

# **(Social) Place and Space in Early Mycenaean Greece: An Introduction**

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## **Social Space**

The title of this conference pays tribute to the seminal book on the Production of Space by Henri Lefebvre, who conveys his message in a succinct formula: “(Social) space is a (social) product”.<sup>3</sup> Thus, every society produces its own social space through social practice, which affects relations between subjects and objects. Human agency creates space as it takes place in space: spatial practice shapes and transforms the physical, social and metaphysical space and guides human movements in and towards buildings, structures and objects. These practices reproduce not only the spaces themselves but also the social structures that these spaces support.<sup>4</sup>

Human agency shapes geography as an area of political, economic and social interaction. The political and economic conditions of a given society determine the technical development and organisation of the landscape in the form of e.g. roads, fortifications, cemeteries and tombs, settlement types and settlement patterns. Thus, every culturally defined period gains its typical geography. Through the interaction with the environment and the building of palaces, towns, villages, farms and associated cemeteries a cultural system is virtually inscribed into the landscape, thus generating a particular set of spatial practices in terms of social communication and interaction. Social space locates the specific social relationships in their hierarchical structures.

The Mycenaean culture of Greece (c. 1700 – mid-11<sup>th</sup> century BC) has left a particularly outstanding material legacy of buildings and artefacts. Large, stone-built tholoi and the fortifications of the palace centres of Mycenae and Tiryns are still present in the landscape of the Greek mainland. For a long time, the exploration of the Mycenaean culture has concentrated on palaces and funeral monuments and has, in fact, revealed a large number of important finds.<sup>5</sup> However, the state of research has changed markedly in recent years, because modern excavations and research projects provide new perspectives for a wider understanding of the emergence of the Mycenaean culture in the 17<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries BC that is based on diverse information from various regions of the Greek mainland.

## **The Transition to Mycenaean**

The formative period of the Mycenaean civilisation began in the second half of the Middle Bronze Age and was characterised by a series of processes that reshaped Middle Helladic traditions and created a new cultural and political landscape with corresponding spatial practices on the Greek

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<sup>3</sup> Lefebvre 1991, 26, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Smith 2003, 72.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Maran 2006; Thaler 2006; Wright 2006 on Mycenaean architecture as performative space.

mainland.<sup>6</sup> The increasingly elaborate, sometimes monumental tombs with their occasionally rich funeral gifts have for the longest time determined our knowledge of the formative phase of the Mycenaean civilisation.<sup>7</sup> They form one material dimension of the increasingly stratified organisation of social groups on the Greek mainland at the time, when compared to the earlier Middle Bronze Age. Soon after the first discoveries in the Shaft Graves of Mycenae at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the strong Minoan impact that effected the adoption of images and figurative motifs and their integration into the early Mycenaean material culture was recognised.<sup>8</sup> Despite the important role that Neopalatial Crete played in the formative phase of the Mycenaean culture, the independent, although not self-contained, character of the mainland developments should not be underestimated. In comparison, there are many differences between Minoan and Mycenaean cultural practices in terms of tomb architecture, burial customs, the architecture of residential and representative buildings, and settlement organisation,<sup>9</sup> but also in the production and consumption of pottery.<sup>10</sup>

The research carried out in recent years offers new perspectives for approaching the social practices that created and shaped the spaces and places of early Mycenaean Greece. This applies to the current interest in the Greek Middle Bronze Age,<sup>11</sup> regional studies, publications of important sites such as Ayios Stephanos,<sup>12</sup> Menelaion,<sup>13</sup> and the Aspis of Argos,<sup>14</sup> and renewed excavations at already known sites such as Pylos, Iklaina, Kakovatos, Malthi and Aigina-Kolonna.<sup>15</sup> New research projects have specifically focused on settlements of the early Late Bronze Age, which are essential for understanding the social space in terms of the relationship between cemeteries/tombs and areas of habitation.

### New Regional Perspectives

Recent fieldwork in the region of Triphylia provides the background for this conference on early Mycenaean Greece. New excavations at Kakovatos in 2010–2011 revealed remains of an early Mycenaean residential complex, and the related research project is emphatically dedicated to a regional perspective (Eder – Hadzi-Spiliopoulou, this volume; Nikolentzos – Moutzouridis, this volume). The concurrent analysis of the rich grave offerings from the associated tholos tombs (de Vreé, this volume), the simultaneous evaluation of the Late Bronze Age pottery from Kakovatos and three neighbouring sites in the area (Kleidi-Samikon, Epitalion, Ayios Dimitrios) and the systematic petrographic and chemical analysis of the pottery from all these sites (Huber et al., this volume) offer a wealth of archaeological data that can be interpreted in terms of social space. The region therefore provides a suitable basis for modelling the processes of emerging hierarchical structures, settlement patterns and super-regional contacts at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age in the southwest of the Peloponnese. The region has rarely acquired any political importance in history, but the early Mycenaean period witnessed the rise of Kakovatos as the seat of the regional elite, which was linked to far-reaching networks and furnished its tombs with burial gifts rivalling those of contemporary Mycenae, Pylos and Peristeria.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Dickinson 1977; Dickinson 1989.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Wright 1987; Cavanagh – Mee 1998; Voutsaki 1998; Boyd 2002; Bennet – Galanakis 2005; Galanakis 2011; Murphy 2014; Zavadil 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Evans 1929; cf. Schoep 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Kilian 1987; Wiersma 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. generally Gorogianni et al. 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. e.g. Mesohelladika; Wiersma 2014; Wiersma – Voutsaki 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Tylour † – Janko 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Catling 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Philippa-Touchais et al. 2014; Philippa-Touchais 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the contributions in the present volume; for Malthi see now: Worsham et al. 2018.

