

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI «L'ORIENTALE»
DIPARTIMENTO DI ASIA AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO



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E STORIA ANTICA

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Altezza: h.; ad esempio: ad es.; bibliografia: bibl.; catalogo: cat.; centimetri: cm (senza punto); circa: ca.; citato: cit.; colonna/e: col./coll.; confronta: cfr.; *et alii*: *et al.*; diametro: diam.; fascicolo: fasc.; figura/e: fig./figg.; frammento/i: fr./fr.; grammi: gr.; inventario: inv.; larghezza: largh.; linea/e: l./ll.; lunghezza: lungh.; massimo/a: max.; metri: m (senza punto); millimetri: mm (senza punto); numero/i: n./nn.; pagina/e: p./pp.; professore/professoressa: prof./prof.ssa; ristampa: rist.; secolo: sec.; seguente/i: s./ss.; serie: S.; sotto voce/i: s.v./s.vv.; spessore: spess.; supplemento: suppl.; tavola/e: tav./tavv.; tomba: T.; traduzione italiana: trad. it.; vedi: v.

Non si abbreviano: *idem*, *eadem*, *ibidem*; in corso di stampa: *infra*; Nord, Sud, Est, Ovest (sempre in maiuscolo); nota/e; *non vidi*; *supra*.

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MORTUARY PRACTICES IN EARLY IRON AGE AEGEAN FAMILY RITUALS AND COMMUNAL RITES*

Nota Kourou

Honouring the dead by means of the proper rites and through the socially accepted channels (*τὰ νομιζόμενα*) has been a common and necessary practice all over ancient Greece, even though burial traditions may vary widely at places. The funerary rituals¹, i.e. practices and ceremonies that take place from the moment that a person dies until the corpse is deposited in the tomb, had not much regional variation². But rites and rituals following the interment, which are here dubbed mortuary practices to distinguish them from the funerary rituals that preceded the burial, present a considerable variation not only from one area to the other, but also from one period of time to the next. They cover a wide range of practices starting with the marking of the grave and continue with purification rites, commemorative meals and ceremonies hosted by the family or by the community³.

Mortuary practices performed by the close relatives for a recently deceased person are family ritu-

als: they have a private and personal character as they are directed to a particular individual, now dead. They maintain a strong cultic aspect as they are intended to honour and appease the dead relative, but they also retain a social facet aimed at demonstrating family status⁴. Mortuary tributes carried out by the community are communal rites: these normally are addressed not to a recently departed person, but to the ancestors in general (ancestral cult⁵) or to a significant ancestor identified as hero (heroic cult⁶). This technical distinction between family rituals and communal mortuary rites aside, the main intent is the same, i.e. to pay tribute and appease the dead by bringing gifts to the grave in a ceremonial way and to purify the area from the evil demons, so as to restore the cyclical rhythm of death and regeneration/life.

Funerary rituals and “grave cult”, as mortuary rites are usually called, have been much discussed, but the focus so far has been on mainland Greece and mainly Attica. By offering an overview of the less well known mortuary practices in the EIA Aegean, this paper traces the transition from family rituals to communal rites and ancestral cult, based on current archaeological evidence from the Cyclades, Euboea and some other EIA coastal sites in the Aegean.

* This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the University of Naples, “L’Orientale”, on the invitation of Prof. Matteo D’Acunto. An earlier version of it was given at a Doktoranden Kolloquium in the German Archaeological Institute at Athens organized by its director, Prof. Katja Sporn. I am most grateful to both colleagues for giving me the opportunity to focus on this subject.

¹ Cfr. Andronikos 1968; Kurtz - Boardman 1971; Humphreys 1980; Sourvinou-Inwood 1983 and 1995; Garland 1985; Morris 1987 and 1992; Whitley 1997; Johnston 1999, pp. 36-81; d’Agostino 2000; Whitley 2001, pp. 90-98; Vlachou 2012; Alexandridou 2016.

² Though, it was Athenian vase painting of the late 8th cent. primarily that captured some of the rituals, mainly the prothesis and ekphora, cfr. Ahlberg 1971; Sourvinou-Inwood 1983, pp. 39-43; Hiller 2006.

