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A Mortuary Perspective on Political Changes in Late Minoan II–IIIB Crete

LAURA PRESTON

Abstract

In this article, I explore political developments on Crete in the Final and Postpalatial periods (the ceramic phases Late Minoan II to IIIB) through the evidence of high status mortuary practices. Patterns in tomb architecture, burial assemblages, and cemetery distributions provide insights into various changes in elite ideologies and in the island's political geography. In analyzing political dynamics, I consider agendas that operated on the intra-island level, to balance the frequent tendency to focus on external (mainland) agency in explaining the cultural and political transformations that occurred on Crete during this period.

At the start of the Final Palatial period, new burial customs were introduced at the dominant center of Knossos. The new customs appear to have functioned as a medium for status competition in a horizon of political instability. Following an initial phase of mortuary experimentation, however, changes in the later Final Palatial period suggest a standardization in elites' strategies of mortuary self-representation at this center. Beyond Knossos, similar tomb practices began to occur at several centers in the later Final Palatial period, with an increase in mortuary display in the early Postpalatial phase that seems to indicate resurgent regional elites seizing the political opportunities attendant upon Knossos's collapse. Other aspects of the Postpalatial political geography highlighted are a shift in the focus of mortuary ostentation toward the far west of the island in LM IIIB, and more generally, evidence for further, local elites beyond the known regional centers across the island.

cultural categories versus social strategies

Developments in high status burial practices can reveal changes in elite symbolism and political geography on Late Bronze Age Crete. A number of burials in elaborate tomb structures and/or with

wealthy assemblages have been documented at certain Final Palatial and Postpalatial cemeteries, often associated with known major settlements. These ostentatious burials appear to represent groups and individuals who either aspired to or had achieved an elite status within the local social and political hierarchies. These high status associations may be compared with other types of archaeological evidence from the associated settlement contexts (including architectural and textual data), which highlight the political, cultural, and economic importance of these sites and document the presence and activities of powerful groups within them. These tombs can, therefore, provide a window onto certain aspects of Cretan elite activities in this period, particularly regarding high status ideologies, and intra- and intersite power relations. The archaeological value of mortuary evidence for exploring status relations and political dynamics has been convincingly proposed with respect to the chiefdom- and subsequent state-level societies of the Middle to Late Helladic mainland.¹ Such a link is also evident on Final and Postpalatial Crete, and the present study highlights ways in which the mortuary evidence augments the largely settlement- and text-based reconstructions of Crete's internal political developments.

The relatively brief time-span covered (15th to 13th centuries B.C.)² was a politically unstable one on Crete, a turning point between the preceding state-level, palace-centered societies of the Minoan civilization in the Neopalatial period and the much smaller-scale settlements that were to predominate on the island in the subsequent Early Iron Age.

*This article sets out the principal results of my doctoral research, which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board and, for the final year, the British School at Athens. My Ph.D. was supervised by Cyprian Broodbank and Todd Whitelaw, to both of whom I am extremely grateful for their advice and unstinting support. I wish also to acknowledge the staff and my fellow students generally at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, where most of my research was undertaken, for providing such a stimulating working environment. For comments upon drafts of the present paper, I would like to thank Cyprian Broodbank, Todd Whitelaw, John Bennet, Jerry

Rutter, Nicola Cucuzza, Elisabetta Borgna, and an anonymous referee for the *AJA*; I would also like to thank Eleni Hatzki for useful discussion and advice, particularly regarding the dating of the Knossian tombs.

¹ Dabney and Wright 1990; Voutsaki 1993, 1995a, 1998; Wright 1995.

² The following correlation between absolute dating and the relative ceramic phases is followed, based on Manning (1995, 217; 1999, 340) and Wiener (1998): Late Minoan II: ca. 1490/1470–1435/1405 BC; LM IIIA1: ca. 1435/1405–1390/1370; LM IIIA2: ca. 1390/1370–1320/1300; LM IIIB: ca. 1320/1300–1200/1190.

Culturally, too, significant changes occurred here, particularly as the developing Mycenaean polities on the Greek mainland increasingly influenced various aspects of material culture on Crete, as well as elsewhere in the Aegean. This phenomenon is particularly notable in the mortuary sphere, which therefore offers a useful case study for considering processes of cultural interaction between complex societies.

Previous interpretive studies of the funerary data have often been restricted in scope, focusing on individual cemeteries, tomb types, or categories of funerary artifact. Until recently, there has been a lack of analyses that draw together different aspects of the mortuary context and explore patterns in the data at different geographical and temporal levels, in order to address broader questions concerning this period.³ One major exception to this observation has been the frequent use of high status burials to try to reconstruct the cultural and, by extension, ethnic affiliations of the elites.⁴ In particular, on the basis of the pronounced mainland-derived influences observed in Cretan burial practices from the 15th century onward, the presence of an intrusive, mainland-derived elite is widely accepted for Knossos (the principal island center in the Final Palatial phase) and is being actively sought for the various Postpalatial regional centers.⁵

The overly straightforward equations of burial practices with ethnic identities assumed within this approach undermine its plausibility. Such equations are inevitably hazardous in a period for which little or nothing is known of how ethnicity was constructed in the Aegean,⁶ nor are they sustained by a detailed examination of the empirical evidence. A more constructive approach, both theoretically and empirically, is to consider the adoption of mainland-derived ideas on Crete as the result of active, strategic decisions. Evidence for adaptation and experimentation in burial symbolism, and comparisons of mortuary patterns with non-mortuary archaeological evidence, suggest that an important function of burial symbolism was its manipulation by individuals asserting their status, rather than providing passive, static ethnic indicators.

Moreover, I argue here that such strategies operated largely at local (i.e., intra-island) political levels. While political interactions in the Aegean were probably operating simultaneously on all kinds of geographical scales, the tendency in the past has been to privilege the longer-distance, Aegean-wide interactions as the prime movers behind political changes on Crete, at the expense of those operating at regional and local levels within the island. On the one hand, a large-scale perspective embracing the Aegean, and indeed the eastern Mediterranean more generally, is necessary for understanding the broad cultural and economic processes that impinged upon localized political developments.⁷ The clearly mainland-derived influences on aspects of Cretan cultural practices, and the evidence for trade contacts between specific Cretan and mainland polities, argue an important role for such contextualization in any analysis. On the other hand, however, this was not necessarily the principal level at which most political decisions were being made on Crete. The mortuary evidence suggests that direct external intervention is not actually an essential factor in explaining the cultural and political changes witnessed on Crete between LM II and IIIB. There was undoubtedly awareness (though to varying degrees) on the parts of elites on Crete of cultural and political developments elsewhere in the Aegean, which had an impact on developments within the island. But everyday political consciousness probably operated also on much more localized geographical scales, such that ideas that were borrowed from beyond the island (as many indisputably were), were adapted to suit competitive social and political agendas that were largely internally focused.

current perspectives on the political geography of crete

Politically, the Final Palatial period is characterized by Knossos's predominance over much of Crete following a series of violent upheavals that destroyed the other palace centers of the island in the early 15th century. It is not yet clear whether this Knossian hegemony was an entirely new phe-

³Though see Perna (2001) for an important recent contribution to this subject regarding the distribution of high status burial practices and reconstructions of Cretan political geography.

⁴E.g., D'Agata 1999, 51–4; Driessen and Macdonald 1984, 66–8; Haskell 1997; Kallitsaki 1997; Popham et al. 1974, 253. See also Löwe 1996, 52–7 for an overview of the evidence and arguments.

⁵Godart and Tzedakis 1992, 332–3; Hallager 1997, 185; La Rosa 1997, 264; Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 148–151, 193.

⁶See Renfrew 1996, Bennet 1999, and Davis and Bennet 1999 for useful critiques and constructive analyses of this issue within the Aegean specifically.

⁷E.g., Sherratt and Sherratt 1991.

nomenon or had an antecedent in the preceding Neopalatial period,⁸ but substantial elements of the administrative system and ideological underpinnings in the Final Palatial phase were certainly innovative.⁹ Moreover, the arguments advanced for the existence of several independent polities on the island at the end of the Neopalatial period are strong,¹⁰ so a scenario in which Neopalatial Knossos had been ideologically predominant on the island, but had only limited, if any, direct political control beyond a north-central Cretan hinterland,¹¹ seems plausible.

The palace's Linear B archives, supplemented by archaeological investigation elsewhere on the island, have shed considerable light on the economic basis, political geography, and administrative structure of the Final Palatial regime (though political structures beyond the Knossian-controlled central, western, and mideastern regions of the island still remain obscure).¹² In particular, several second-order centers have been identified in the texts and the settlement record, through whose local elites Knossos's predominantly textile-producing industry appears to have been managed. The correlation of at least two of these intermediate sites with former Neopalatial centers (Phaistos and Chania, and possibly Malia and Archanes) bespeaks a certain degree of continuity in the power networks of the island,¹³ whose further extension into the Postpalatial phase will be considered below.

This centralized Knossian regime was short-lived, though the causes of its collapse remain unclear. An early 14th-century dating (i.e., early LM IIIA2) for this collapse horizon is followed here, rather than the alternative LM IIIB date. This preference for the earlier date is based primarily on the balance of the evidence for dating the destruction of the archives in the Knossos palace,¹⁴ but it finds corroboration

in evidence from other island centers, including the former second-order sites.¹⁵ In particular, there is an increase in archaeologically visible status display, such as in the architectural building programs in settlement contexts attested at Agia Triada, Archanes, Chania, Kommos, Malia, and Tylissos.¹⁶ Political fragmentation may also be reflected in an increasing regional divergence of ceramic styles across the island in LM IIIA2.¹⁷ At Knossos, by contrast, no parallel architectural redevelopment was undertaken in this phase; indeed, on current evidence there was a significant contraction in the settlement area between LM IIIA and IIIB.¹⁸

Although various LM IIIA2 and IIIB regional centers have been identified, the political landscape of Postpalatial Crete is less clearly understood, especially given the current lack of archival data that could shed light on relations between the different centers. An inheritance of Knossos's centralized administration by one or two of the former second-order sites has been proposed,¹⁹ while others prefer to see a more fragmented mosaic of several independent polities organized around each of the known centers.²⁰ Within either scenario, though, Kydonia (modern Chania) in the far west of the island is usually accorded a more elevated status than the other nodal sites. Although its excavators have been reluctant to propose a Kydonian hegemony that covered the whole of Knossos's former domain, as opposed simply to a west Cretan kingdom,²¹ Chania's claims to some degree of preeminence are threefold. First, it has produced evidence for a Linear B administration in the form of clay tablets, so far unparalleled elsewhere on Postpalatial Crete.²² A second is the evidence for extensive trade contacts, documented in the wide distribution not only of fine ware products of the distinctive Chaniote ceramic "workshop,"²³ but especially

⁸Hallager and Hallager 1995; Knappett and Schoep 2000; Schoep 1999; Soles 1995.

⁹Driessen and Schoep 1999; Palaima 1987; Weingarten 1990, 112–4.

¹⁰See esp. Schoep 1999; also Cherry 1986.

¹¹As has been argued, e.g., for Zakro (Platon 2002).

¹²Bennet 1985, 1986, 1987, 1990, 1992; Driessen 2001a; McArthur 1981, 1985; Wilson 1977.

¹³Bennet 1990, 210–1.

¹⁴Popham 1970; 1988, 219–20; 1997; contra Hallager 1977, 71–88 and Niemeier 1985, 141–62.

¹⁵Shelmerdine 1992.

¹⁶La Rosa 1985, 52; 1993; 1997, 255–64; Cucuzza 1997 for Agia Triada; Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 150–1 for Archanes; Godart and Tzedakis 1992, 35; Hallager 1997, 178 for Chania; J. and M. Shaw 1997 for Kommos; Driessen

and Farnoux 1994 for Malia; and Hayden 1987 for Tylissos.

¹⁷E.g., Banou and Rethemiotakis 1997; Godart and Tzedakis 1992, 332; Kanta 1980, 288–93. Smith, however, cautions that the developments of regional traditions varied in their timings (2002, Chapter 3).

¹⁸Whitelaw 2000. See also Hatzaki forthcoming a and b.

¹⁹La Rosa 1993, 620; 1997, 264; see also Driessen and Farnoux 1994, 55.

²⁰Godart and Tzedakis 1997, 162; Haskell 1997, 193; Pour-sat 1997, 390.

²¹Tzedakis 1971, 368; Hallager 1988, 120–3; Godart and Tzedakis 1991, 189; Hallager and Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1997, 174.

²²Godart and Tzedakis 1992, 103–6; Hallager and Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1997.

²³Godart and Tzedakis 1991, 188; 1997; Kanta 1980, 288–9; Tzedakis 1969.