In order to view the developments in Triphylia during the early Mycenaean period in the context of contemporary phenomena in the Peloponnese, our international conference has brought together scholars who have presented and discussed new results of current excavations as well as new perspectives on older materials. A comparative view of regional trends and super-regional phenomena contributes to a more geographically balanced yet differentiated picture of the time of the emerging Mycenaean culture and its culturally specific landscape.

The eponymous site of Mycenae has always played a key role for research into Mycenaean Greece.<sup>16</sup> Since the expeditions of Heinrich Schliemann at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, archaeological research conducted in the Argolid has shaped our basic understanding of the Late Bronze Age on the Greek mainland. However, one of our aims was to look beyond Mycenae and the other famous Argive sites that became the seats of Mycenaean palaces and fortifications. As part of our conference, the presentation of new data as well as the (re)assessment of already known finds has opened new perspectives on the often unknown early Mycenaean period in other regions of the Peloponnese. The discussion of settlement as well as of burial sites promises new approaches to their interpretation under regional and superregional perspectives. The cross-regional evaluation of similarities and differences in burial customs and of the combination of grave goods of different categories<sup>17</sup> offers insights into contemporary concepts of value and related strategies for elaborating social hierarchies. Systematic archaeometric and archaeological analyses of Mycenaean and non-Mycenaean pottery (for example from Crete, Kythera, Aigina) allow us to trace the production and distribution of vessels in their geographic dimension and to recognise supra-regional networks in the early Mycenaean Aegean. This affects fine ware pottery, cooking pots and storage vessels equally.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the current archaeological research in all parts of the Peloponnese provides a broad basis for understanding social strategies of power and the mechanisms of supra-regional contacts in the early Late Bronze Age Aegean.

The conference on “(Social) Place and Space in Early Mycenaean Greece”, which took place at the Austrian Archaeological Institute at Athens, 5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> October 2016, pursued the regional approach with an explicit focus on the spatial and social aspects. The present proceedings bring together 29 contributions in a regional sequence. After the introduction to the theoretical framework and the general setting in the Aegean at the onset of the Late Bronze Age, thirteen papers are dedicated to the early Mycenaean remains in Triphylia, Messenia and Zakynthos Island. Thus, case studies of early Mycenaean tombs and residential sites in the southwestern Peloponnese form the first part of this volume and are supplemented by ten papers covering the other areas of the Peloponnese and adjacent islands (Lakonia and Kythera, Achaia, Arkadia, the Argolid, and Aigina). As will become clear in the following, one major aim was to contextualise the results of the recent archaeological research project at Kakovatos in Triphylia at regional as well as supra-regional levels and to compare developments in the southwestern Peloponnese with those in other regions. Our original idea of also integrating new information and results from excavations and research projects on the Central Greek mainland proved to be oversized in the context of a single conference. Many new projects in this area deal with important settlement sites (Mitrou,<sup>19</sup> Kirrha<sup>20</sup>) or exciting funeral evidence (Shaft Grave of Plasi at Marathon in Attica,<sup>21</sup> Blue Stone Structure at Eleon in Boiotia,<sup>22</sup> to name just a few). The early Mycenaean archaeology of the central Greek mainland and also the northern Peloponnese as well as the relations across the

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Voutsaki 1995; Wright 1987.

<sup>17</sup> For Mycenae, cf. Kilian-Dirlmeier 1986.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. Zerner 1993; Kalogeropoulos 1998; Broodbank et al. 2005; Zerner 2008; Gauß – Kiriati 2011; Gauß et al. 2015; Lindblom et al. 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Mitrou: <<https://mitrou.utk.edu/>> (last access 7 Feb. 2020); Van de Moortel et al. 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Kirrha: <<https://www.efa.gr/index.php/en/recherche/sites-de-fouilles/grece-centrale/kirrha>> (last access 7 Feb. 2020); Lagia et al. 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Plasi-Marathon: <<http://www.marathonexcavations.arch.uoa.gr/index.php/mycenaean-grav>> (last access 7 Feb. 2020).

<sup>22</sup> Eleon: <<https://ebapexcavations.org/>> (last access 7 Feb. 2020); Burns – Burke 2019.

Corinthian Gulf would deserve a conference of their own. Therefore, it is clear that this volume with its almost exclusive focus on the Peloponnese can only constitute a start that is worth continuing (Fig. 1). However, a final group of four papers covers aspects that are more general and explores questions of pottery production and consumption, issues of religious emulation and adaptation and the development of a mortuary landscape in early Mycenaean Greece.

The opening key note by James Wright foregrounds the various issues that were raised during the conference in different ways and in different case studies: the investigation of changing spatial distributions of archaeological data relating to residence, industry and storage, burial, transport and exchange, and worship creates the basis for tracing social and economic processes.

J. Wright stresses the importance of the mobility of people in creating opportunities for interaction and competition across space and time and enabling the acquisition of knowledge. Variations in mobility, and thus in access to knowledge, resources and contacts contribute to differentiation within social groups. Mobility promotes creating social networks, which are in turn important for the acquisition of (more) knowledge as well as of foreign goods and materials. Networks in the Aegean (on land and sea) have a long history reaching way back into the third millennium BC and even beyond. The material evidence of the early Mycenaean period illustrates exchange within the Aegean, but also extending across a wide geographical area from Europe across the Mediterranean to the East. The acquired knowledge and goods were strategically employed to bolster alliances and to consolidate social hierarchies. Interaction between the mainland and Crete may have taken place first via the Aegean islands, and only with the beginning of the Late Bronze Age increasingly became more directional. The islands of Aigina and Kythera, as well as the seaports in the Cyclades played a crucial role in mediating the contacts on various levels. Although there was no single trajectory for the emergence of the Mycenaean culture, the volcanic eruption of Thera marked a turning point in creating a new situation in the network of interactions between Crete and the mainland.