³ Several celebrations, like the Genesia or Anthesteria, that commemorated the ancestors are known cfr. Kurtz - Boardman 1971, p. 147.

⁴ Cfr. Johnston 1999, p. 38 “the living might bring offerings to the dead not out of affection, but rather in fear that they would cause harm if not appeased”.

⁵ Cfr. Coldstream 1976; Hägg 1983 and 1999; Calligas 1988; Lambrinoudakis 1988; Morris 1988; Antonaccio 1993; 1994 and 1995; Kourou 2015, 92-100.

⁶ Identification of a heroic cult or its distinction from ancestral is a complex issue, especially if the hero to whom the cult is addressed is not identified today, cfr. Snodgrass 1982; 1994; Whitley 1988 and 1994; Deoudi 1999; Mazarakis Ainian 1999 and 2004; Ekroth 2002.

Family care for the recently dead

Following the interment of the dead, mortuary practices start with the purification of the grave with the use of fire and continue with a meal, offered back at the dead person's house. The marking of the grave soon afterwards concludes the primary obligations to the dead, though relatives later continue to pay tribute to the dead person with more ceremonies at regular intervals (*Tà τρίτα, τὰ ἔνατα, τὰ ἐτήσια*).

Marking the grave

Marking the grave has long been a highly symbolic act in the ancient Greek world, not only because the marker functioned as an indicator of the underlying tomb, but chiefly because it operated as an honourable and respectful declaration to the deceased's social persona⁷. In EIA Aegean islands, however, this was a simple and modest operation: normally a simple stone or a boulder would play the role of a marker. No decorated stelai are known earlier than the 7th cent. in the Cyclades: until then stones or boulders are the commonest grave markers. Roughly hewn or unprocessed stones serving as markers remain in use, especially in the Cyclades, until late in the Classical period (Fig. 1).

Another common kind of marker was a small pile of soil or stones forming a low tumulus over the grave. In Homer, the proper way of marking the grave and honouring the dead was the use of both, a stele and a tumulus⁸: this double signification of the tomb occurs frequently in the Cyclades. Larger tumuli covering more than one tomb, which are common in EIA Thessaly, Macedonia and a few other sites on the Mainland including Attica⁹, are found at Tsiaklario on Naxos, but they represent an extremely rare practice in the islands¹⁰.

In the EIA, the marking of the grave with a large

vase was equally unusual outside Athens. The case of a Mycenaean hydria used as a marker over a LPG grave at Grotta on Naxos is an isolated incident: it carries a particular symbolism, related to the use of heirlooms in a developing society trying to express a concept of continuity and status¹¹. Nonetheless, large Geometric vases found intact in cemetery areas, and out of context, imply that possibly the practice of marking a grave with a vase was not entirely alien in the Cyclades after all¹².

Purification rituals

Purification of the grave was a most important ritual in the EIA, meant to drive away evil demons and pollution associated with death and burial¹³. The first purification ceremony was conducted immediately after the interment, by lighting a fire over the tomb. In this ceremony offerings were thrown into the fire. Fragments of half-burnt vases amid traces of fire over the graves survive in most cemeteries; they attest to the frequency and popularity of the practice in the islands. According to written sources purification was extended to the mourners themselves, who on their return to the house of the dead person purified themselves with water kept in a vase that stood outside the door of the house¹⁴.

Later purification ceremonies held periodically were meant to avert the bad spirits and any evil ancestral ghost, which might bring about pollution (*μίασμα*) to the living relatives¹⁵. They were also performed with the use of fire, now lit in a separate pyre pit that was dug for this purpose inside the cemetery by the grave. Pyre pits for purification ceremonies outside a burial place hardly ever occur in the Cyclades: the case of a cluster of pyre pits at Xobourgo on Tenos presents rather elements of

⁷ Cfr. Kurtz - Boardman 1971, pp. 218-220; Vlachou 2012, p. 378; for an association between a grave marker and the high social status of the deceased, cfr. Morris 1987, p. 151.