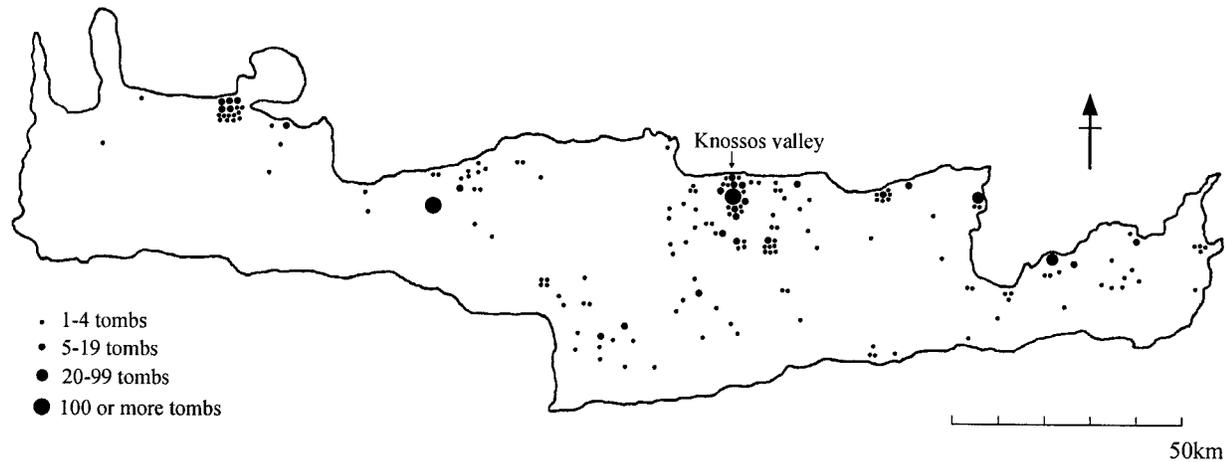


Fig. 1. Distribution of LM II-III B cemeteries across Crete

of the numerous “Inscribed Stirrup Jars” (ISJs) of west Cretan origin.²⁴ Third, references to a *wanax* on several of these ISJs may encourage us to anticipate the discovery of a palatial center in this area of the island (which would also, incidentally, render the term Postpalatial an inappropriate label for this period).²⁵ Chania also appears to have been among the last of the regional centers to succumb to destruction in LM III B,²⁶ though the problem of gauging the temporal sequence of the destructions is compounded by the lack of clear subdivisions for this long ceramic phase.²⁷

The mortuary evidence

The Cretan Final and Postpalatial mortuary evidence consists almost entirely of burials in subterranean tomb structures. Tomb burial had, it seems, been less common in the preceding Neopalatial era, and pithos or coffin burials in shallow pits predominate among the archaeologically visible methods of corpse disposal. But over 800 tombs have so far been excavated across the island that can be

securely dated to within LM II-III B, a figure which rises to over 1,000 if tombs possibly of this period are also included.²⁸ Spatially, every region of the island is represented except the far southwest (fig. 1); however, the temporal distribution of the tombs is less even, and this inevitably constrains the scope of burial-led analyses. As argued elsewhere,²⁹ early in the Final Palatial period tomb use appears to have been largely concentrated at Knossos: only in the later Final Palatial and especially the Postpalatial periods does the large-scale spread of these practices to other parts of the island allow an exploration of the broader political landscape. The implication of this is that one cannot derive the same types of information from the mortuary record across the time-span under study. Burial evidence can shed only limited light on areas beyond Knossos in LM II, in contrast to the pan-Cretan perspective it is able to provide for later phases. However, the early evidence is informative in a different way: namely, by complementing the insights into the broader picture of Knossian hegemony supplied

²⁴ Catling et al. 1980; Day and Haskell 1995; Godart and Tzedakis 1992, 179–87.

²⁵ Bennet 1992, 78. Provenance analysis has attributed TH Z 839 to the vicinity of Chania, but the place of manufacture of EL Z 1 is unclear (Jones 1986, 477–93).

²⁶ Godart and Tzedakis 1991, 189; Hallager 1997, 181. Cf. La Rosa 1985, 52–3 for Agia Triada and Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 151 for Archanes.

²⁷ Kanta 1997a.

²⁸ The tombs considered in this study have been drawn mainly from the detailed catalogue compiled by Löwe (1996). For the purposes of the present analysis, a tomb is considered securely datable to within LM II-III B if it fulfils one of two criteria: (1) its use within this period is suggested by stylistic dating of ceramic vessels in the tomb—apart from larnakes,

since the reliability of directly transposing to this form stylistic dating criteria developed on the basis of other ceramic media is not yet demonstrated (Kanta 1980, 293); or (2) all the other datable tombs in the same cemetery can be confidently placed within this period.

“Possible” LM II-III B tombs embrace: (1) tombs not dated precisely in publication to within the LM II-III B period (e.g., “LM III” tombs); (2) tombs without datable ceramics but which in other respects conform with the architectural and artefactual patterns of datable tombs of this period; and (3) chance finds of artifacts that bear the signature of mortuary deposits of this period, although the tomb itself and the human remains have been lost, destroyed, or not identified.

²⁹ Preston forthcoming.

by the Linear B and settlement evidence, by providing a potential window onto developments in elite ideology at Knossos itself. In the following analysis, then, I focus first on the tombs of Final Palatial Knossos (considering the LM II and IIIA1 ceramic phases), then consider aspects of the political geography of the island in the later Final Palatial and the Postpalatial periods (LM IIIA to IIIB).

final palatial knossos: a site-level perspective

The Final Palatial tombs in the Knossos valley and the associated harbor area have been the subject of numerous studies.³⁰ Comparative levels of rank within Knossian society are difficult to reconstruct, but tomb burial appears to have denoted at least an assertion of high status in the Final Palatial period, given the comparative rarity of the practice (in terms of numbers of tombs and of individuals per tomb) and the often ostentatious assemblages.³¹ The dominant line of enquiry into these tombs has been to use them as ethnic indicators, tools for establishing the geographical origins of the Knossian elite. A notable exception, however, is provided by Kilian-Dirlmeier, who used the burial evidence instead to try to reconstruct gender divisions and military and social status hierarchies within the elite.³² Apart from presenting the most rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the available burial evidence to date, this study has broken new ground in pursuing a wider range of issues through this body of data than had hitherto been attempted. One potential drawback to this study, however, is the premise that social divisions (based on gender, status, and military function) and their mortuary expression remained consistent through time, as no distinction was made between subphases within the overall LM II–IIIA dataset.³³

Despite the development of a refined ceramic stylistic chronology for Late Minoan Knossos,³⁴

there have in fact been few attempts at diachronic studies of Knossian mortuary practices. This may be at least partly because of the large number of tombs that are not datable with the degree of precision desirable for inclusion within such an analysis. So far, 189 tombs with use securely datable to within the LM II–IIIB period have been reported from the Knossos area. Of these, 99 cannot be dated any more precisely, whether because of a lack of diagnostic ceramics in the assemblage or through lack of detail in their publication. Of the remainder, 46 tombs have clear evidence of use during LM II and/or LM IIIA1.³⁵ This small dataset, and the large number of Late Bronze Age tombs at Knossos that cannot be dated with any precision, necessitates caution in exploring the issue of change in mortuary customs during the course of the Final Palatial period. Nevertheless, the patterns that emerge from such an analysis are worth highlighting, because while securely datable LM II and IIIA1 burials are indeed few, several interesting differences in mortuary practice are apparent between the two phases. They suggest that different agendas were dictating mortuary rituals in the earlier and later parts of the Final Palatial phase, which has interesting implications for reconstructing the internal political and ideological dynamics of the Knossian elite.

Late Minoan II

LM II saw significant changes in burial activities at Knossos that coincided with the establishment of this center's broader political regime on Crete. While tomb use is attested for the preceding Neopalatial phase (in notable contrast with much of the rest of the island), it appears not to have functioned as a forum for display at the highest elite levels.³⁶ LM II, by contrast, saw the introduction of ostentatious tomb burials whose architectural and artifactual extravagance suggests that

³⁰ The definition of the Knossos area used here incorporates the Knossos valley and the adjoining port settlement at Poros, given the probable control of the latter by the palatial elite of Knossos and the spatial link between the two areas in the distribution of the cemetery sites. Archanes, a few kilometres to the south, is not included as this appears to have formed a distinct settlement with its own associated cemetery sites, which do not seem to have extended northward to the Knossos valley.

³¹ E.g., Catling in Popham et al. 1974, 253; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985; Perna 2001. Macdonald is more cautious about assuming elite status for all those receiving tomb burial at Knossos (Driessen and Macdonald 1984, 66).

³² Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985.

³³ Also of note is an interesting study by Baboula (2000) of the Zapher Papoura cemetery specifically, exploring the relative values of the different assemblages and their significance. In this study, the issue of consistency in deposition practices through the life-span of the cemetery is addressed (Baboula 2000, 74).

³⁴ Popham 1967, 1969; for LM II and LM IIIA1 in particular, Popham et al. 1984.

³⁵ Unfortunately, it is not possible to distinguish with certainty between pre- and post-destruction LM IIIA2 burials on ceramic grounds. As a result, all datable LM IIIA2 are here categorized as Postpalatial, but the probability that some are actually Final Palatial in date should be borne in mind.

³⁶ Dimopoulou 1999.

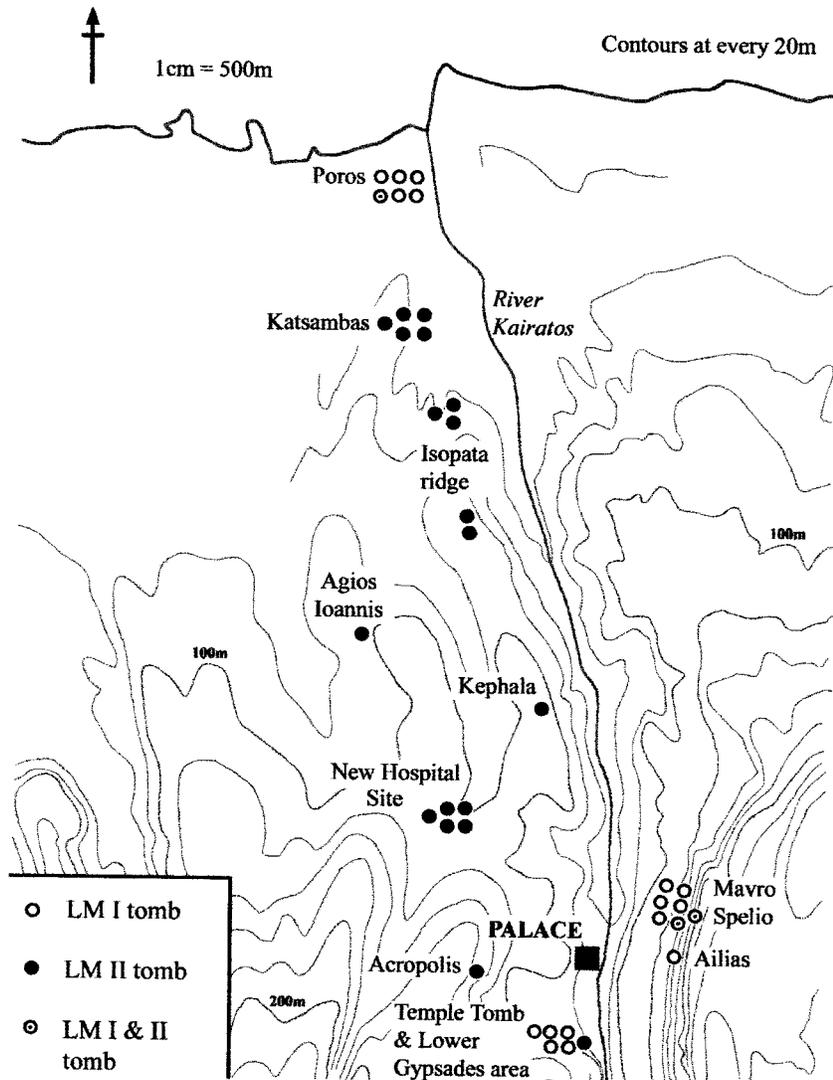


Fig. 2. Distribution of tombs in use at LM I and LM II Knossos

they carried explicitly high status associations and were consciously employed as contexts for status display. Moreover, a new mortuary landscape was created, stretching from the harbor area down the length of the Knossos valley (fig. 2).

The frequent assumption that these burials are to be associated with an intrusive, mainland-derived elite group has been challenged in detail elsewhere.³⁷ While the new practices show unquestionable signs of mainland influence, in tomb architec-

ture, corpse deposition methods, and assemblage composition,³⁸ a purely invasionist interpretation of these changes will not in itself explain the remarkable degree of cultural eclecticism and experimentation evident in some of these tombs. This is particularly notable in the larger structures on the Isopata ridge, whose burials incorporated prestige symbols from diverse sources, including Neopalatial Cretan traditions, in their assemblages and architecture, with some unique results.³⁹ Indeed, the

³⁷ Preston 1999.

