-	-	-	-
	Μ, skel. 1	f	2 cups, 6 goblets, 5 jugs, 3 askoi, 1 hydria, 1 bowl, 1 amphoriskos	beads of various materials	-	stone seal	3 Minoan askoi
	Ξ 1	c	2 cups, 2 jugs	-	-	-	-
	Μ, skel. 2	c	1 cup, 1 askos	bone pins	-	-	-
LH IB	K	m	1 kantharos, 1 jug, 1 jar, 1 hydria	-	-	-	2 Polychrome Mainland jugs
	Δ, skel. 1	m	1 hydria, 1 jar, 1 large bowl, 2 knives (one with ivory handle)	-	1 sword (with alabaster pommel), 1 dagger, 19 arrowheads	-	LDW jar, Polychrome Mainland hydria
	Ο, skel. 1	f	1 kantharos, 1 askos, 4 jars, 1 hydria, 1 amphoriskos, 1 amphora	2 gold diadems, 1 gold star, 2 gold plates, 1 silver pin, 3 bronze pins with rock crystal heads, necklace beads of various materials (gold, rock crystal, amethyst, sardonyx), 1 amber necklace (collar)	-	1 bead with glyptic, 1 rock crystal duck-shaped bowl	Polychrome Mainland jar and hydria, amber collar
	E	f	1 bronze jug, 1 bronze krater, 1 bronze hydria, 1 bronze dish; pottery: 2 jars, 4 hydriae	2 gold diadems, 3 notch-shaped and 4 cross-shaped gold ornaments, 1 gilded bone pin	-	1 cooking vessel	2 Polychrome Mainland jars
	Γ, skel. 4	f	3 kantharoi, 1 jug, 1 hydria	-	-	-	LDW jug, Aeginetan hydria

(based on Dietz 1991)

**Table 2: Extraordinary graves of the Shaft Grave period**

Site	symposium- set	warrior-set	adornments	other	imports
Makryssia (1)	> 20 clay vases, 3 knives	-	bronze pins, bronze brooch	whorls	-
Klidhi* (1)	pottery, Keftiu-cups	-		-	Keftiu-cups?
Peristeria*	gold kantharos, MH pots, knife	arrowheads, sword	semi-precious stones, rock crystal, amber beads, elements of a gold necklace	numerous small gold foil objects (e. g. butterflies and flying birds)	-
Kephalovrysso (2)	numerous vessels, knives	arrowheads, daggers, helmet	-	spindles	-
Koryphasion* (2)	pottery, fragments of silver vessels	-	-	-	pyxis of Egyptian porcelain, several pieces of pottery of Minoan origin
Tholos IV/ Englianos** (2)	numerous pottery	-	2 figure-of-8-shield ornaments of gold and ivory	gold foil butterflies, golden drum beads, gold inlay, several seals and seal rings	Min. marble lamp, Palace-style jar, lamp of Cretan serpentine, sword pommel of Egyptian alabaster
Pylos Grave Circle (pit 1+3) (2)	Pottery, silver cup, bronze cauldrons	swords, daggers	ivory and bronze pins, silver diadems	bronze scale pans	Minoan pithos?, cup, jar, ivory plaque
Thebes	pottery, knife	sword, spearhead, helmet, arrowheads	-	-	-
Argos (3)	numerous vessels	swords, daggers	jewellery of semi-precious stones and gold	-	-
Lerna* (3)	2 fine cups	-	-	-	conical cup
Kolonna (4)	pottery, knives	sword, spearhead, arrowheads, dagger, helmet	gold diadem	-	Min. bridge-spouted jar (Kamares)
Aegina treasure*** (4)	-	-	numerous items	-	Levantine or Egyptian influence

\* looted; \*\* looted and in use MHIII to LHIII; \*\*\*provenience unclear

(1) cluster in NW-Peloponnese; (2) cluster in SW-Peloponnese; (3) cluster in Argolid; (4) cluster on Aegina

(based on the cited excavation reports, with additions from Boyd 2002)