### Triphylia and Zakynthos

Current archaeological research in the region of Triphylia on the west coast of the Peloponnese began with renewed interest in the site of Kakovatos in 2009 (Eder – Hadzi-Spiliopoulou), which had become widely known through the discovery of three early Mycenaean tombs by Wilhelm Dörpfeld about 100 years earlier. On the hill near the tholos tombs, the recent excavations revealed the remains of a residential architectural complex with storage rooms and a substantial terrace wall of LH IIA–B date. The evaluation of the stratigraphy suggests that this complex in an elevated position above the plain was created in the LH I/IIA transition, and the storage facilities imply the control of dependent personnel and of part of the agricultural production by the resident group. The stratigraphic sequence of pottery deposits enables us to study the successive development of a repertoire of Mycenaean type vessels out of the regional MH tradition.

Contemporaneously with the architectural complex, the tholos tombs were built (de Vreé). The evaluation of the grave goods indicates a revised chronology for the earliest phase of use in LH I/IIA. The various categories of funeral gifts (weaponry, pieces of horse harnesses, jewellery of gold, amber, lapis lazuli) are either precious, custom-made objects or imported items and find their parallels in a small number of richly furnished tombs on the Greek mainland (e.g. Mycenae, Dendra, Peristeria, Pylos, Thorikos, and Volos). A limited group of peers of high social rank apparently used similar status symbols, although particularly close connections with Mycenae as well as with Peristeria and Pylos in Messenia are apparent. Moreover, the comparison of early Mycenaean tomb contexts suggests the existence of several distinct categories of funeral assemblages. Recurrent patterns of combinations of offerings point to certain rules governing the selection and deposition of grave goods according to social rank. Comparable assemblages suggest widely accepted social rules across a large geographical area and indicate a high degree of communication among the various groups of early Mycenaean Greece. High-ranking funerals

must have been special occasions that offered the opportunity for developing and entertaining a common set of values and normative behaviour.

At Kakovatos, imported pottery comes from the Argolid, Crete and Kythera and the south-eastern Aegean (Huber et al.) and illustrates the integration of the Kakovatos group into a wide network of contacts spanning the Peloponnese and the southern Aegean. Contacts with Messenia seem to have been close from early on and suggest that Triphylia shared the cultural connections of the southwestern Peloponnese. These regional and super-regional networks were responsible for the circulation and exchange of prestige items and valuable materials that were deposited with the elite burials of the period.

In terms of social space, the building of the residential complex and the tholos tombs of Kakovatos at the turn of LH I/IIA must have reshaped pre-existing communication patterns and social hierarchies within the micro-region. The construction of the largest tombs of the region required mobilisation of the workforce, which would have created and permanently manifested asymmetric social and economic conditions. The remote and elevated location of the site also had a distancing effect on the surrounding population (for example of Kleidi-Samikon), certainly enhanced by the unusual riches of foreign origin that were attached to the resident group of Kakovatos and ostentatiously displayed during burial ceremonies. Funerals will possibly have attracted people from near and far and offered an occasion for representing the resident group, but also for communal festivities enhancing social cohesion. Driving chariots and hunting offered means of controlling territory, although it is difficult to determine the area in northern Triphylia that was overseen by the Kakovatos residents, even if it seems likely that Kleidi-Samikon was part of it.

The burials of the Kakovatos group (at least in Tholos A) belonged to the highest category of funeral gifts according to Christine de Vreé, and burial assemblages of equal level are known