³⁸ Certain of these elements are anticipated in the Neopalatial Poros tombs (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985, 209–11; Muhly 1992), but the main horizon of their acceptance is clearly LM II, and

Niemeier's argument that they had purely indigenous Cretan origins is difficult to substantiate (1983, 226; 1985, 204–16).

³⁹ For a detailed discussion of these innovations in the LM II tombs, see Preston 1999.

uniting feature of the LM II tombs seems to be less a statement of common ethnic origin, than a shared desire for conspicuous display which manifested itself in different, and in some cases highly innovative, ways. This desire may well have been a reaction to a crisis in elite confidence and identity, if the LM IB collapse horizon across the island had undermined not only Crete's political structure, but also the elite ideological systems that had underpinned it. Such a dual destabilization may be possible even if Knossos had been the instigator of this collapse horizon, rather than simply a victim, because severe disruptions of the status quo often allow people to act in ways that would not be acceptable in a situation of stability. Destabilization of established and complex hierarchical and ideological systems provides new and greater opportunities for individual agency, innovation, and status mobility. At Knossos specifically, then, this horizon could have allowed for (perhaps even necessitated) renegotiations of the power structure in LM II. In response, it seems that certain groups at this now dominant center opportunistically tried new competitive strategies, one of which was to channel prestige symbolism from various origins into mortuary display.

This alternative explanation does not deny the possibility that individuals of mainland origin were among the LM II Knossian elite (and these particular tomb-using groups), and thereby advocate purely endogenous change. Rather, it maintains that while external cultural influences are clearly apparent in Knossian high status material culture, there are serious methodological and empirical problems with the way the invasionist hypothesis has been supported in the past. A scenario involving an elite of mixed geographical origins is far from unlikely, given both the receptivity to mainland ideas shown at LM II Knossos and the longer history of Cretan interactions with the mainland in the Neopalatial period. Moreover, it would certainly help toward understanding a number of the specific decisions the Knossian elite were making in

LM II, whether the collapse of the Neopalatial palace centers resulted from Knossian expansionist policies or factors external to Crete (or both). However, it is simply not possible to demonstrate the Cretan or mainland origins of elite individuals on the basis of the evidence presently available. More importantly, instead of trying to force these tombs into cultural categories into which they clearly do not always fit, it is more rewarding to explore the innovations and experiments with cultural symbolism that were taking place, within which issues of personal origins become less relevant.⁴⁰

Late Minoan IIIA1

To what extent did this competition and experimentation at Knossos persist into the later part of the Final Palatial period? The datable LM IIIA1 tombs show a high degree of continuity from their LM II predecessors, but with notable differences in cemetery location, tomb architecture, and assemblage composition. Regarding location, while the overall linear axis of the LM II tomb sites stretching from the palace to the harbor town along the ridges was retained, there were some shifts in the siting of individual cemeteries in LM IIIA1 (fig. 3). These disruptions were minor in comparison with the earlier transformation of the Neopalatial mortuary landscape in LM II, but they also contrast with a greater degree of continuity in cemetery locations at Knossos into the subsequent, Postpalatial period. It is difficult to advance explanations for these shifts at present, but reallocations of land or dislocations in elite lineages may have contributed.

Three developments in tomb architecture also can be highlighted. The first is a decline in recourse to Neopalatial high status symbolism. In particular, the ashlar masonry and mason marks employed in several LM II tombs are not emulated in LM IIIA1 constructions.⁴¹ The second development is a decline in effort expended on tomb construction generally, in terms of both tomb size and levels of elaboration. Constructions on the scale of

⁴⁰ Hints of such experimentation can also be seen in other aspects of the elite material record. Innovations in the form and decoration of the Knossian Ephyraean goblet have been discussed by French (1997), and such an approach would be interesting to extend to the Linear B script and fresco iconography (e.g., Rehak and Younger 1998, 155–6 n. 449; Immerwahr 1990, 95).

⁴¹ The LM II tombs concerned are the Isopata Royal Tomb (Evans 1905, 526–62), Isopata tomb 1 (Evans 1914, 5–13) and the Kephala Tholos (Hutchinson 1956a). Two chamber tombs, at Nea Alikarnassos (Lembesi 1977, 564–7) and Isopata tomb

6 (Evans 1914, 30–33), should also be noted here, as both are reminiscent of the “pillar crypt” design seen in the LM II Isopata tomb 2 (Evans 1914, 33–59), though they are smaller and less elaborate. However, their dates are uncertain. The LM II or IIIA1 dating tentatively assigned to the Nea Alikarnassos tomb is based mainly on its architectural similarities to the aforementioned Isopata tombs. Isopata tomb 6 has also been dated to LM IIIA (Evans 1914, Furumark 1941, 171 n. 4, Pini 1968, 84), but the ceramic assemblage could equally be assigned to LM II.

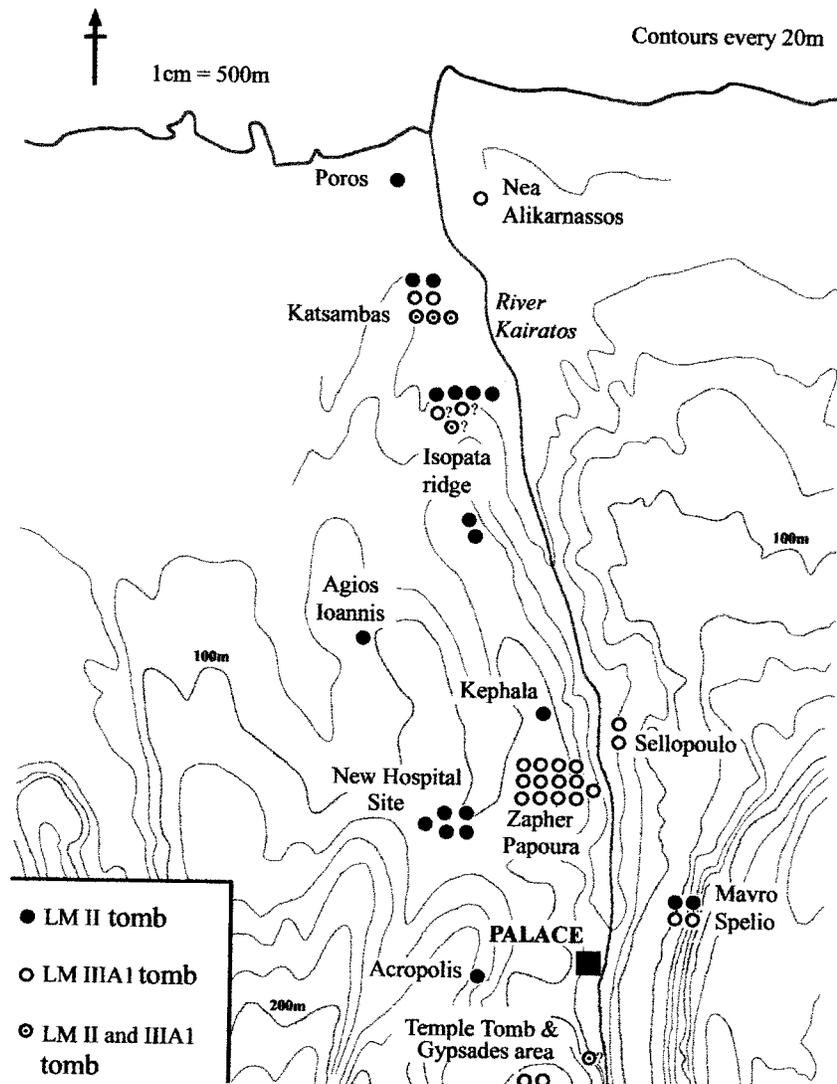


Fig. 3. Distribution of tombs in use at LM II and LM IIIA1 Knossos

the largest LM II tombs cease in the following phase (see fig. 4), while at the other end of the scale, there is a higher number of small tombs, because of an increase in the popularity of the shaft grave and pit-cave (both of which are generally smaller than chamber tombs). Third, a number of the features found in LM II chamber and corbel-vaulted tombs now become rare (table 1): namely, masonry-built tombs, finely carved or lined cists, carved benches in tomb chambers or dromoi, and entrance facades embellished with carved insets.

In assemblage composition, a general continuity into LM IIIA1 is seen in terms of the types of object

preferred (table 2), and some tombs (most notably, Sellopoulo tombs 3 and 4) attest to a continuation in the deposition of conspicuous amounts of wealth. Several points of difference can also be observed, however. There is an absence of artifacts with traditional Cretan high status associations in the LM IIIA1 assemblages, a similar trend to that observed in tomb architecture. There are changes in the popularity of certain ceramic vessel types, among which the decline in the numbers of squat alabaster, piriform jars, and braziers in LM IIIA1 assemblages is particularly notable.⁴² Regarding vessels in metal, LM IIIA1 burials include fewer precious

⁴² See Alberti 1999 for a detailed analysis of the squat alabastron in the Final Palatial Knossian tombs. The decline in squat alabaster and braziers may indicate changes in the nature of the actual burial rite in LM IIIA1, if they were actively used as

components in the rituals (the squat alabastron perhaps for unguents with which to treat the corpse and the brazier for lighting and/or fumigation).

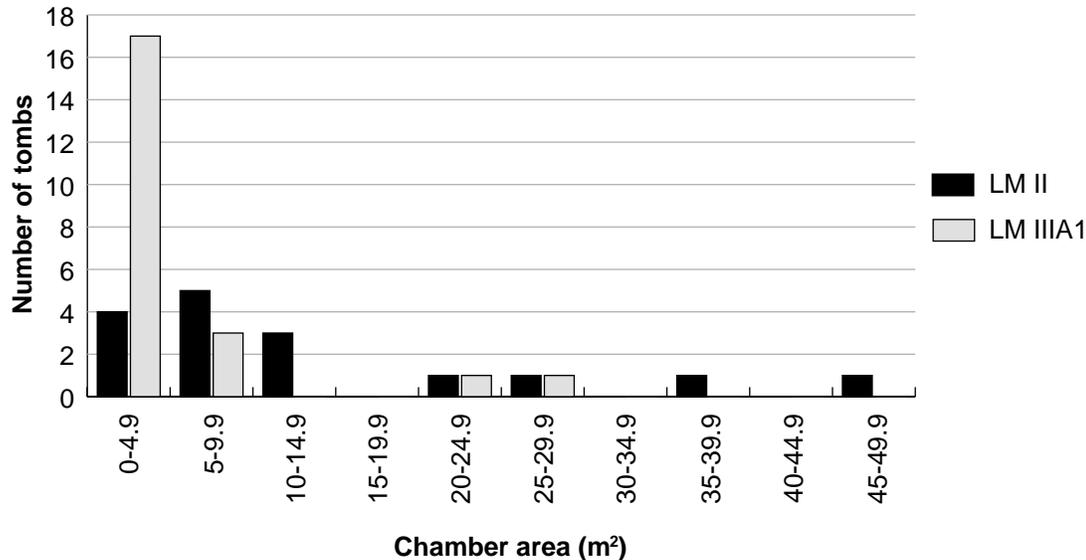


Fig. 4. Chamber sizes of Final Palatial Knossian tombs (areas are calculated as follows: main chamber areas are given for chamber and corbel-vaulted tombs, cave areas for pit-caves, and the area at the grave base for shaft graves)

metal (i.e., gold and/or silver) drinking vessels,⁴³ coinciding with an increase in tin-coated drinking vessels in LM IIIA1, which are so far absent from LM II interments.⁴⁴ There is possibly also an increase in the occurrence of bronze vessels in LM IIIA1 assemblages: these are certainly attested in only two tombs of this phase, but the numbers would be amplified if Zapher Papoura tombs 14, 35, and 36 are of LM IIIA1 date. However, this increase is not necessarily directly linked with the shift from precious metal to tin-coated vessels, as different vessel shapes are involved. Within LM II–III B burials as a whole at Knossos, most shapes in bronze relate to food preparation and presentation, in contrast to the emphasis on drinking activities in the shapes in silver, gold, and tin-coated ceramics (see fig. 5). Regarding the deposition of weaponry, finally, there is a possible decline in this practice in LM IIIA1, but this would be offset by an LM IIIA1 dating for several currently undatable “warrior burials.”