⁸ *Il.*, Π 457 and 675: “τύμβω τε, στήλῃ τε- τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων”.

⁹ Cfr. Andronikos 1968, pp. 107-114. For recent finds at Alos, cfr. Malakasioti-Mousioni 2004; for Attica, cfr. Smithson 1961 (Nea Ionia).

¹⁰ Cfr. Coldstream 1977, p. 92; Zapheirou 1983 and 2008-2009; Charalambidou 2010-2012.

¹¹ Cfr. Lambrinoudakis 1985 and 1988, p. 239, fig. 9; Kourou 2015, pp. 86-87.

¹² Cfr. e.g. the large MG amphora from Grotta, Naxos, known as the Kontoleon amphora, Kourou 1999, pls. 25 and 56-59.

¹³ Cfr. for purification rites, Sourvinou-Inwood 1983, p. 38; Parker 1983, pp. 33-39; Paoletti 2004.

¹⁴ Kurtz - Boardman 1971, pp. 149-150. For *chthonia loutra*, i.e. washing the dead body before burial, cfr. Andronikos 1968, pp. 2-6; Diehl 1964, pp. 235-236; Kourou 2011a; Alexandridou 2014, p. 25.

¹⁵ Cfr. Johnston 1999, pp. 46-63 (μιαρός).



Fig. 1 - Xobourgo: Part of the Classical cemetery with simple stone markers (a) and pyre pits (b) amid the graves.

communal practices¹⁶. Beyond this isolated case, purification rites in the Cyclades employing pyre pits by the grave are attested until much later times, such as for instance in the Classical cemetery of Tenos, in which well-formed examples were set among the graves (Fig. 1).

A characteristic EIA example of a purification pit inside a burial ground has been excavated at Naxos in the burial ground of Metropolis, near Grotta. The grave (grave II, 1984)¹⁷, a simple PG shaft dug into the soft soil and marked by a huge granite bolder, was enclosed by a low stone kerb, clearly designating the area as a private plot. The grave had been purified by fire immediately after the interment, as is suggested by the traces of fire over it. But next to the grave and inside the enclosure wall, a pyre pit had been dug. Repeated layers of fire having been lit inside this pit indicate that its use continued, evidently at regular intervals, for some time. This PG grave plot encapsulates the en-

tire social code of burial practice inside an enclosure wall: the interment, the post-burial purification of the grave and repeated purification rituals in the pyre pit for some time after¹⁸.

Perideipnon and other meals

The first funerary feast took place immediately after the interment, when mourners and relatives having provided the dead with the necessary offerings at the funeral returned home, where a meal (*περίδειπνον*) was provided as a part of the funerary ceremony¹⁹. Later and at regular intervals other mortuary meals would be carried out at the tomb in a ceremony attended by a large part of the local community. The meal paid respect to and commemorated the deceased's life and memory; obliquely it also demonstrated the social position and values of the family. Ample evidence exists for such commemorative ceremonies over the grave where meals were provided. Burnt deposits containing ashes and

¹⁶ Cfr. Kourou 2011b.

¹⁷ Lambrinoudakis 1984, 334, pl. 175a-c.

¹⁸ Cfr. Kourou 2015, pp. 88-89.

¹⁹ Cfr. Kurtz - Boardman 1971, pp. 146-147; Garland 1985, pp. 111-112; Johnston 1999, p. 42.