**Table 3: Grave Circle A**

grave	Interments	symposium-set*	warrior-set	adornments	other	imports**
II	1 man	1 golden cup, 2 knives, 1 faience vessel; pottery: 1 jar	1 sword, 1 spearhead, 1 dagger	1 diadem	ivory fragments	1 egg-shaped rhyton
VI	2 men	1 golden cup, 1 silver cup, fragments of bronze vessels, 3 knives; pottery: 4 cups, 1 small askos, 1 small kantharos, 1 large jar, 1 krater, 1 small amphora, 1 large amphora, 1 small spouted jar, 5 large spouted jars ( 3 with birds)	2 swords, 4 spearheads, 3 daggers, 2 dagger pommels of alabaster and ivory, 1 pair of golden 'Gamaschenhalter' (parts of sword-belts), 1 pair of tweezers (bronze), 1 razor, 1 whetstone	4 golden leaf-shaped ornaments	-	-
IV	3 men, 2 women	1 golden cup with rosettes, 1 alabaster vessel, 1 electrum cup, 1 golden vessel with lid, 5 golden cups, 1 'Nestorbecher', 5 knives (plus several fragments), 4 butchering knives, numerous fragments of silver vessels, 6 silver cups, 1 silver jar, 1 fork, 10 bronze cauldrons (plus several fragments), 6 small bronze hydriae, 4 large bronze hydriae, 1 large alabaster jar, 1 alabaster cup, 1 large bronze krater, 1 large silver vessel with warrior decoration; pottery: 2 amphorae, 4 kantharoi, 2 small amphorae	22 swords plus several fragments, 5 richly decorated daggers, 3 spearheads, 1 boar's tusk helmet, bronze and golden helmet decoration, 38 arrowheads of flint and obsidian, 3 razors (one with ivory handle), 2 whetstones, 1 ivory comb framed in gold sheet, numerous gold sheet decorations of sword-belts, numerous precious and richly decorated sword pommels (gold, alabaster and ivory)	2 golden crowns (women), 8 diadems, 2 golden rings with scenes of hunting and warfare, 1 golden breastplate, 3 gold masks, 5 bracelets, 1 golden star, numerous amber beads, 3 golden pins, 1 golden pinhead with griffin decoration, 1 lion-shaped belt decoration; numerous small ornaments of gold sheet: > 400 gold coated bone buttons from sword-belts, additional 13 rhomboid examples; 7 bull's heads with double axe-shaped, 48 double axe-shaped, 9 lily blossom-shaped, c. 68 octopus-shaped, 3 'Minoan shrine'-shaped, c. 20 rosette-shaped, 96 elliptical	1 golden lion's head rhyton, 1 silver bull's head rhyton, 3 chisels, 1 silver conical rhyton (siege rhyton), 1 copper axe, 1 gaming board (of faience, rock crystal and ivory)	2 ostrich-egg rhytons, several faience 'cult knots', 1 (hittite ?) stag-shaped silver vessel
III	3 women, 2 children	1 golden cup, 1 golden jar, 3 silver cups (1 with gold rosettes), 1 faience jar (with warriors), 1 knife, 1 spoon, 1 alabaster bowl, fragments of faience vessels, 1 bronze cup, several large bronze vessels (pans, cauldrons); pottery: 2 cups, 3 jars	-	1 golden crown, 2 diadems, 14 golden notch-shaped ornaments, 1 golden cross, 12 golden stars, 4 pairs of earrings, 6 bracelets, 12 golden chain beads with spiral decoration, 2 faience beads, 1 necklace with pomegranate beads, 2 silver rings, numerous beads (mostly of carnelian, but also rock crystal, amethyst, faience and gold, as well as 24-30 pcs. of amber), silver and gold pins with elaborate heads, ca. 800 ornaments of gold sheet	1 spindle whorl, 3 golden beads and 2 gems with scenes of hunting and warfare, 3 pairs of golden scales,	1 faience rhyton (?)
V	3 men	5 golden cups, 1 knife, 2 butchering knives, 8 silver cups (one with golden rim), 1 bone spoon, 1 gold-framed alabaster vessel, 1 small rock-crystal amphora, 1 large silver jar, several large bronze vessels (and fragments of bronze and silver vessels); pottery: 1 amphora, 1 jar, 1 globular amphora	23 swords (plus several fragments), 1 spearhead, 9 daggers (some with inlaid blades - lilies, running griffins, Nilotic landscape), 1 golden sword-belt, several silver and golden decorations of sword-belts and other pieces of armour, several sword pommels (of alabaster and ivory), 1 pair of tweezers (silver), 1 ivory mirror handle, 3 whetstones, 1 boar's tusk helmet	2 gold masks, 2 golden breastplates, 1 golden necklace with antithetical eagles, c. 100 amber beads, ivory fragments; > 300 gold sheet ornaments (mostly gold framed bone buttons)	1 chisel, 2-3 wooden caskets, lined in gold or with ivory inlays	3 ostrich-egg rhyta (1 with dolphins)
I	3 women	2 silver cups, faience vessels, 1 knife; pottery: 7 kraters, 2 cups, 2 jars	-	3 diadems, 26 golden notch-shaped ornaments, 14 golden crosses, sev. beads (2 pcs. of amber)	ivory inlays; 2 Psi-idols (from fill)	-

(based on Karo 1933, roughly according to the proposed different chronologies as compiled by Graziadio 1991, table 4; \* the assignment of the bronze vessels to one particular grave is not always certain, especially between grave III, IV and V; \*\* only items obviously not produced in the mainland)