A variety of causes probably account for the full range of changes in burial practices between the earlier and later phases of the Final Palatial period. But assuming that the available data are roughly representative of the original patterns, some implica-

tions regarding trends in mortuary behavior at Final Palatial Knossos can be suggested. The first concerns an overall decline in levels of ostentation in the archaeologically visible aspects of mortuary ritual. This is most notable in the sphere of tomb architecture, but may also be highlighted in certain aspects of artifact deposition. There is a subtle shift away from the use of exotica and Neopalatial prestige symbols, and a substitution of tin-coated for precious metal drinking vessels. Ceramic vessels extravagant in their size and decoration decrease in frequency (especially the “Palace style Jars”), and if the squat alabastra contained valuable unguents, their absence in LM IIIA1 signals a further modification in funerary expenditure. Competitive display in tomb use had by no means been abandoned, as the extraordinary Sellopoulo tombs indicate, but overall, there is a decline in sumptuary extravagance. This decline may be partly the result of a shift in investment to less archaeologically conspicuous mortuary arenas in LM IIIA1. Equally, however, it may signal a genuine decline in funerary ostentation and experimentation, within a more stable political hierarchy, which either discouraged or rendered unnecessary the types of mortuary display witnessed in the most extravagant LM II tombs.

⁴³ Especially if the gold cup from the eponymous Agios Ioannis tomb is also added to the LM II list. This burial cannot be securely dated, as the only ceramic element in the assemblage is a brazier, though the sword is of an early type (the excavator advocated an early (LM IB or II) date for the tomb on this basis [Hood 1956]).

⁴⁴ The tin-coated vessels in LM II assemblages are two squat alabastra and a jug, from Isopata Tomb 5, rather than drinking vessel shapes. Note also that tin coating of such larger shapes as these is not attested in any LM IIIA1 burials, but is restricted to small kylikes, conical cups, and bowls.

Table 1. Architectural Elaboration of Final Palatial Chamber and Corbel-Vaulted Tombs at Knossos

Period	Tomb ^a	Masonry -Built	Elaborated Facade	Bench/ Platform	Cist/ Pit	Other
LM II	Agios Ioannis (515)		X	X		
	Isopata Royal Tomb (545)	X			X	Forehall with 2 side-chambers; niches in chamber and dromos; mason marks
	Isopata 1 (546)	X			X	Niche in rear wall of chamber; mason marks
	Isopata 2 (548)		X	X	X	Buttress in chamber with column carved in low relief
	Isopata 3 (549)			X		
	Isopata 5 (551)		X	X		
	Katsambas A (443)			X		
	Katsambas Γ (445)					
	Katsambas Δ (446)			X		Niche in dromos
	Katsambas E (447)			X		
	Katsambas Z (448)		X			
	Kephala Tholos (553)	X			X	Forehall with 2 side-chambers; mason marks
	New Hospital Site I (491)			X		
	New Hospital Site III (493)					
	New Hospital Site V (494)					
LM IIIA1	Katsambas B (444)			X	X	
	Katsambas H (449)					Central column in chamber; plaster on part of chamber floor
	Lower Gypsades ^b					
	Sellopoulo 3 (575)					
	Sellopoulo 4 (576)					
	Upper Gypsades I (524)					Niche in dromos
	Upper Gypsades XV (538)					

^a Numbers in brackets refer to the tomb catalogue number in Löwe 1996.

^b See Popham 1980.

The second, and perhaps closely linked, trend is evidence for a stronger sense of ideological unity in the LM IIIA1 tombs, with the final abandonment of Neopalatial symbolism in favor of universal use of the “warrior elite” package.⁴⁵ This ideology was

clearly closely aligned with contemporary developments on the mainland, where palace complexes were being established, and it suggests that the Knossian elite was both buying into, and actively contributing to, the development of the warrior

⁴⁵ An interesting study by D’Agata (1999a, 1999b) has proposed the existence of an ethnic division between individuals of Mycenaean and Minoan derivation in LM IIIA1–early IIIA2 burials at Knossos, reflected in drinking vessel types in the assemblages (with Mycenaean identity represented by metal or tin-coated kylikes, and Minoan by metal or clay cups). How-

ever, there is a frequent co-occurrence in individual assemblages of vessel types and symbolism that could be labeled as “Minoan” or “Mycenaean”: e.g., in the Temple Tomb’s rear pillar crypt a stone vessel with figure-of-eight shield handles and a one-handed clay cup (Evans 1935, 1002–14); in Sellopoulo tomb 4 tin-coated kylikes with tin-coated and clay conical cups,

elite ideology, although this had a longer ancestry on the mainland.⁴⁶ Equally, Knossos was divergent in several respects, of which the most prominent in mortuary terms lies in its peculiar tomb type preferences. For while the chamber tomb was the most common type at Knossos throughout the Final and Postpalatial phases, the popularity of the pit-cave and shaft grave here is out of proportion with mainland patterns. The shaft grave had been virtually abandoned in the Argolid by the end of the Cretan Neopalatial phase, and the pit-cave occurs only sporadically in mainland chamber tomb cemeteries.⁴⁷ This difference is interesting to balance against the Knossian elite's general willingness to participate in a cultural koine with the mainland polities. Yet it does not necessarily mark a "Cretan" trajectory that can be offset against a monolithic mainland system in accordance with the traditional geographical-cultural divides applied to the Aegean. Rather, it correlates with an increasingly observed phenomenon on the mainland itself throughout the Late Bronze Age: that while developing within common cultural parameters, different regions appear to have diverged not only in their political trajectories,⁴⁸ but also in elements of their cultural symbolism. In fact, one of the most obvious examples of this variation so far highlighted is the regionally specific significance of certain tomb types, especially the tholos in the Argolid and Messenia.⁴⁹ In this sense, Knossos's development of its own specific mortuary vocabulary can be seen as part of a broader Aegean phenomenon of regional variation in the use of cultural symbols.

Im iiiia–b crete: an island perspective

Any attempt to assess the consequences of the collapse of Knossian hegemony for burial practices at this center is constrained partly by the problem

of the paucity of clearly datable LM IIIA2 burials, and partly by the difficulty of establishing which occurred before the collapse horizon and which occurred after. In general, however, the evidence from tombs with attested LM IIIA2 use suggests a further decline in mortuary ostentation.⁵⁰ The deposition of valuable artifacts may have continued to a certain extent,⁵¹ and there are a number of undatable graves with fairly impressive assemblages, for which an LM IIIA2 date cannot be ruled out.⁵² No burial of definite LM IIIA2 date, however, is on the scale of the wealthier LM II or IIIA1 burials. Nor are there any securely datable LM IIIA2 burials with swords or spearheads, though other weaponry is present,⁵³ and metal vessels are rare. Overall, the picture is one of a significantly reduced scale of actual sacrifice of valuable artifacts, though the continuation of tomb use and the occasional deposition of valuable materials perpetuated the mortuary ideals of previous generations.

The LM IIIB evidence shows a continuation of these trends. There are few burials datable to this period, which may reflect an overall decline in tomb use. The known burials are poor, containing mainly ceramic vessels and simple jewelry, though there are possible evocations of the warrior burial in the Gypsades Papadakis plot tomb 3.⁵⁴ The present picture, therefore, suggests a decline in mortuary ostentation through LM IIIA2–B. Entitlement to tomb burial may have continued to function locally as a symbol of status—indeed, the collapse of Knossos's Cretan hegemony in the early 14th century does not preclude its survival as a regional center and the continuing existence of a local elite here. The settlement size even in LM IIIB suggests a significant center,⁵⁵ and the LM IIIA2 occupation of the palace and other central buildings should not necessarily be dismissed as

with burials 1 and 2 (see notes to table 2); in Katsambas tomb Gamma a clay kylix, a one-handled cup, and a conical cup (see notes to table 2); in Katsambas tomb Beta a jug with figure-of-eight shield decoration and one-handled cups (see notes to table 2); and in Katsambas tomb Theta tin-coated kylikes with tin-coated conical cups (Alexiou 1970). Such overlaps within assemblages make ethnic affiliations difficult to determine on the basis of artifact choices.

⁴⁶ In the Shaft Grave period and perhaps even earlier (see Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997 for the MM II warrior grave at Kolonna).

⁴⁷ Dickinson 1983, 57; Pini 1968, 46.

⁴⁸ Cherry and Davis 1999.

⁴⁹ Voutsaki 1998; see also Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 77–9, and Dickinson 1983, 66.

⁵⁰ As also observed in Perna 2001.

⁵¹ E.g., the silver ring, bronze vessel, and probable boar's

tusk helmet in Katsambas tomb Theta (Alexiou 1970).

⁵² In particular, Zapher Papoura tombs 14 and 36, but also tombs such as Zapher Papoura 42, 43, 75 and 98, and Mavro Spelio 18 (Evans 1905 for the Zapher Papoura tombs; Forsdyke 1927, 282 for Mavro Spelio tomb 18).

⁵³ Evans (1905, 473–5, no. 95e) describes the blade in Zapher Papoura tomb 95 as a short sword. With a length of 37 cm, it is on the borderline between dagger and short sword.

⁵⁴ Grammatikaki 1998, 445–8. For the classification of the blade from this tomb as a dagger (32 cm long and described in publication as a sword), cf. *supra* n. 53. Burials in Upper Gypsades tomb 7, accompanied by an iron knife, amber bead, and two curated sealstones, have also been dated to LM IIIB (Hood et al. 1959), but an LM IIIC date seems more probable on the basis of the pottery.

⁵⁵ Whitelaw 2000.

Table 2. Principal Artifact Types in Knossian LM II and LM IIIA1 Assemblages

Artifact Type ^a	Number of Objects Retrieved ^b	
	LM II (15 Tombs)	LM IIIA1 (24 Tombs)
<i>Traditional Cretan emblems</i>		
Bull head rhyton	1 (1)	0
Double axe	3 (1)	0
Ring-handled vessel	5 (2)	0
Macehead	1 (1)	0
<i>Adornment</i>		
Bead (incl. rosettes)	47 (6)	735 (10)
Ring	2 (2)	6 (3)
Pin	1 (1)	2 (1)
Bracelet	0	1 (1)
Seal	9 (5)	6 (3)
<i>Grooming</i>		
Mirror	2 (2)	12 (7)
Razor	3 (3)	11 (7)
Tweezers	2 (2)	1 (1)
<i>Weaponry/armor</i>		
Sword	5 (4)	4 (2)
Spearhead	8 (6)	2 (1)
Arrowhead	27 (3)	18 (2)
Dagger	1 (1)	2 (2)
Helmet	1 (1)	0
Knife	5 (3)	15 (9)
<i>Non-ceramic vessels</i>		
Stone	29 (3)	0
Gold/silver	5 (4)	2 (1)
Bronze	1 (1)	31 (2)
Tin-coated	3 (1)	15 (5)
<i>Ceramic vessels</i>		
Goblet	7 (6)	15 (5)
Cup	1 (1)	2 (2)
Conical cup	1 (1)	8 (5)
Bowl	0	9 (5)
Stirrup jar	2 (2)	10 (8)
Squat alabastron	19 (13)	0
Jug	10 (7)	21 (18)
Brazier	10 (7)	0
Rhyton	0	1 (1)
Piriform 3-handled jar	22 (8)	7 (5)
Bridge-spouted jar	2 (2)	0
Amphora	1 (1)	0

Note: These data exclude multi-period tombs where individual assemblages cannot be clearly distinguished. Tombs that may have been partially plundered or otherwise disturbed are, however, included. The LM II tombs included are: the Acropolis tomb (Evans 1935, 849–50), an Agios Ioannis chamber tomb (Hood and Coldstream 1968), Isopata tombs 1, 2, 3, and 5 (Evans 1914), the Isopata Royal Tomb (see supra n. 41), the New Hospital Site tombs (Hood and de Jong 1952; Grammatikaki 2001, 627), the “Gold and Silver Cup Tomb” (Hutchinson 1956b), and Katsambas tombs Delta and Epsilon (Alexiou 1967). The LM IIIA1 tombs included are: a Lower Gypsades tomb (Popham 1980), Sellopoulo tombs 3 and 4 (Popham et al. 1974), Upper Gypsades tombs 1 (chamber burial), 2 and 15 (Hood et al. 1959), and Zapher Papoura tombs 1, 5–7, 25, 10a, 25, 44, 51, 62, 64–68, 70, 76, and 96 (Evans 1905). I am indebted to Dr. E. Hatzaki for allowing me to refer to her dating of the Zapher Papoura tombs (Hatzaki forthcoming b).

^a Ceramic vessels with tin coating are entered twice.

^b Numbers in parentheses indicate the total numbers of tombs represented.