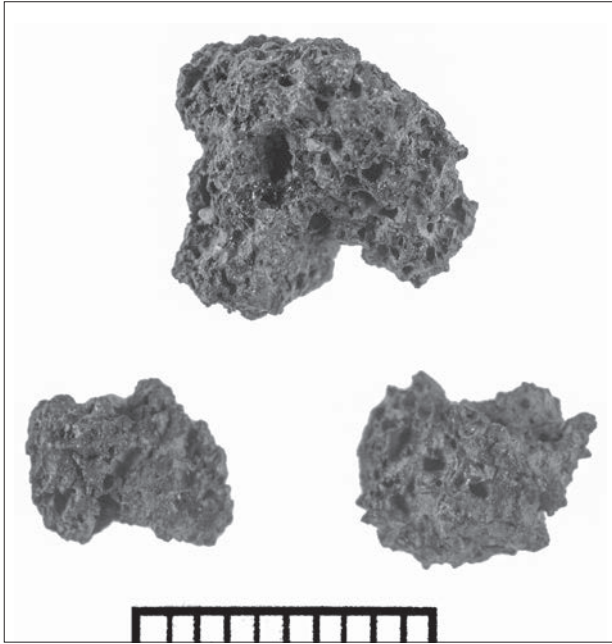


Fig. 2 - Xobourgo: Carbonized figs from the pyre pits.

animal bones are frequently found along with pottery above the grave or in the adjacent pyre pit. Burnt sacrifices were extremely common, according to archaeological and literary evidence.

The fact that later in the Archaic period Solon explicitly outlawed the sacrifice of oxen at the grave suggests that by then this was not an uncommon custom, at least for certain classes of people²⁰. According to archaeological evidence, however, burnt sacrifices in mortuary practices involved much smaller animals, such as chicken or small goats. At Tenos, Xobourgo, the bones found in or above the pyre pits were mostly of goats, although chicken and a kind of wild deer were well represented²¹.

Periodic Food offerings: Fruits, cereals and other products of the earth

Offerings used in the periodic purification rites and found above graves or in the pyre pits amid traces of charcoal and ashes consist mainly of broken vases and animal bones. But fruits, cereals and various kinds of foodstuffs are also occasionally identified²². For instance at Xobourgo on Tenos among the ashes and charcoal of a pyre pit, figs



Fig. 3 - Xobourgo: Sea shells of the murex trunculus species found by an offering table.

(Fig. 2) and raisins were found, while some intact vases excavated above a nearby pyre pit contained barley²³. Models of fruits in clay, mainly of pomegranates, as substitutes for the real product are common offerings in cemeteries in the Geometric period²⁴, while later in the art of Classical Greece, pomegranates and other fruits set in a richly decorated *kanoun* are represented, mainly on white lekythoi, where relatives are shown bringing offerings to the grave²⁵. The repertoire of food offerings also includes sea shells of the edible *murex trunculus* species (Fig. 3)²⁶.

Cicero (de leg. II 59 and 64) records the deposition of fruits at the grave on the third day after the burial as an old custom going back to the time of Cecrops²⁷. The offering of cereals and fruits or flowers at the grave may have had an underlying

²⁰ Cfr. Plutarch, *Solon*, 21.

²¹ Cfr. Trantalidou 2011, 1064.

²² Cfr. Andronikos 1968, pp. 91-93.

²³ Cfr. Kourou 2013, p. 89.

²⁴ Cfr. Kourou 1987; Zosi 2002-2003.

²⁵ Cfr. e.g. Stampolidis - Oikonomou 2014, p. 119, n. 32 (Chr. Avronidaki)

²⁶ Cfr. Kourou 2013, p. 92, fig. 80.

²⁷ Cfr. Kurtz - Boardman 1971, p. 145.

chthonic character in that such were products of the land; they were presented by the living to the dead as a means of winning their favour²⁸. Figs, having a cleansing quality, may have been symbolically identified with a purification value, which could explain their frequency both in funerary and mortuary ceremonies²⁹. But they may also have been simply meant as gifts to the dead person, something to bestow a good quality of life in the Underworld. Whether the vases were offered empty, and thus in a symbolic way, or for their actual content is not easy to say: evidently both took place as there is archaeological evidence and written sources for vases with real foodstuff deposited in the grave³⁰ or later in the pyre pit. Beliefs in an existence in the Underworld certainly led people to present real things, to meet the needs of the dead person³¹.

Periodic Libations

Libations (*χοαί*) in the cemeteries played the same role as did food offerings, as they were used either for purification or addressed to the dead to assure them a decent future³². Various substances have been used for libations, but the most common were wine, honey and olive oil. The ritual offering of wine and oil is well recorded in Homer, with Achilles making a wine libation at the funeral of Patroclus (*Il.* Ψ 218-222), as well as placing vases with honey and oil on the funeral pyre (*Il.* Ψ 170). Wine and oil are mentioned as the necessary liquids for libation in a late 5th cent. inscription from Ioulis at Keos, which describes the current funerary rules³³.