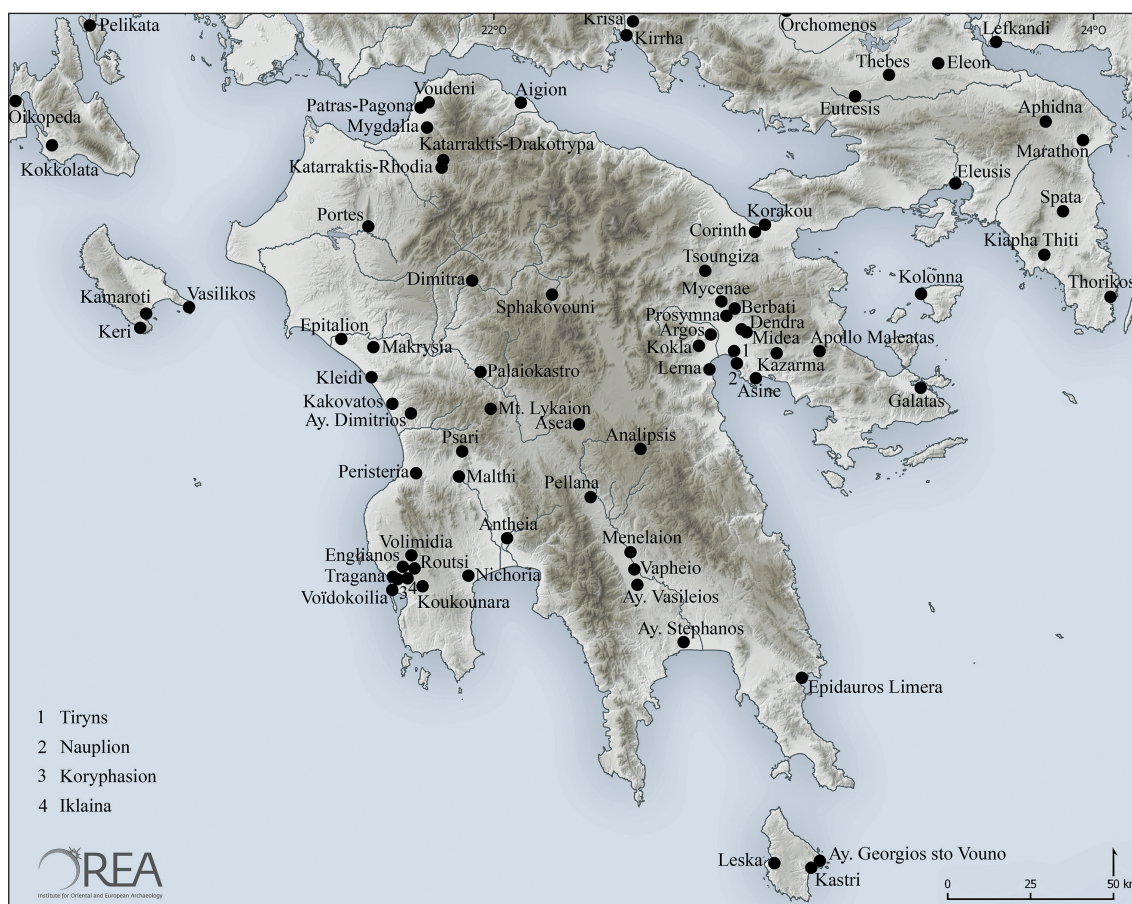


Fig. 1: Map of selected early Mycenaean sites mentioned in the present volume (M. Zavadil, B. Eder)

from Mycenae, Vapheio, Pylos, and Peristeria. Tombs with burials of lower categories seem to have often been spatially separated. In the case of Triphylyia the large and richly furnished tholos tombs stood all by themselves, and the smaller built tombs with much more modest grave offerings were located at Kleidi-Samikon or at Makryisia (at a distance of 10 km and 15 km respectively as the crow flies). The evaluation of the Mycenaean pottery from the recent excavations at Kleidi (Nikolentzos – Moutzouridis) illustrates that this strategically located site was contemporaneously in use with Kakovatos, but seems to have been of hierarchically subordinate importance. However, it apparently survived the fall of Kakovatos, which was destroyed in LH IIB. The political geography must have changed again generating new patterns of communication.

Recent fieldwork on the island of Zakynthos (van Wijngaarden et al.) has produced data that can be compared with the adjacent islands and neighbouring regions of the mainland. The Ionian Islands apparently did not form a cultural homogeneous entity, but material evidence suggests different patterns of relations and areas of interaction. Early Mycenaean pottery is present on Zakynthos and has good parallels in Messenia, and this pattern seems to be mirrored in Triphylyia, where LH I–IIA pottery can be found up to the Alpheios River, while it is virtually absent from the region north of the river in the later region of Elis (Huber et al.). These close connections are still reflected in the Linear B texts from Pylos, which are 200 years later, and contain onomastic references to the wider Alpheios region and Zakynthos.<sup>23</sup>

### Messenia

The construction of the new roof at the Palace of Nestor entailed archaeological research that in turn produced stratigraphical evidence of MH III–LH IIB date at Ano Englianos (Karapanagiotou et al.). From at least LH I, an architectural complex at the site of the later palace employed ashlar style masonry. Remains of a fortification wall also date to the early Mycenaean period. Some rooms were already decorated with painted plaster and indicate that wall paintings existed long before the decorative programmes of the LH IIIIB palace (Egan). Wall painting fragments of LH IIA date were previously known only from Mycenae, but similarly early examples are now attested in Pylos as well. Moreover, fragments from MH III/LH I deposits suggest the adoption of Minoan-style mural painting at the very beginning of the Mycenaean age in Pylos. Although the picture is still fragmentary, the site apparently featured a representative architectural complex from early on. The presence of Minoanising painted pottery and imports of coarse red micaceous vessels from Kythera confirms the Cretan cultural influence (Vitale et al.). The evaluation of a LH IIB pottery deposit at the site now allows us to illustrate the gradual decrease of MH Matt-Painted and Minoanising painted vessels and the consistent increase in Mycenaean Lustrous Decorated pottery and the development of a Mycenaean pottery assemblage out of a multi-faceted repertoire of pottery traditions. Goblets, conical cups, kylikes, dippers, and basins as well as cooking jugs and tripods supplement miniature goblets and fragments of painted offering tables from this deposit, making up the composition of ceramic shapes as part of ritual equipment. They may be considered suggestive of a feasting assemblage, which seems to be contemporary in date with the destruction of Kakovatos in an advanced stage of LH IIB. At both sites the presence of one-handed angular kylikes seems to foreshadow developments of LH IIIA (see also Eder – Hadzi-Spiliopoulou). Similarities and differences in the LH IIB pottery deposits from these sites offer interesting perspectives for future research. For instance, the absence or presence of Ephyraean goblets and conical cups may be the result of different cultural connections.

Contemporaneously with the representative building complex, the mortuary landscape at Pylos witnessed the building of the large tholos tombs that profoundly transformed the social space around Pylos (Murphy). The funeral activities physically created, expressed, and reinforced

<sup>23</sup> Eder 2011, 111–114; cf. more generally Bennet 2017 on Linear B texts and geography.

a new socio-political ideology within the related community. “(...) the investment in the mortuary arena through the construction of the tombs and the deposition of significant wealth therein indicates a break with the older order, a shift to separate into family groups, and an emphasis on achieved status.” The tomb of the ‘Griffin Warrior’ adds a new component to the traditional funeral landscape.<sup>24</sup> One may ask whether the choice to bury this special male person with his funeral assemblage in a deep shaft betrays something of his relation or non-relation to the rest of the elite group tombs in the immediate surroundings.