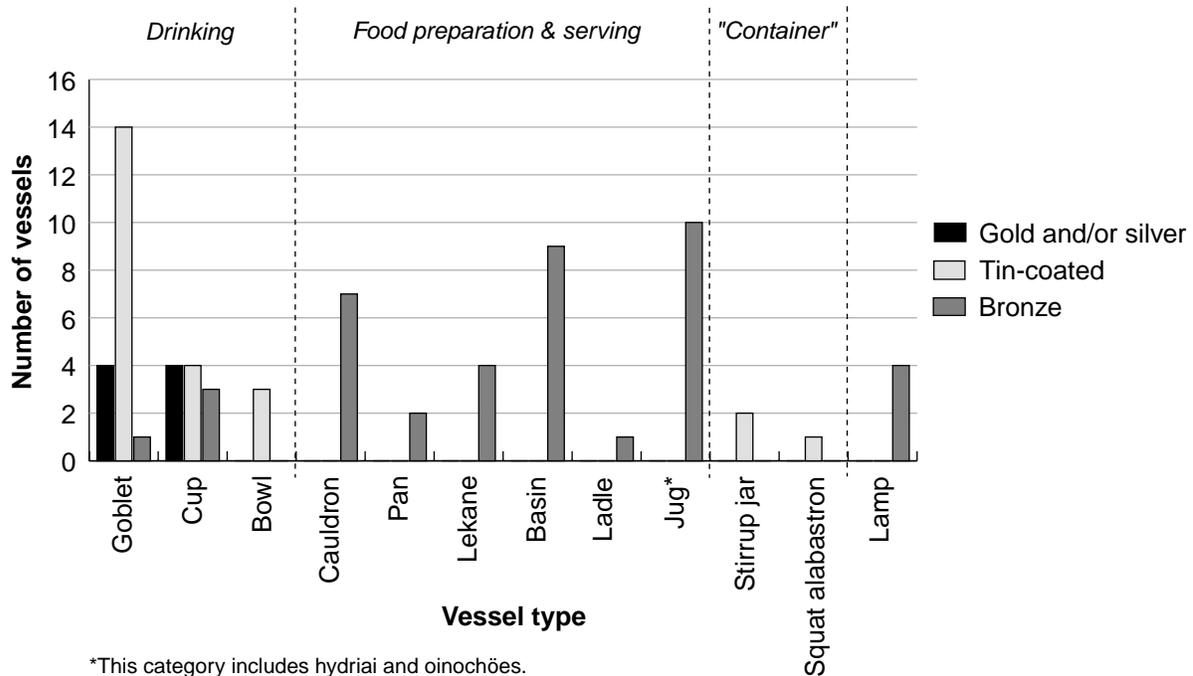


Fig. 5. Metal vessel types in Knossian LM II-III B burials

squatter activity, though significant changes in the use of high status buildings can be observed.⁵⁶ Considerations of the social structure at Knossos in the immediate aftermath of the early LM IIIA2 destruction horizon need to be moderated by an allowance for the range of different political conditions that may follow upon the collapse of a state system. Elites should not necessarily be expected simply to disappear following a dramatic reduction in the scale of a political center. However, the burial record does suggest that while elites may have survived within the local hierarchy, they functioned at greatly reduced levels of power, resources, and prestige, and burial was no longer a principal forum for display.

Looking beyond Knossos

These burials need not be considered in virtual isolation: LM IIIA, and particularly LM IIIA2, saw the large-scale spread of tomb use to the rest of the island. The number of (usually chamber tomb) cemeteries of the Postpalatial period so far recovered is impressive and steadily increasing. By virtue of their sheer quantity, these tombs appear to represent a broader cross-section of the populace

than they had at the point of their initial introduction, at LM II Knossos, when their associations had been far more exclusive. Within this broader social spectrum, however, the focus here will be on a few cemeteries and individual tombs that stand out as elite in nature and self-representation. This mortuary evidence sheds light on three different aspects of the political landscape of LM IIIA-B Crete. The first is a renewed horizon of experimentation with high status mortuary display at three regional centers in LM IIIA, the second the existence of elites beyond the known centers during the Postpalatial period, and the third a regional shift in ostentatious mortuary practices in LM IIIB.

Opportunities and Responses: The LM IIIA Phase

The lack of receptivity elsewhere on LM II Crete to the tomb burial practices being introduced at Knossos does not necessarily imply that this form of advertisement was consciously monopolized by the Knossian elite. Limited resources and/or incentive for display among high status groups at the subjugated Neopalatial centers in the immediate aftermath of the LM IB destructions are perhaps more

⁵⁶ Popham et al. 1984, 263; Popham 1988, 218, 223; 1994, 97. See also Hatzaki forthcoming (a and b).

plausible explanations for this absence. The selective introduction of these funerary customs beyond Knossos appears to begin in LM IIIA1, escalating in LM IIIA2, and three high status cemeteries of this period, associated with the regional centers of Archanes, Agia Triada, and Phaistos, are particularly noteworthy in terms of funerary elaboration.

The cemetery of Phourni at Archanes had a long prior history of use stretching back to EM II;⁵⁷ tomb construction and burial were resumed in LM IIIA after a hiatus in LM II, with a particular spate of activity in LM IIIA2 (in the use of the two corbel-vaulted tombs and the “grave enclosure”).⁵⁸ The cemetery site adjacent to Agia Triada had a similar history, with earlier use and an LM IIIA revival, the Tomb of the Sarcophagus now dated to early LM IIIA2.⁵⁹ The Kalyvia cemetery in the western Mesara, usually considered to be associated with Phaistos, was, by contrast, a new establishment in LM IIIA.⁶⁰ All three of the settlement centers with which these cemeteries are associated had functioned as important nodes in the Final Palatial political landscape. Archanes cannot yet confidently be identified with any of the toponyms in the Linear B archives, but Phaistos is probably to be associated with *pa-i-to*, and Agia Triada possibly with *da-wo*.⁶¹ The political relationship between the two Mesaran centers is unclear, and joint control of both sites by a single elite is one possibility—which would present an intriguing mortuary scenario if the two cemeteries represented different factions within a single political entity.

It is important to emphasize that tomb use was apparently not adopted by all regional elites in LM IIIA (e.g., there is no high status cemetery at

Malia); moreover, where it was employed, investment in tomb construction is not as impressive as either the contemporary settlement programs (particularly in LM IIIA2) or the earlier monumental LM II mortuary structures at Knossos. For example, the corbel-vaulted tomb Alpha at Phourni, with a total chamber area of 15 m², cannot compete with the LM II Isopata Royal Tomb (48 m²) and Kephala Tholos (24 m²) at Knossos;⁶² similarly, the largest known chamber tomb beyond Knossos, Kalyvia tomb 1, does not rival the LM II Isopata tomb 2 (with areas of 26 and 35 m² respectively).⁶³ Nevertheless, these tombs were impressive by contemporary mortuary standards, and the interest in ostentatious tomb burial in LM IIIA shows that the funerary sphere was a medium whose potential for status advertisement was recognized.⁶⁴ This interest therefore provides an intriguing perspective onto the changing political circumstances on the island in the transition to the Postpalatial period. Tomb burials at these cemeteries appear to be first taken up, if selectively, in LM IIIA1, which may reflect a political and economic revival among elite groups at these centers, with increasing resources and incentive to try out tomb burial as a medium for status assertion, a medium that had already proved successful at Knossos. The principal intended audience of such display was probably local, involving competition for, or consolidation of, positions within the centers' power hierarchies; however, the reassertion of confidence that they suggest on the part of these elites may also have presented a challenge to Knossian hegemony. The escalation in levels of mortuary

⁵⁷ Panagiotopoulos 2002, 169; Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 155, 187.

⁵⁸ A detailed understanding of the sequence of LM IIIA activities at Phourni must await full publication, but I follow Kanta's and Kallitsaki's dating of Tomb Alpha and the grave enclosure to LM IIIA2 (Kanta 1980, 33; Kallitsaki 1997, 220; contra Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 168, 479–81). Tomb Delta is also dated to LM IIIA2 (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 185–6). However, the reuse of Tomb Beta is dated only to “LM IIIA” (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 169–79), and that of Building 3 to the post-Neopalatial period (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 106–12).

⁵⁹ For the recent dating of the Tomb of the Sarcophagus (Paribeni 1904, 713–9), see La Rosa 1999. The round tomb A was not reused following its abandonment in MM II (Pelon 1976, 8–10). By contrast, round tomb Beta, following an initial use period from EM II to MM IB (La Rosa 1992, 75; though contrast Branigan 1968, 17–9; 1970, 166), was reused in LM IIIA, producing both LM IIIA1 and IIIA2 pottery (Paribeni 1904, 677–91; Kanta 1980, 104). The reuse of a Neopalatial

structure for burials (the “Tomb of the Gold Objects,” Paribeni 1904, 719–55) has been dated to early LM IIIA2 (La Rosa 1992, 76; cf. Soles 1992, 120–5), though La Rosa (2000) suggests that the human remains here may be secondary depositions, perhaps from the Tomb of the Sarcophagus.

⁶⁰ La Rosa (1985, 51) dates the entire cemetery to the LM IIIA2 phase, but some LM IIIA1 material was retrieved. Unfortunately, a detailed history of the cemetery cannot be attempted at present since in most cases it is uncertain which tombs produced which ceramic vessels (Savignoni 1904, 526).

⁶¹ Bennet 1985, 247. However, the possibility that the toponym *pa-i-to* had migrated from Phaistos to Agia Triada in LM III is also suggested by Bennet (1992, 97, note 96).

⁶² Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 158–68 for Phourni tomb Alpha; see supra n. 41 for the Knossian tombs.

⁶³ Savignoni 1904, 526–7 for Kalyvia tomb 1; see supra n. 41 for Isopata tomb 2.

⁶⁴ Cucuzza notes that at Agia Triada, a further, and probably not dissociated, sphere was probably that of religious ritual (Cucuzza 2001).

Table 3. LM IIIA Tomb Types in the Cemeteries of Agia Triada, Kalyvia, and Archanes Phourni

Tomb Type	Agia		
	Triada	Kalyvia	Phourni
Corbel-vaulted tomb	–	–	2
Chamber tomb	–	12	–
Grave enclosure	–	–	1
Shaft grave (individual)	–	2	–
Reused structure	2	–	2
Other	1	–	–

display at Agia Triada and Archanes Phourni in early LM IIIA2 coincides with the collapse of that hegemony. Unfortunately, it is impossible to ascertain whether these burials preceded or succeeded the destruction horizon at the Knossos palace, but this timing may not be crucial, if the collapse is viewed as a longer-term process of which the palace's destruction was but a climactic episode. These elites may have played an active role in the overthrow of Knossian hegemony (with ideological strategies of ostentatious burial playing a part in this defiance), or simply benefited from the collapse (which produced a political vacuum in which mortuary display was one means of negotiating power relations). Either way, in the process and aftermath of the fall of Knossos, there was even more for the regional elites to play for, and high status burial was probably used to exploit the climate of opportunities offered for political reorganization within and between the resurgent centers.

As active elements within a period of political flux, the elite LM IIIA (and particularly the LM IIIA2) burials are reminiscent of the earlier, LM II horizon of mortuary extravagance at Knossos. Equally reminiscent of that LM II horizon is the renewed experimentation with high status funerary symbolism in LM IIIA at the three elite cemeteries noted above. This is most obvious in the individualistic and innovative choices being made in tomb architecture (table 3).⁶⁵ The burying group using the Phourni cemetery during this period employed an eclectic assortment of

new and older tombs.⁶⁶ The reuse of the existing structures Tomb Beta and Building 3 may have been partly a matter of expediency, but it probably also constituted an appeal for legitimation through the appropriation of structures with traditional high status associations. Of the new structures, the corbel-vaulted tombs Alpha and Delta were attractive as status symbols in two respects. This tomb type had contemporary elite associations, as developed on the mainland and, more immediately, at Final Palatial Knossos; but equally, it could have been considered appropriate at Phourni because of its structural evocation of the older round tombs in this cemetery. The other new structure, however—the grave enclosure—has no known parallels or precedents anywhere on Crete, and is best explained at present as a conscious echo of the Mycenae's much older but still highly prestigious Grave Circle A, albeit on a far smaller scale.⁶⁷

Experimentation is visible not only in the variety of decisions being made in tomb architecture: it is also discernible in the adaptations involved in these tombs (such that straightforward distinctions between "Minoan" and "Mycenaean" tombs become unviable). The use of larnakes in the grave circle burials combines a tomb design borrowed from the mainland with a more specifically Cretan burial practice. A further example can be found in the complex relationship between the corbel-vaulted and round tombs. While compatibility with local tradition may have been a factor in the introduction of the corbel-vaulted tomb, the influences were, in a sense, two-way, since there is a simultaneous revival of interest in the older round tomb type. LM IIIA2 saw ritual activities at round tomb Gamma, apparently for the first time since the tomb's original EM burial use,⁶⁸ while various architectural modifications were made in LM IIIA to the round tomb area of the Tomb Beta complex, including the construction of a new dromos, and the use of the room leading off the circular chamber for one or more burials, after which this room was permanently sealed off.⁶⁹ The latter event particularly is

⁶⁵ As observed by Cucuzza 2002, with regard to the diverse mortuary practices at Archanes Phourni, Agia Triada, Kamilari, Kalyvia, and Goudies.