Residues of liquids are frequently traced in cemeteries, inside or above the graves or the pyre pits. Libations were normally performed above or by the

grave³⁴. In the archaeological record there exist instances that imply or indicate more directly that attempts were made to direct the liquid to the interior of the grave. For example, at Asine in the Karmaniola plot, a coarse jug given a hole in its base was found exactly positioned above a tomb³⁵. Another good example where libations were carried straight to the ash urn has been excavated at the Geometric cemetery of Eltyna in Crete. One of the Eltyna tombs, tomb 7, consisted of two superimposed pits: a bottle-shaped lower one containing the ash urn and the grave goods, and the upper one, which served as a receptacle for liquid offerings³⁶. The floor of the upper pit was covered by a slab, under which a rhyton strainer was “adjusted to the mouth of the burial pit below and into the collar neck of the ash urn, whereby liquids being poured in the upper pit soaked gradually through and into the urn and the bones of the deceased”³⁷. This tomb represents in the clearest possible way the variability in libation practices, which were at times customized to fit the personality of the dead or accommodate local beliefs in the Underworld and chthonic cult³⁸.

Chthonic rituals over a tomb

As the dead are perceived to have a further life in the Underworld, mortuary rituals are related to chthonic cult by definition. In the historical period chthonic rites were addressed not only to chthonic deities, but also to the dead who were considered to be beneath the earth³⁹. They served as a kind of magic to guarantee the welfare of the dead in the underworld by sending away the evil demon; thus chthonic rituals usually include breaking and destruction⁴⁰. But they were also meant to evoke the fertility and fecundity of the earth. For this latter

²⁸ Cfr. Kurtz - Boardman 1971, p. 143; Johnston 1999, p. 43.

²⁹ For carbonized figs from an EG grave in the Athenian Agora, cfr. Young 1949, p. 282, pl. 66.4.

³⁰ For organic materials chemically identified in vases found in Geometric graves at Eleusis, cfr. Skias 1898, p. 100, n. 1.

³¹ This practice had started already during the funerary rituals. For instance, a pair of clay boots in a young girl's grave were aimed to help her have an easy walk, while a toy model in a child's burial was to make its life easier, while vases deposited in a grave helped the deceased in drinking and eating, even symbolically (cfr. Kourou 2015, pp. 100-101).

³² Cfr. Luk., de fun. 9: “Αἱ ψυχαὶ τρέφονται ταῖς χοαῖς”

³³ Cfr. Kurtz - Boardman 1971, p. 200.

³⁴ Cfr. in Attica the large pierced Geometric vases serving as markers; later the trench-and-hole practice was designed to cover this necessity of facilitating libations and offerings to the dead. For the trench-and-hole practice, Alexandridou 2015, with previous bibliography.

³⁵ Wells 1983, pp. 4.1, 24

³⁶ Cfr. For the trench-and-hole practice, Alexandridou 2015, with previous bibliography.

³⁷ Rethemiotakis-Egglezou 2010, pp. 52, 191, pl. 6.

³⁸ For chthonic cult, cfr. Stengel 1883 (still important for literary sources).

³⁹ Cfr. Burkert 2000, pp. 194-199.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Papasavvas 2017 (with further bibliography on use and meaning of fragmentation).