Four kilometres to the northeast as the crow flies, lies the large chamber tomb cemetery of Chora-Volimidia that was likewise founded in MH III/LH I (Vlachopoulos). Four different clusters comprised 34 tombs that belong to the earliest chamber tombs on the mainland with their architecture possibly imitating tholos tombs. Contemporary with the site at Ano Englianos, this cemetery must have developed with an associated settlement or habitation clusters. The tomb clusters may reflect groups of kinship. Because of their proximity, Ano Englianos and Chora-Volimidia and their social space should be considered together. In contrast to the rich funerary assemblages of the tombs of Pylos, the chamber tombs of Volimidia were rather poor. If we apply de Vreé’s categories of social rank, the people buried in the tombs of Volimidia belonged to lower levels of the social echelon than those of Pylos and represent an additional and complementary section of the population. Remarkably, as in the case of Kakovatos, the elite groups at Pylos appear to have aimed at separating themselves physically from other groups in life and death.

The relationship with Pylos is also a matter of discussion in the case of the settlement of Iklaina, less than 4 km to the southeast as the crow flies (Cosmopoulos). Later than the representative complex at Ano Englianos the earliest substantial remains at the site date to LH IIA–B, and the first monumental architecture belongs to LH IIIA2, when a massive platform in Cyclopean masonry was erected. The question remains, when the site was integrated into the realm of the Pylos polity.

In her study of the development of the tholos, Zavadil covers a wider area and includes the evidence from the southwestern Peloponnese. In MH III/LH I the few existing tholoi hardly show any considerable differences in terms of construction or in the choice of building materials. However, differences are expressed in the composition of the burial goods. By LH I not only the choice of grave goods, but also the size of the tombs had apparently become indicators of social distinction. With the wider distribution of the tholoi in LH II, the special design of the stomion and (sometimes) of the façade was introduced as a further means of differentiation in the area south of the Neda River. This does not apply to the region north of the Neda: as far as the poor state of preservation allows us to tell, the exceptionally rich tholoi of Kakovatos do not seem to have received any special architectural design. This may indicate that in northern Triphylia the competitive employment of burial architecture may not have been considered necessary, or the chronology of the tombs predates this stage of additional aggrandisement. Notwithstanding these differences, these richly furnished tholoi may have been the burial places of the chiefs of small territories, who had probably already begun to rise in some regions in MH III/LH I.

The creation of visible markers in the shape of tumuli formed one of the primary display strategies in MH Messenia, when regional variability reflects the lack of supra-regional interaction and competition among elites (Petraakis). Both Michaela Zavadil and Vassilis Petraakis suggest that social stratification was already present in the MH, even if it was only expressed more or less cautiously in material terms. There was an inherent relationship between tumuli and the development of the tholos tombs, both of which manifested externally through a mound of earth. In the Middle/Late Bronze Age transition, profound changes took place in the funeral landscape of the southwestern Peloponnese with the emergence of novel distinctive features in the architecture of tombs and of various types of built tombs including the tholos. The new tholos form had an impact on other regions and contributed to the creation of supra-regionally shared features marking an elitist

<sup>24</sup> Davis – Stocker 2016; Stocker – Davis 2017; Davis – Stocker 2018.

tomb architecture. In addition to the similarities within the repertoire of burial gifts, the spreading of common types of tombs bears witness to the intense interaction among elite groups of the early Mycenaean mainland. Moreover, as Yannis Galanakis (see below ‘General Aspects’) makes clear, convergences developed between the architecture of tholos and chamber tombs throughout the Mycenaean mainland.

### Lakonia and Kythera

Since 2008, the new excavations at Ayios Vasileios in the central Eurotas Valley have revealed the scattered remains of a representative architectural complex on the one hand and a group of early Mycenaean burials on the other. The North Cemetery forms the early Mycenaean extramural burial ground of the settlement and was established at some point in the Middle/Late Bronze Age transition (Voutsaki et al.). The realm of the deceased was clearly separated from that of the living and the tombs manifested a strategy of representing a distinct social group transcending the smaller group of the family or household. Stone-built cist tombs form the majority of the graves, which vary in respect of the size and quality of the selected material, and one of them stands out due to the light blue colour of the carefully cut schist slabs. The blue colour associated with tomb structures brings the rectangular Blue Stone Structure at Eleon in Boiotia into mind, which separated eleven tombs of the early Mycenaean period from a larger burial area.<sup>25</sup> A built tomb of unrivalled size contained more than 25 burials and forms some kind of intermediate stage in the development towards larger built tombs with multiple burials. It exemplifies the phase of experimentation with tomb architecture that can be seen in almost every region at the very beginning of the Late Bronze Age. The burials in the North Cemetery are generally poor in offerings, which are usually confined to a few, if any vases at all, and differences in wealth remain minimal. However, variations in the size and the quality of construction of the tombs imply differences in the mobilisation of labour and increasing differentiation in mortuary treatment. This is characteristic of the transformation of mortuary practices on the southern Greek mainland at the onset of the Mycenaean era.

To the southwest of the cemetery, two porticoes flanking a large courtyard provide evidence for studying the foundation system of the residential complex and thus offer invaluable insights into the origins of Mycenaean palatial architecture (Vasilogamvrou et al.). The foundations of the porticoes served at the same time as retaining walls with two faces. They supported a system of terrace platforms and were probably constructed in LH IIIA2 Early. Several differences exist between the terraces of Ayios Vasileios and later palatial and earlier defensive terraces on the Greek mainland, and the foundation terraces of Mansion 2 at the Menelaion, which were built almost at the same time, provide the best parallels in regional terms. For some details of the construction there are Cretan parallels that suggest a Minoan influence on the architectural design of the early palace in Ayios Vasileios.