⁶⁶ See *supra* ns. 58 and 62 for tombs Alpha, Beta, and Delta, and Building 3; Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 189–91 and Kallitsaki 1997 for the grave enclosure.

⁶⁷ Kallitsaki 1997, 224–6. The continuing awareness and veneration of Grave Circle A at Mycenae in the palatial period is well documented (French 2002, 56, 79–80 advocates a 13th-century date for the incorporation of the circle within the citadel walls, instead of the late 14th-century date proposed by

Wace (1949, 62–3)). Grave Circle B also may have been remembered and celebrated, given the LH II reuse of one of the tombs (Mylonas 1973, 211–25), and if one interprets the encroachment of the Tomb of Clytemnestra as a bid for status by physical association rather than as evidence of neglect of the circle (Antonaccio 1994, 90–1).

⁶⁸ Ceramic "offerings" were made through the window adjacent to its entrance (Sakellarakis 1972, 346, 348, Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 181–4).

⁶⁹ Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1991, 90–6; 1997, 170–3.

reminiscent of the roughly contemporary burial use and sealing of the side chamber in tomb Alpha, and may indicate a blurring of the ideological significance of the two similar structural types at this site, with each lending legitimacy to the other as high status structures.

Overall, funerary activities in the Phourni cemetery in LM IIIA show a concern for status assertion that involved a significant degree of experimentation with old and new burial symbolism. Equally notable is the absence of the chamber tomb, the structural type preferred in most other Cretan cemeteries in this period. This choice contrasts with Kalyvia, where the chamber tomb and individual shaft grave were embraced, while the corbel-vaulted tomb was not taken up. At Kalyvia, the chamber tomb was the forum for architectural display, such as Tomb 1, whose outstanding size was highlighted above, though the tholos structure was possibly evoked in the doming of the roof of Tomb 9.⁷⁰ At Agia Triada, finally, the received idea of exploiting the strategic potential of tomb burial was embraced as wholeheartedly as at the other cemeteries, but all externally derived tomb types were rejected in favor of aboveground rather than subterranean tomb structures: a unique built tomb (the Tomb of the Sarcophagus) and, as at Phourni, the reuse of two older structures (round tomb Beta and the “Tomb of the Gold Objects”⁷¹).

Assemblage choices were generally consistent across these cemeteries, but interesting intersite variations can be observed in corpse treatment. First,

redeposition of human remains is attested at Phourni, in the grave enclosure burials and Tomb Beta. Second, the rejection of larnax use as an appropriate burial form at Kalyvia stands out against its popularity across much of the rest of the island, including Archanes and Agia Triada.⁷² Indeed, the display potential of the larnax was most fully exploited at Agia Triada, where the usual clay form was aggrandized in a large carved limestone version lavishly decorated with scenes of ritual, probably of a mortuary nature. These possibly drew on Egyptian influences,⁷³ but certainly also evoked fresco iconography⁷⁴ and incorporated other indigenous Cretan prestige symbols in the depiction of religious paraphernalia. In fact, this unique artifact encapsulates the desire for display and the willingness to experiment and innovate that characterize these elite cemeteries in this horizon.⁷⁵

The lack of uniformity in burial choices between (and, at Phourni and Agia Triada at least, within) the different cemeteries is striking. Moreover, the combinations of revived, borrowed, and entirely innovative symbolism involved in all aspects of the burial sphere (tomb types, assemblages, and burial methods) do not present any clear patterns of differentiation that may represent expressions of ethnicity, but are more suggestive of high status groups trying out new strategies for display by combining symbolism adapted from various sources, with some groups more innovative than others.⁷⁶ Just as observed above for the LM II Knossian burials, attempts to reconstruct the geographical origins of

⁷⁰ Savignoni 1904, 514, fig. 5.

⁷¹ See *supra* n. 59.

⁷² Cf. Cucuzza 2002, 148. Kanta notes that a box of larnax fragments in Heraklion Museum is labelled as coming from Xanthoudides' original excavation of these tombs (Kanta 1980, 99), but these fragments are somewhat incongruous in both form and date. First, at least one of them was a tub larnax, which would be very unusual for this area of the island. Second, according to Kanta's analysis of their decoration, two of them are of a later date (LM IIIB) than that usually assigned to this cemetery. Moreover, no mention was made of any clay receptacles recovered from these tombs in Savignoni's publication (1904). It may, therefore, be questionable whether these larnax fragments are actually from the Kalyvia tombs—if they are, they appear to signify a small-scale return to the site after its principal period of use.

⁷³ Watrous 1991, 290–2. Cucuzza (2002) also notes the receptivity of the Agia Triada elite to diverse cultural influences for purposes of mortuary display.

⁷⁴ Long 1974; Militello 1999, 283–308.

⁷⁵ This individuality, incidentally, carries obvious, but often unacknowledged, implications regarding the validity of attempting generalising reconstructions of Cretan mortuary customs

and beliefs on the basis of this coffin's iconography (e.g., Marinatos 1993, 31–6).

⁷⁶ As observed by Cucuzza (2002) in the cases of the elites buried in the Kalyvia and Agia Triada cemeteries, with the former aligning itself more closely with the mortuary vocabulary developed at Knossos, and the latter more innovative and drawing on ideas from other sources. Cucuzza suggests that different cultural traditions were being expressed in the Mesara tombs through the presence or absence of larnakes and conical cups (signifying an adherence to Minoan tradition or an affiliation with the “Knossian-Mycenaean” elite respectively). Conical cups and larnakes are, however, present in Knossian assemblages, which would make it less likely that they were simultaneously employed elsewhere as emblems of difference from the Knossian elite. Conical cups occur in Knossian tombs of both the Final Palatial and Postpalatial periods, e.g., in LM IIIA1 Sellopoulo tombs 3 and 4 (Popham et al. 1974) and Katsambas tombs Gamma and Epsilon (Alexiou 1967); and in LM IIIA2 Katsambas tomb Theta (Alexiou 1970) and a Gypsades tomb (Coldstream 1963, 30–4). Larnakes were also in use at Postpalatial Knossos (at present larnax use is a phenomenon certainly attested only from LM IIIA2 throughout the island).

the elites at these Postpalatial centers are thwarted by these elements of cultural experimentation and innovation. Nor is this phenomenon confined to the mortuary sphere: it finds parallels in another archaeologically prominent medium at the Postpalatial centers—monumental architecture in the settlement context. Hybrid designs (i.e., mixing Minoan and Mycenaean traditions) or simply unprecedented architectural forms in various new constructions, have been a subject of speculation and often frustration,⁷⁷ but this eclecticism, and willingness to adapt and innovate, complements the patterns observed in the elite cemeteries, and highlights again the potential subtleties involved in the manipulation of cultural symbolism.⁷⁸

Equally importantly, while general cultural developments in Postpalatial Crete continued to be influenced by broader Aegean trends (and particularly developments at the mainland polities), the mortuary strategies described above were a response to political fluidity within the island and owed much to precedents set at Knossos. As observed earlier, it is often assumed, implicitly or otherwise, that the continuing cultural affinities of Crete with the mainland in the Postpalatial phase point to a mainland origin for the elites of the resurgent regional centers. This stance needs to be balanced by recognition of the potential for internally motivated change. The political collapse at Knossos also provided opportunities to other centers to challenge Knossian hegemony and benefit from this center's collapse.

The Broader Landscape in LM IIIA2–B

Our knowledge of the distribution of Crete's central Postpalatial sites is fairly detailed, in that a number of important centers have been identified across the island, even if their power relationships are unclear. This picture, however, largely results from a past research focus on these sites. Settlement excavation has tended to concentrate on the largest sites, and mainly for the sake of investigating their Protopalatial and Neopalatial remains (particularly the palace complexes), rather than their later occupation phases. Less attention has been paid to smaller-scale sites,⁷⁹ though the latter

are now increasingly attested through survey.⁸⁰ Given these limitations in present-day knowledge of the island's settlement geography, the bias in excavation toward the known specific centers will naturally focus attention toward them in any discussion of the political hierarchy in this phase. This has, arguably, led to an implicit assumption that these were the only power bases in the Postpalatial Cretan landscape. Such a scenario would fit neatly as a further extension of Bennet's observation of continuity in site hierarchy from the Neopalatial into the Final Palatial period.⁸¹ Just as the palace centers were absorbed into the Knossian hegemony as administrative second-order centers responsible for their regions, with the "overseers" perhaps members of the local elites, the removal of Knossos as the apex of this regime may have seen regional power redistributed among these liberated centers. However, the mortuary evidence, which provides a window onto the wider population of the island unrepresented by the more restricted settlement data so far retrieved, hints at a more complex scenario.

This complexity is most conspicuous in patterns in the distributions of ostentatious assemblages and tomb architecture. In attempting to quantify the former, it must be remembered that value is subjectively, contextually, and multiply constructed.⁸² Yet our knowledge of Aegean Bronze Age exchange systems and comparative studies of mainland mortuary assemblages do allow us to detect certain dimensions of material and artifactual value that were probably in operation in Late Minoan Crete. Three such dimensions are analyzed here as examples. First, levels of accessibility, and distance from point of origin, seem to have been two significant factors in the social construction of the value of commodities (both raw materials and finished products) derived from extra-island, and especially extra-Aegean, sources. Desirability in these cases would have been constructed upon factors of exclusivity and narratives of "authentication,"⁸³ as a result of external supply constraints or a rarity artificially created locally.⁸⁴ While exotic prestige artifacts from extra-Aegean sources are actually extremely rare in Postpalatial burials, this idea can be explored more

⁷⁷ Cucuzza 1997 for Agia Triada; Pelon 1997, 354–5 for Malia; Hallager 1997, 185 for Chania; Shaw and Shaw 1997, 433–4 for Kommos; see also Hayden 1987, 210 regarding Tyllissos.

⁷⁸ As observed by Hayden, "The question of origin may be more complex than that of a simple choice between a Mycenaean and Cretan ancestry" (Hayden 1987, 218).

⁷⁹ Kanta 1980, 1.

⁸⁰ Driessen 2001b; although a general decline in the number of smaller settlement sites in various regions in the Postpalatial phase has been noted.

⁸¹ Bennet 1990, 208–11.

⁸² Appadurai 1986.

⁸³ Appadurai 1986, 44–6.

⁸⁴ Voutsaki 1995b, 9–11.

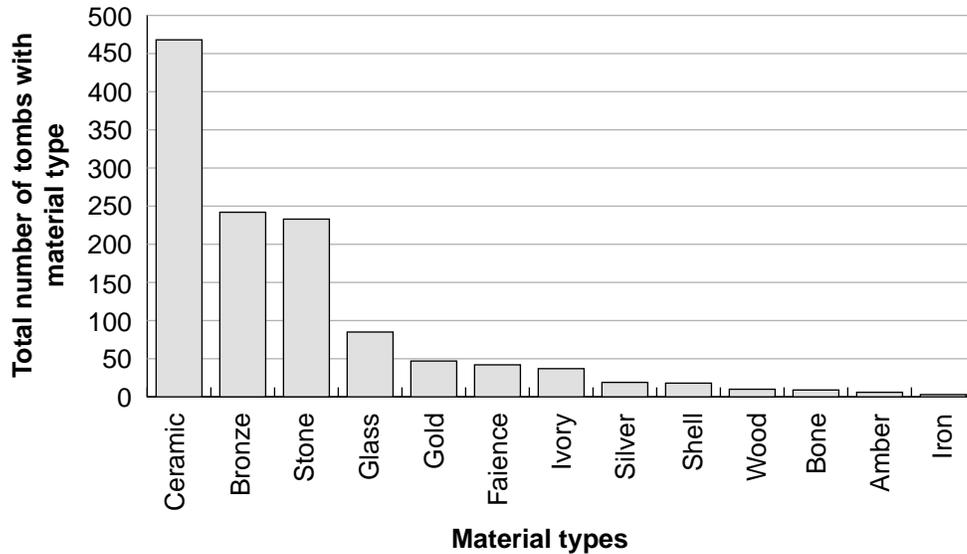


Fig. 6. Overall frequencies of different material types in LM IIIA2–III B assemblages

successfully in terms of materials. The rarer materials in the assemblages—particularly iron and amber, but also ivory, gold, and silver (figs. 6 and 7)—would have carried a greater degree of inherent value as imported materials.⁸⁵

Second, certain artifact types found in the assemblages that were not exotic were nevertheless imbued with a symbolic value as high status emblems, a value that incorporated, but also exceeded, the materials and skill that went into their manufacture. Accoutrements associated with the elite warrior exemplify this, and while the deposition of sets of weaponry and metal feasting vessels on the scale seen at Final Palatial Knossos is rare in the Postpalatial period, it does continue (figs. 8 and 9).⁸⁶

A further useful approach is to compare relative degrees of material diversity in assemblages (i.e., the total number of different material types represented) between individual cemeteries. This method, employed by Voutsaki for the Late Helladic mainland,⁸⁷ is particularly useful in tackling the problem of the large number of disturbed assemblages in the dataset, as traces do often remain of valuable objects that have been removed (table 4 lists the cemeteries with the highest material diversity scores, of 7 and above).