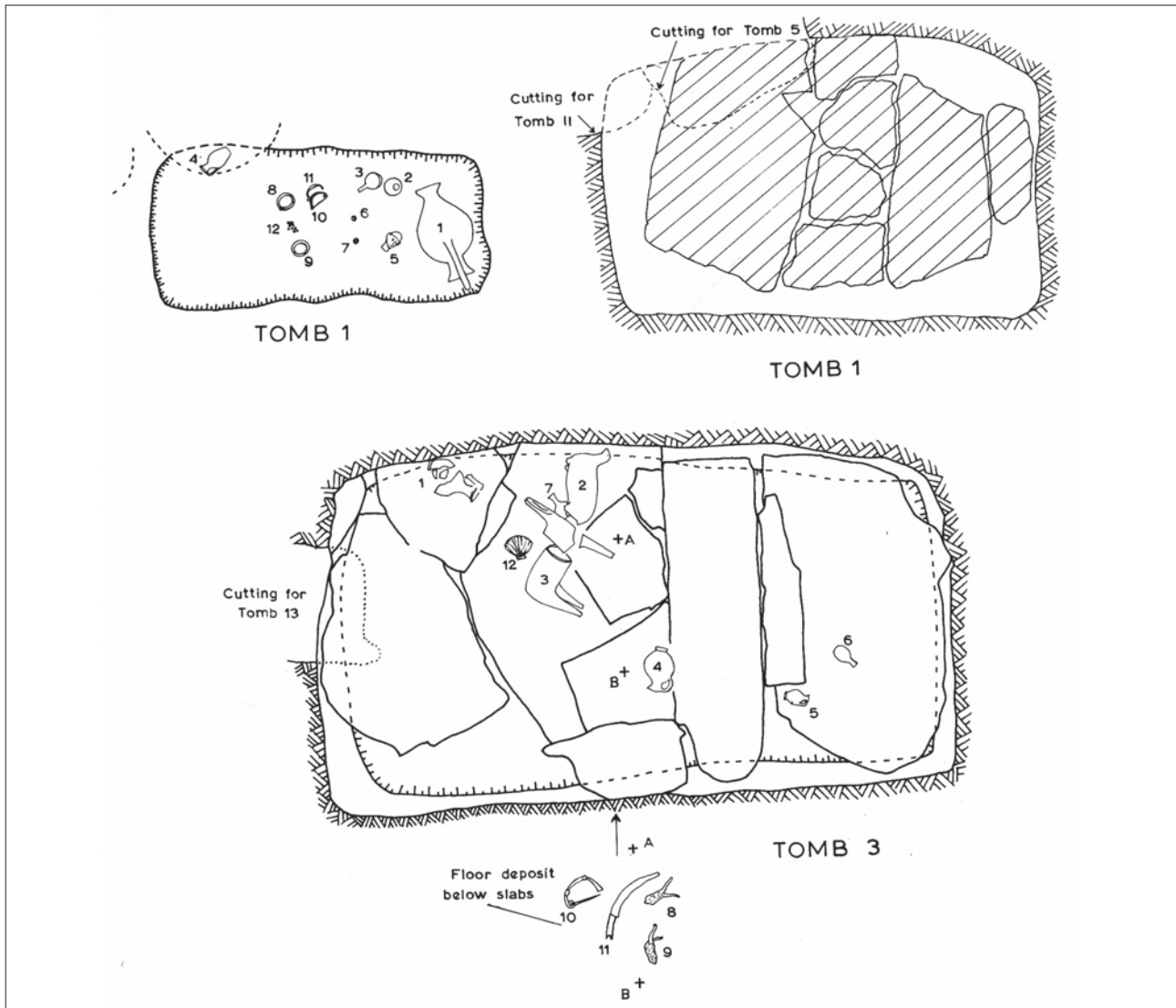


Fig. 4 - Lefkandi, Toumba cemetery, T1 with the centaur's head (5) among the grave goods and T3 with the centaur's body (3) amid the offerings on the cover slabs. (After Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1979, pl.157).

reason chthonic rites were sometimes integrated into the cult of a celestial deity, such as Demeter, who was associated with the fertility and prosperity of the earth. But establishing a clear distinction between a chthonic and a mortuary rite on archaeological evidence remains a matter of interpretation.