Because of its geographical position, the island of Kythera has often been considered key in connecting the southern Peloponnese with Crete. However, recent fieldwork in the course of the Kythera Island Project has helped us to gain a better understanding of how Kytherans might have operated between the palatial societies of Minoan Crete and the diverse groups emerging on the Mycenaean mainland (Kiriati – Broodbank). During the Neopalatial period, the landscape of Kythera experienced a dramatic increase in the number of sites across the island combined with a growth of the settlement at Kastri and the establishment of two Minoan-type peak sanctuaries reflecting a thorough process of Minoanisation. While Kastri and the surrounding area proved to constitute the centre of specialised production and consumption, the rural landscape was characterised by small farmsteads, which may have been responsible for the supply of agricultural goods

<sup>25</sup> Eleon: cf. above n. 22.



to Kastrì. Two broad groups of pottery fabrics – Mudstone-tempered and Red Micaceous – are associated with the local pottery production exhibiting Minoanising features. Both main Kytheran pottery classes apparently arrived on the mainland, and even potters from Kythera may have worked temporarily or more permanently in certain places in the Peloponnese, and thus became part in the transfer of some Minoan technologies.

#### Achaia and Arkadia

The MH III/LH I transition was also the period of the establishment of the settlement of Mygdalia in the Patras region. Current excavations provide a perspective into the early Mycenaean period of the area, which is mainly known for a series of ‘warrior burials’ of the Postpalatial period of the later 12<sup>th</sup> and early 11<sup>th</sup> century BC (Papazoglou-Manioudaki – Paschalidis). Located on a hill with a view of the Patras Plain, habitation spread across three terraces and shows clear evidence of use from LH I/IIA onwards. A strong retaining wall in the southeast supported the lowest terrace, where a large house of 20 m in length with substantial walls was covered by a destruction level. It contained an assemblage of bronze knives, tweezers, needles and other objects. Pottery dates the destruction to LH IIIA1 Late/IIIA2 Early and seems to mark the abandonment of Mygdalia. The plundering of the nearby tholos in roughly the same period suggests a period of crisis in the region at the onset of the Palatial era. Reoccupation of the site in the Palatial period was apparently limited.

The survey of sites in Arkadia (Salavoura) offers welcome evidence for Bronze Age habitation in the mountainous heart of the Peloponnese, although prehistoric Arkadia never seems to have formed a regional unit of its own. River valleys opened routes of communication within the Peloponnese and linked the interior to the developments of other regions. The most prominent site is that of Analipsis featuring the only tholos in the region and elaborate finds such as palatial jars (LH IIA–B/IIIB1). The site lies on an inland route leading from the Eurotas Valley into the northeastern Peloponnese. In LH II, the first chamber tombs were cut at Palaiokastro in the upper Alpheios River valley, which connected the northwestern with the southern Peloponnese. The imitation of the roof of a tholos with a central cavity at the top forms a feature that first seems to appear in the chamber tomb cemetery of Volimidia (cf. Vlachopoulos) and also in Pellana in Lakonia and illustrates the distribution of major trends in tomb architecture across a wide geographical area. Near Palaiokastro, the ash altar of Zeus on Mount Lykaion provides the most interesting finds of recent years, where ritual activity seems to have started in LH IIB and attracted people from the surrounding communities to join religious festivities.

#### Argolid and Aigina

It was our deliberate choice not to dedicate entire contributions only to the emergence of Mycenae, Tiryns, and Midea, the later palatial centres in the Argolid,<sup>26</sup> within the framework of this conference, because these debates tend to overshadow the developments that took place in other sites of the region. However, references to these major sites are always present when discussing the early Mycenaean evidence from Asine, Argos, Kazarma, Dendra, and Aigina.<sup>27</sup>

The diverging trajectories of different communities in the early Mycenaean Argolid become evident when the burial record of Asine is compared with that of Mycenae (Voutsaki). The various aspects of burial practices, correlations and variations in time and space manifest social relationships and networks. In MH III–LH II noticeable patterns of variation exist among the commu-

<sup>26</sup> Cf. recent volumes summarising the work in the northeastern Peloponnese: Voutsaki 2010; Kissas – Niemeier 2013; Schallin – Tournavitou 2015.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the role of Aigina, see Tartaron 2010.

nities of the Argolid in terms of location and types of tombs. With the move to the extramural cemetery at Asine and the use of a tumulus with a few richer offerings, the burial group differentiated itself from the rest of the community. However, mortuary practices then remain remarkably homogeneous and comparatively stable well into LH I, albeit some variation is apparent in the burial gifts. In LH I a single inhumation with a dagger and 14 vases exemplifies an attempt at distinction, although the cist burial still seems to conform with the local tradition. After LH I the East Cemetery declines and LH IIA marks the start of the chamber tomb cemetery on Barbouna Hill. By contrast, the first burials of Grave Circle B at Mycenae already combined traditional practices with innovative features in terms of the tomb architecture and burial gifts. Material connections lead to Aigina, Crete and the Cyclades favouring the creation of new norms. Ostentation, elaboration and innovation increased in the course of the use of Grave Circle B that correlated with the expanding networks of the group at Mycenae. Locally different micro-traditions characterise the mortuary practices of the two sites in the Argolid at the onset of the Mycenaean era. Developments were neither uniform nor linear, and Mycenae was apparently not representative of the entire region.