The distributions of these valuable materials and artifact types, and the cemeteries' material diversity scores, partially corroborate the preeminence that has implicitly been assigned to the known regional centers, since their associated cemeteries stand out from other tomb sites in terms of the resources being devoted to them. Kalyvia, Agia Triada, and (particularly) Archanes Phourni are among the limited number of cemeteries where valuable materials and artifacts occur, and all score highly according to material diversity. This suggests that the elites of these centers enjoyed a relatively high level of access to exchange networks of prestige goods or to the resources for their production, which rendered the sacrifice of valuable materials to the tomb less problematic than at most other sites.

On the other hand, however, elites at some of these centers (most notably Archanes) sacrificed considerably more than others in terms of assemblage wealth. For example, the Agia Triada tombs produced relatively few valuable materials (though much of the original assemblages may have been removed later). More importantly, these centers are not the exclusive preserves of mortuary ostentation. Occurrences of valuable materials and artifacts elsewhere may be the result of dispersion from the

⁸⁵ Faience and glass should also be considered as valuable, both because of the complex processes involved in their manufacture (Foster 1979, 1–9) and because of the probable elite control of these craft industries. Unfortunately, a frequent lack of distinction in publication reports between these materials renders it difficult to gauge their relative quantities.

⁸⁶ Figs. 7–9 show the distributions and total numbers of valuable artefact types and of objects manufactured from valuable materials; space constraints do not allow a similar analysis drawing out the numbers of tombs concerned in each case, but this would be a useful area for future analysis.

⁸⁷ Voutsaki 1993.

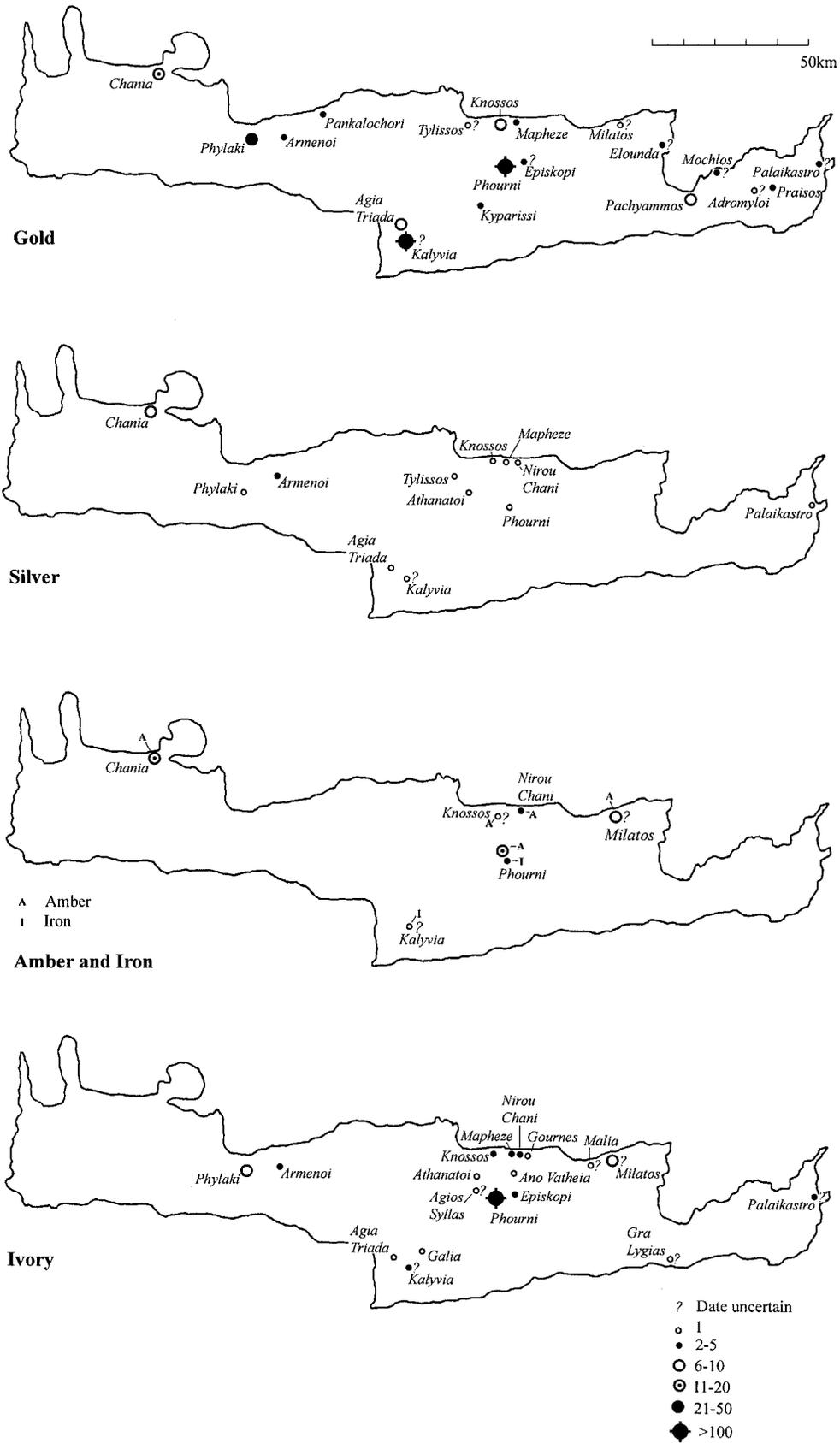


Fig. 7. Distribution of valuable materials in LM IIIA2-III B tombs (showing numbers of artifacts recovered)

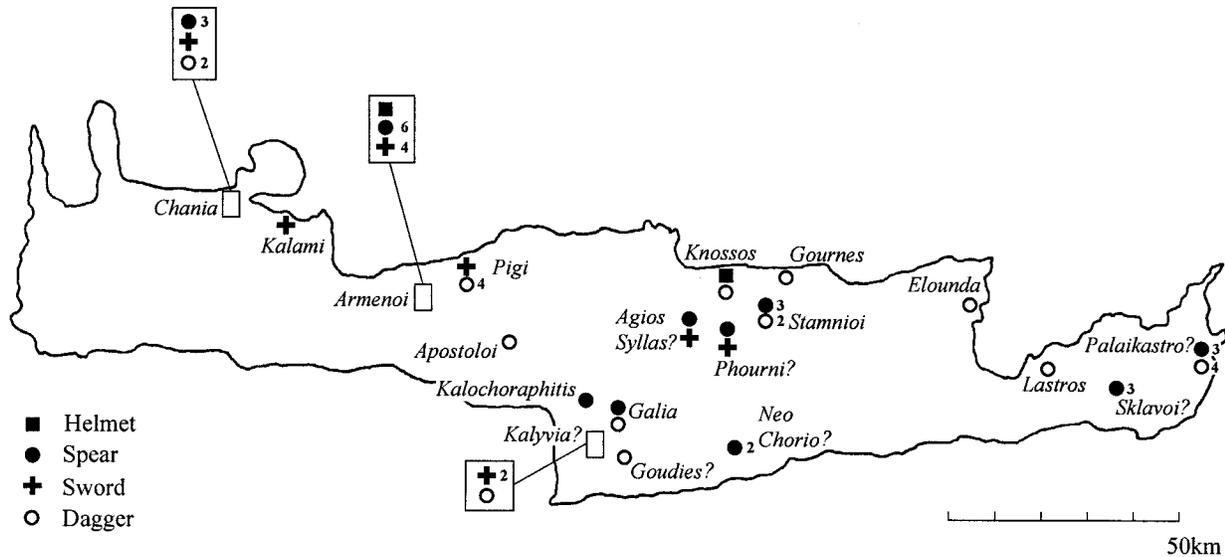


Fig. 8. Distribution of weaponry in LM IIIA2-III B tombs (indicating number of artifacts recovered if more than 1)

known centers, but they demonstrate an interest in mortuary ostentation at other sites, though the latter probably had access to a smaller pool of expendable resources. On the basis of the material diversity scores, examples include tomb 6 at Milatos east of Malia (which is responsible for this cemetery's high score), and the corbel-vaulted tomb at Phylaki (even after plundering).⁸⁸ Such tombs may represent local high status groups beyond the regional centers, which, while not necessarily able to compete with the elites at the known centers, nevertheless need to be incorporated into the picture. The inland cemetery of Armenoi is also prominent in terms of the axes of value highlighted above. This is partly a function of its size, as this is the largest Late Bronze Age burial ground so far known on Crete, with over 200 tombs. This cemetery may have been associated with a regional center in this area (assuming that this cemetery represented the population of just one settlement), though this has not yet been located.⁸⁹

Similar patterns emerge in tomb architecture, and particularly the distribution of corbel-vaulted tombs constructed in the Postpalatial period (fig. 10). This tomb form clearly connoted high status at Knossos and in many parts of the mainland and required more skill and human resources to construct than chamber tombs and other types that involved purely extractive processes of construction. Those at Apodoulou and Kamares in the northwestern Mesara,⁹⁰ as well as several in the eastern area of the island,⁹¹ are exceptional in being very small-scale structures that probably functioned as local alternatives to the chamber tomb, rather than as advertisements of high status by aspiring elites (thus corresponding more closely with the lower end of the size range in Messenia⁹²). However, of the remaining locations, only Phourni and two small (and, unfortunately, undated) tombs at Knossos⁹³ are physically associated with known regional centers. The majority, including Achladia in the east,⁹⁴ Damania and Smari in the central region,⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Davaras 1988 for Milatos tomb 6. Tzedakis 1988 for Phylaki.

⁸⁹ The Final Palatial second-order center *da-22* mentioned in the Knossian archives has been tentatively placed in this area (Bennet 1985, 243), but not confidently identified in the archaeological record. Bennet (1987, 311, n. 27) suggests a coastal location for this site, which would exclude Armenoi as a candidate.

⁹⁰ Kanta 1997b and Pologiorgis 1987 for Apodoulou; Taramelli 1901, 437–43 for Kamares.

⁹¹ E.g., Praisos tomb B (Bosanquet 1902, 245–8) and possibly Praisos tomb E and the Ziros tomb (Bosanquet 1902, 254;

Davaras 1967, 442), though their dating is uncertain. The sizes of the Sphakia tomb (Platon 1960, 294) and the Kalamaphka tomb (Dunbabin 1947, 191; Kanta 1980, 161) are not given.

⁹² Voutsaki 1998.

⁹³ At Sellopoulo (Hogarth 1900, 81) and Khaniale Tekke (Dunbabin 1944, 84–6).

⁹⁴ Tsipoulou and Vagnetti 1995.

⁹⁵ Xanthoudides 1917 for Damania; Hatzi-Vallianou 1980, 27–41 for Smari (the construction date of this tomb is uncertain, but is probably within LM IIIA, and could be Final Palatial).