Mycenae also comes into play, when assessing the development of Argos, which was one of the most important Middle Bronze Age settlements in the Argive Plain (Philippa-Touchais et al.). The MH period witnessed varying patterns of progress and setback of individual settlements in the region. The case of Argos exemplifies again the assumption that the history of the region was probably more complex than generally believed. While Argos experienced significant growth of the settlement on the Aspis hilltop and the construction of funeral tumuli on the plain in MH II, the situation in Mycenae seems to have remained unchanged until its spectacular rise at the end of the Middle Bronze Age, which manifested itself in the establishment of Grave Circle B. By that period Argos underwent a period of severe changes, if not of decline: the settlement on the Aspis started to extend into the Lower Town (the former burial ground) and was abandoned by LH II, when settlement activities were confined to the plain. Some of the inhabitants of the Aspis may even have emigrated to Mycenae and participated in her ascent. Lerna was probably the most important port of the Argive Plain for most of the MH, but it experienced similar developments to Argos. With LH I, Nauplion emerged as a new harbour site and Lerna seems to have rapidly declined by LH IIB.

On the road connecting the central Argive Plain with the eastern Argolid lies the tholos of Kazarma indicating the importance of this route in the early Mycenaean period (Keramidas et al.). Most likely built in LH IIA, it remained in use at least throughout LH IIB. Three shafts with intact burials contained rich funeral gifts in the form of amethyst jewellery, seals, precious metal vessels and a range of weapons that seem to conform to the standard elite burial assemblage of the period. The idea of an independent centre competing with its peers in the Argive Plain has already been abandoned by Sofia Voutsaki in favour of the concept of a dependent and allied partner of Mycenae. "(...) the deeply hierarchical distribution of goods, and foremost the temporal and spatial patterns in their circulation leaves little doubt: I believe that the distribution of *a few* valuable goods in *selected* sites in the *eastern* part of the plain does not imply loss or absence of central control, but rather that creating and maintaining alliances was a key element in the process of centralization. Mycenae, the emerging power, did not want to prevent everyone from acquiring valuable items, but rather to control the process of distribution of insignia; more precisely, she wanted to promote her allies and to thereby ensure their loyalty, to exclude her rivals and thereby cunningly pave their downfall in the competitive arena. I therefore suggest that valuables were not acquired independently, but rather by cultivating links with the Mycenae elites (...)"<sup>28</sup>

While the archaeological evidence seems to indicate a progressive centralisation towards Mycenae in LH II,<sup>29</sup> Dendra is one of the sites where the tholos is still in use in LH IIIA1–2.

<sup>28</sup> Voutsaki 2010, 103.

<sup>29</sup> Voutsaki 2001; Voutsaki 2010.

The undisturbed burials discovered in 1926 provide invaluable information about the composition and the quality of the grave goods, which regularly belonged to the equipment of elite burials (Konstantinidi-Syvridi). The funerary gifts of the male burial, conventionally addressed as ‘king’, consisted of gold, silver and bronze vessels, jewellery and seals, as well as several swords of horned and cruciform types with gold-plated hilts and pommels, knives and spearheads. Similar assemblages are known from contemporary tombs in the Argolid, Messenia and Crete. Eleni Konstantinidi-Syvridi addresses technical aspects of the finds, e.g. the composition of inlaid materials on metal vessels and of finger rings made of different precious metals. The production of this type of custom-made artefact as well as highly specialised techniques such as ‘gold embroidery’ did not survive into the Palatial period, when production of jewellery and other valuable items was subjected to more industrialised processes. Did that have anything to do with the fall of Knossos?

When compared to the developments in the Argolid, the island of Aigina exemplifies the differences in the processes of Mycenaeanisation that occurred throughout the mainland (Gauß). The fortified settlement of Kolonna was the major site in the Saronic Gulf in the Early and Middle Bronze Age featuring a large building complex as a potential administrative centre. Pottery is the main, but not only evidence for contacts to Minoan Crete and the Cyclades. Mycenaean pottery makes its appearance in the first stages of the Late Bronze Age, while Aiginetan Matt-Painted, bichrome-painted pottery and kitchenwares are widely distributed in the Aegean. Only by LH IIIA had this picture changed: Mycenaean pottery styles and related forming techniques now dominated the ceramic assemblage. Mainly Aiginetan cooking pots continued to be produced and exported in noteworthy numbers during the Mycenaean Palatial and early Postpalatial period. Almost symbolically, a potter’s kiln had taken the place of the monumental building complex.

### General Aspects

The production and consumption of pottery forms one of the key topics in the study of the MH/LH transition and early Mycenaean period. There are marked differences between the regions of the Peloponnese in terms of MH pottery production and consumption, and one would assume that they followed different trajectories to becoming Mycenaean (Dickinson). However, some general trends can be observed in the increasing preference for light-coloured wares, the continuation of the traditional shapes of kantharoi and stemmed goblets as well as the production of small shapes such as cups and small jugs. Minoanising pottery appears in varying quantities in the southern and northeastern Peloponnese including lustrous decorated wares. Within the context of fine Minoanising pottery, the evolution of the Mycenaean decorated wares took place, most probably in the Argolid from where it spread to Lakonia and Messenia. There seems to be no trace of an independent or parallel LH I development.<sup>30</sup> The patterns of Mycenaean decorated pottery started to follow almost entirely Minoan traditions, although there is some variation in the selection of the motifs. LH I pottery, especially cups, travelled as far as the northern, southern and eastern Aegean and to the Gulf of Naples in the west. Stylistic innovation seems to have emanated from the Argolid for the greater part of the existence of the Mycenaean ceramic style.

Slightly earlier and contemporary with the LH I pottery style, polychrome decoration was a very popular, although comparatively short-lived feature of the fine ware pottery production on the Greek mainland and the adjacent islands. Several different regions from southern Thessaly to Boiotia, Aigina, and the Cycladic Islands (Keos, Melos, Thera) are the origin of more or less widely distributed classes of bichrome matt-painted pottery (Lindblom – Rutter). When the corresponding classes of Cycladic origin experienced their decline, Aiginetan Bichrome was becoming popular throughout the central Aegean and was widely exported to the northeastern Peloponnese,

<sup>30</sup> Cf. however, Lindblom et al. 2015.

central Greece and the Cyclades during LH I. It is different in several respects from the contemporaneous Boiotian Bichrome, which was produced in a number of places in central Greece and encompassed a complete tableware assemblage rather than the much narrower subset of shapes characterising Aiginetan Bichrome. At the same time there were also other polychrome ceramic classes, including the Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished class, known from sites in the Corinthia, the Argolid and the Saronic Gulf, which is closely related to the Mycenaean ceramic style of LH I in terms of shape and decoration. Local southern Lakonian and Messenian classes complement the varied picture of bichrome and trichrome pottery production. The restrictive repertoire of decorative patterns leads Michael Lindblom and Jeremy Rutter to the assumption that “(t)here must have been a virtual taboo in Helladic culture on creative artisanal expression that only the craftsmen imported into the service of Mycenae’s shaft-grave elite at the end of the MH period were ultimately able to break up (...)”.

Minoan models had a formative influence on the religious iconography of the early Mycenaean period, when figurative art developed after the essentially aniconic Middle Bronze Age (Weilharter). Religious motifs and symbols were employed in constructing an ideologically founded identity of elites in support of their claims to power. In the Shaft Graves of Mycenae, for example rhyta, ‘sacral knots’ or golden cut-outs in the shape of a tripartite shrine or a double axe framed by the horns of a bull feature among the ritual equipment and religious symbols that originated in Minoan Crete. However, the selection of religious objects and motifs seems to have taken place subsequently under certain criteria, since in some cases the adoption had lasting effects. In this sense, the figurative motifs and cult objects could have been employed in enhancing and promoting already existing cult practices. For example, libations had probably been part of MH religious traditions, but the performance underwent a significant transformation as specialised vessels (rhyta) of sometimes costly materials added the dimension of symbolic display. The continuous production of such rhyta documents in an exemplary manner the long-lasting effects of the encounter between the Minoan and Mycenaean cultural worlds. The adoption of cult implements and also of figurative illustrations by Mycenaean mainlanders seems to have been rather selective and primarily guided by their own religious concepts and ideas.

In the formative period of the Mycenaean culture, tombs also underwent a significant transformation, and many papers in this volume highlight the experimental character of new architectural tomb types. The tholos and chamber tombs are the most prominent among the new emerging types that progressively experience an increase in size and elaboration (Galanakis). Shared cultural codes and craft practices characterised the development of both types and point to multi-scale networks of interaction in the Aegean. They had a similar layout serving multiple burials and creating performative space for ritual action. Chamber tombs could be as monumental as tholoi from LH I onwards, and in LH II–III some outstanding examples in Mycenae and Thebes display impressive long dromoi and dramatic façades achieving a similar impression to that of tholoi. The blending of tholos and chamber tomb architecture becomes manifested in true hybrid constructions as in the case of the Kokla tholos in the Argolid. At least in LH IIA, the social significance of a tomb did not depend on whether it was stone-built or rock-cut. A few monumental rock-cut hybrid tholos-chamber tombs may have been considered as representative as the equally large built tholos. As part of this competition in elaborating tomb architecture the quite distinct type of chamber tomb with rectangular design and pitched or flat roof, long dromos and deep façade emerged, perhaps emulating house architecture. The progressive standardisation in funerary architecture across the Greek mainland reveals the interactive development of common standards and codes of social differentiation and testifies to an ideology based on ranked descent.

## Conclusion

The structuring of social relationships is intimately linked to the environment, because political, economic and social processes take place in space. Social space was highly contested in the early Mycenaean period. We were able to follow the processes that transformed the funerary landscapes and reshaped the social differentiation of the Middle Bronze Age societies of the Greek mainland. The location and the design of the tomb architecture played an important role in the creation of new social structures and a highly visible built environment. The residential architecture is much less well known, but at least we have gained an insight into the concepts of design and form of some places, which already, from the early Mycenaean period, both brought about and reflected the social stratification of society. Minoan influence is present in the design of architecture, early frescoes in Pylos, but especially in the production of pottery, and Kythera's mediating role should not be underestimated. A variety of regional trends characterise the early Late Bronze Age phases, and experimentation with different designs at different locations illustrates the fundamental atmosphere of departure that is equally apparent in the southern, southwestern and northeastern Peloponnese. However, at the same time, intensive contacts prevailed between the individual regions of the Greek mainland, which was already the case in the preceding MH period. Mobility of goods and thus of people (craftsmen, intermarriage, political alliances, etc.) between the regions of the mainland and the Aegean islands (and beyond) was part of the story. From LH I onwards, convergences become tangible in material evidence. These concern the distribution of tholos and chamber tomb, which were innovations created in the southwestern Peloponnese, but also the development of standards in elite burials establishing different categories of rank. The development of the Mycenaean pottery style took place in a pluralistic environment of a multitude of pottery styles probably in the northeastern Peloponnese, from where it spread to the rest of the mainland and even beyond. At the same time, many regional traditions continued to exist for a long time, it was virtually a period of the 'Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen' ("the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous").<sup>31</sup> LH IIIA certainly again marked a turning point, when after the fall of Knossos, palaces were established on the mainland which must have been the driving forces behind the remodelling of the early Mycenaean (social) space in the Aegean.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Bloch 1977.

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## Illustration

Fig. 1: Map of selected early Mycenaean sites mentioned in the present volume (M. Zavadil, B. Eder)