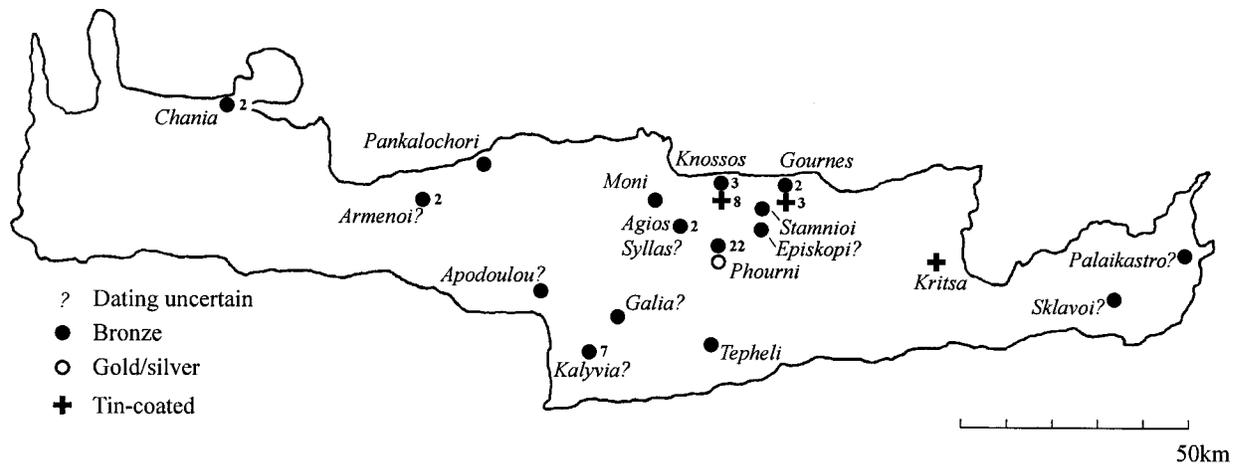


Fig. 9. Distribution of metal vessels in LM IIIA2-III B tombs (indicating number of artifacts recovered if more than 1)

Phylaki in the midwest,⁹⁶ and Maleme and Stylos in the far west,⁹⁷ are not. Some of them may have functioned as territorial markers for central sites, but on the whole they seem rather to represent the aspirations of local elites. The burying groups responsible for these structures probably represent a range of levels in terms of relative status and political power, if the variation between the tombs can be taken to indicate differences in the resources of human labor and skill available to devote to tomb construction. At one end of this scale is the large Maleme tomb, with well-cut masonry, a long, walled dromos, and features such as pivot holes for double doors at the entrance; at the other is the much smaller and more roughly built Smari tomb, with its short, off-center dromos. The pre-excavation disturbance of almost all of these tombs precludes our knowing whether their original assemblages would have shown similar concern for status assertion. However, in the few cases where the assemblages of LM corbel-vaulted tombs have been recovered intact, and even in one that was plundered (Phylaki), the evidence suggests that such a correlation did exist—it is simply unfortunate that these assemblages have been lost.

A survey of the evidence for mortuary architectural and assemblage display, therefore, does suggest that while the regional centers so far discovered or (as at Armenoi) suspected were important nodes in the political geography of Crete, they were not necessarily the only power bases in the landscape that need to be taken into consideration. The

political picture may in fact have been more fragmented and complex than previously suspected, involving other, albeit often minor and also perhaps transitory, elites beyond the known centers. These could have operated within the sphere of authority of the known centers, perhaps associated with former third-order sites of the Knossian regime. Indeed, Tyliisos, identified by Bennet as such a site,⁹⁸ also has a corbel-vaulted tomb, although it is currently undatable beyond the Late Minoan period generally.⁹⁹ Equally, however, at least some of these peripheral tombs may signal the presence of independent local elites beyond the control of the known regional centers.

Entertaining the possibility of more numerous and local political units would also anticipate the similarly fragmented landscape of Early Iron Age Crete. From a broad chronological perspective, the Postpalatial phase stands at an axial point between the palatial states of the much-studied Minoan civilization and the politically fragmented and comparatively obscure landscape of the island in the Early Iron Age. A more detailed understanding of the distributions of elites in this intermediate period could potentially, therefore, allow more insight into how the Iron Age landscape of the island developed.

A Shift toward the West?: Changes in LM III B

Within the Postpalatial period, an LM IIIA horizon of reception to, and experimentation with, high status mortuary symbolism at the cemeteries of Phourni, Kalyvia, and Agia Triada has been

⁹⁶ See supra n. 88. Note also the dromos of a further (in-filled) corbel-vaulted tomb examined by Hood in the area of Mavriana (Hood 1965).

⁹⁷ Davaras 1975 and Kanta 1980, 235 for Stylos.

⁹⁸ Bennet 1985, 245–6.

⁹⁹ Catling 1981, 44.

Table 4. Material Diversity Counts of Post-Palatial Cemeteries (Scores of 7 and above)

Cemetery	Diversity Total
Milatos	7
Phylaki	7
Agia Triada	8
Kalyvia	9?
Armenoi	10
Archanes Phourni	11

observed. This funerary ostentation, however, was not sustained into LM IIIB. At Phourni, most new tomb constructions and all the known wealthy burials can be pinpointed to LM IIIA. The only Postpalatial structure whose construction may belong to LM IIIB is Building 21,¹⁰⁰ while the LM IIIB “Cenotaph” chamber tomb appears not to have been part of the cemetery proper.¹⁰¹ At Kalyvia, all of the tomb constructions are dated to LM IIIA, with no firm evidence for any subsequent burial activities.¹⁰² At Agia Triada, LM IIIB saw merely two or three larnax burials in a pit.¹⁰³ Elsewhere in the central area, and in the east and midwest regions of Crete, the construction of monumentalizing corbel-vaulted tombs also appears to decline, as the initial use of Achladia, Smari, and Phylaki is dated to LM IIIA, and only Damania is assigned to LM IIIB.¹⁰⁴

This decline in mortuary display contrasts with the situation in the far west of the island, where the earliest evidence for large-scale mortuary ostentation—the two corbel-vaulted tombs at Maleme and Stylos—date to LM IIIB.¹⁰⁵ While the comparative lack of archaeological investigation in the far west until the last few decades should be borne in mind, this LM IIIB bias may indicate an ascendancy of elites in the far west, perhaps at the expense of centers elsewhere on the island.

¹⁰⁰ Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1984, 468–80.

¹⁰¹ The location of the Cenotaph tomb in relation to the Phourni cemetery is not described. The chamber tomb seems to be in the vicinity of the cemetery, as it is ascribed to the Phourni location and is situated on the same, southeastern slope of the hill (Sakellarakis 1966, 111; Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 156, 252–3). The chamber tomb is very rarely mentioned in discussions of the cemetery, however, which suggests that it is not close enough to be deemed to fall within the cemetery area proper, though its owners were probably seeking to associate themselves with this prestigious site through proximity.

¹⁰² See supra ns. 60 and 72.

¹⁰³ Paribeni 1904, 710–3; Kanta 1980, 104; La Rosa 1999, 179; 2000, 92; Perna 2001, 136.

¹⁰⁴ At Armenoi, valuable materials and artifacts occur in as-

A concurrent regional shift is observable in ceramic production and trade, with the burgeoning of the “Chania workshop” in LM IIIB.¹⁰⁶ The Linear B tablets so far recovered from Chania also indicate the use of a text-based administrative system here in this phase (though this does not preclude the possibility of an LM IIIA2 antecedent).¹⁰⁷ This increased interest in mortuary display in the far west may also shed light on developments in political organization within this region in LM IIIB, perhaps involving increased levels of competition between elites at different centers, given that the known corbel-vaulted tombs are not clearly linked with Chania spatially.¹⁰⁸

conclusions

In this article, I shift focus away from attempts to distinguish between Minoans and Mycenaeans in the burial record, to explore instead the use of burial by high status groups at certain Cretan centers for status display. The significance of employing symbolism from diverse cultural origins is acknowledged, but the automatic equation of such burial choices with assertions of ethnicity is challenged as being both theoretically unsound and at variance with the evidence itself. Instead, these choices are seen as an aspect of high status competition, in a move beyond conquest-based historical narratives to consider alternative models for exploring and explaining cultural borrowings.

Initially, the Final Palatial period saw the introduction of new tomb practices at Knossos whose levels of ostentation and symbolic experimentation suggest that they were being used as a competitive medium among elites. In the later Final Palatial period (LM IIIA1), a greater standardization in mortuary symbolism and a curbing of sumptuary expenditure may reflect increased political and

semblages of both the LM IIIA2 and IIIB phases, but the few tombs that stand out by virtue of their architectural elaboration are LM IIIA in date. The corbel-vaulted tomb has been dated to LM IIIA1 and 2 (Papadopoulou 1997), and all of the four chamber tombs with areas of over 10 square meters had their first use in LM IIIA: tombs 24, 55 and 159 in LM IIIA2; tomb 95 in IIIA (Tzedakis 1975, 516 for tomb 24; Tzedakis 1977, 642–3 for tomb 55; Godart and Tzedakis 1992, 87–9 for tomb 159; Tzedakis 1984, 369 for tomb 95).

¹⁰⁵ Supra n. 97 for Maleme and Stylos.

¹⁰⁶ Tzedakis 1969.

¹⁰⁷ Hallager and Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1997, 169–70.

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Kanta has proposed Stylos as the location of *a-pa-ta-wa*, an administrative subcenter of Chania mentioned in the Final Palatial Knossian archives (Kanta 1984; cf. Godart and Tzedakis 1992, 222, 321).

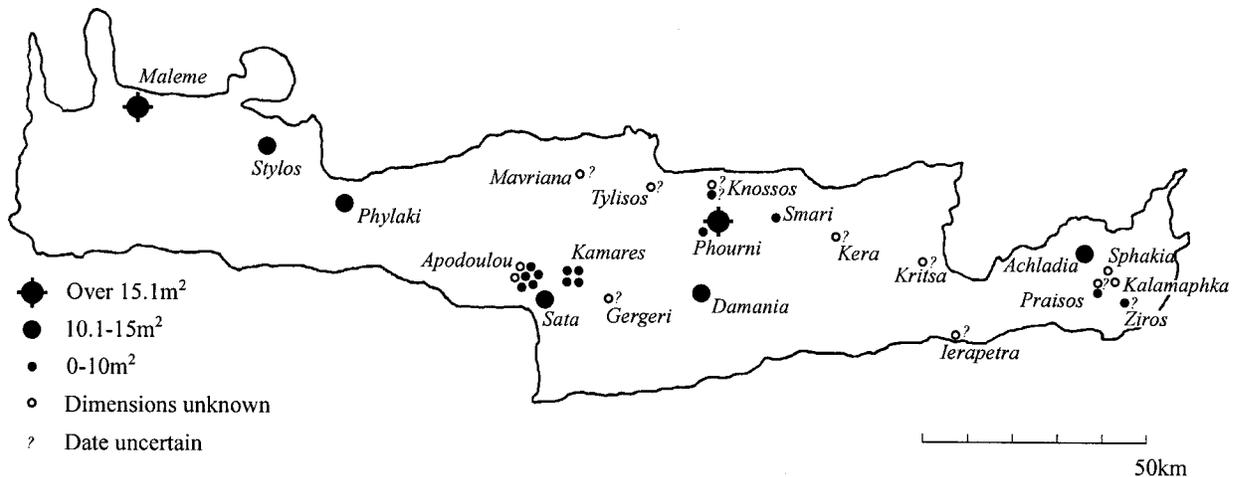


Fig. 10. Distribution of LM IIIA2–IIIB corbel-vaulted tombs on Crete (classified according to chamber area)

ideological stability within this center. At the same period, however, similar customs were starting to be adopted elsewhere on the island, with mortuary display at several regional centers escalating in early LM IIIA2, probably associated with the demise of Knossos and the political opportunities this created. This interest, which involved an element of experimentation with mortuary symbolism comparable to that at LM II Knossos, is attested particularly in the central region of the island, though further ostentatious tombs, as yet unlinked with settlement sites, also occur in the midwestern and eastern regions. In LM IIIB, however, a shift occurs in the deployment of mortuary ostentation to the far west, which may be connected with an escalation in the political power of elites in this region.

Valuable results can also be gained by approaching the issue of Cretan political interactions on a more focused geographical scale than has been the tendency in the past. On the one hand, developments on Crete should be viewed as one aspect of the broader Aegean phenomenon of Mycenaeanization that followed the end of the Neopalatial period. On the other hand, however, political developments on Crete are all too often considered predominantly from a mainland perspective, as shown most clearly in the speculations regarding the origins of the elites controlling first Final Palatial Knossos and later, other regional centers. Mycenaeanization was probably a variable and selective process of cultural and economic domination by the emergent mainland palatial polities, and one that did not necessarily involve direct political intervention everywhere in the Aegean.

The Knossian elite played a seminal role in the introduction and development of new high status

burial practices on the island in the Final Palatial period. The innovations here were subsequently to have an enduring influence elsewhere on Crete as regional elites revived and possibly challenged Knossos's power, then filled the power vacuum left by the Knossian collapse, employing burial as an ideological mechanism for enhancing or bolstering their status in an unstable political environment. These strategies and responses involved adaptations of received ideas that render attempts to detect the geographical origins of the elites concerned not only invidious, but also unproductive as a research question. Contacts with mainland polities would have occurred at various elite levels; these relations were probably to a large extent contingent upon individuals and operated between specific centers. By and large, however, political agendas and the manipulation of cultural symbolism were worked out at and between centers on the island, and in relation to their surrounding territories. In general, therefore, it is becoming increasingly clear that "Mycenaean Crete," while a convenient epithet, is not an entirely accurate label. Attempts to force material culture into categories of Minoan and Mycenaean, and to extend these labels to people in an unjustified inferential leap, hinder the exploration of the subtleties and complexities of cultural interactions, and particularly the selective adoption and adaptation of externally derived ideas, that were occurring as part of social interactions within Crete.

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