A distinctive example of a mortuary ritual that was probably performed as a chthonic rite occurs in the Toumba cemetery at Lefkandi: it involves two shaft tombs, tomb T1 and T3 (Fig. 4), dating to LPG/Sub-PGI, i.e. ca. 900 BC. Each of these neighbouring tombs, separated by some 3m, contained a part of a large, clay centaur figurine made on the wheel, which is the earliest figure of a Greek cen-

taur⁴¹. The head of this large figurine, evidently decapitated in some ritual, was placed in tomb T1, while the centaur's body lay in tomb T3. The head of the centaur had been deposited on the pebble floor of tomb T1, along with the other grave goods⁴², which included four vases and a goodly amount of jewellery in gold, faience and glass, and also in bronze⁴³. The only 'strange' thing in this richly furnished PG tomb was the decapitated head of the centaur figurine. The body of the same figurine was

⁴¹ Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1980, pls. 251-252; Cfr. also, Caruso 2004 (with bibliography).

⁴² Cfr. Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1980, p. 168, pl. 157.

⁴³ Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1980, pl. 216.

found on the cover slabs of tomb T3⁴⁴. This was another cist grave, but with only few grave goods inside on its pebble floor: some bone fragments, two small fragments of gold attachments⁴⁵ and an iron knife with an ivory handle secured by three bronze rivets⁴⁶. However on the limestone slabs covering the tomb along with the centaur's body had been deposited several other offerings, which included five small *lekythoi*⁴⁷, a large terracotta animal rhyton⁴⁸ and a sea shell⁴⁹. Neither of the two graves had been disturbed. Obviously then the centaur figurine was decapitated in a ceremony in which an animal rhyton had also been used. The iron knife with ivory handle in tomb T3 is a rare and valuable object, which Themelis explained as a sacrificial knife that was used in a chthonian rite that had taken place for both tombs at the same time⁵⁰. Deliberately beheading the centaur figurine and burying its head in tomb T1, while depositing its body on the cover slabs of tomb T3, is not a simple mortuary practice. It is rather a chthonic rite with a symbolic significance intended to consecrate the graves⁵¹, which were considered of special importance and so received a form of chthonic rite that involved the symbolic decapitation of the large centaur figurine and the deposition of a rhyton and other offerings over the cover plaques of tomb T3.

Rites explained as chthonic are frequently associated with "empty tombs"⁵². The term is used to define either graves found vacant and entirely devoid of finds or tombs without skeletal remains or ashes, but containing a few offerings and/or animal bones. Both kinds of empty tombs are not uncommon in the Early Iron Age: their interpretation varies from true cenotaphs, to exhumation practices or from the acidity of the soil resulting in the utter decomposition of bones⁵³. There has been an attempt

to explain those tombs at Lefkandi containing only few grave offerings and no skeletal remains as originally containing a human skeleton because the "juxtaposition (of the finds) was such that they seem to echo the outline of the human forms which in life they had decked"⁵⁴. Yet tombs T1 and T3 are characterized as "a puzzling complex" and the finds in tomb T3 especially "the large iron knife does not lend itself to close interpretation"⁵⁵. The association of these two tombs with a chthonic rite, however, gives another perspective to them and to "empty tombs" in general.

A more eloquent picture of "empty tombs" of both classes has been recovered at the site of Viglatouri in Euboea, identified as the ancient Kyme by the excavator⁵⁶. At the centre of this densely built-up site is an oval building, of the LG period: it is set above a series of earlier constructions that reach down to Mycenaean times⁵⁷. The floor of the oval building was above "a layer of trodden earth that rested on a pavement, which sealed a group of empty cists"⁵⁸. Fragments of craters and cups, scattered all over the area amid animal bones, imply feasting and rituals that authorize the interpretation of the oval building by the excavator as a cultic structure, a heroon⁵⁹. In this evidently sacred mortuary area, at a lower level than the oval building and spreading a good way north of it, is to be found a number of "empty cists", ranging in date from the PG to the MG periods. In one of the cists, no. 7, lower than the oval building, the custom recognized as chthonic at Lefkandi tomb T3 is repeated: the cist was found empty of skeletal remains but contained a few animal bones, while on the cover slabs were a lot of offerings, mostly MG pottery⁶⁰. Some other cists "at the east curve of the building"⁶¹ were found empty of human skeletal remains, but contained animal bones and offerings, mostly MG cups and cra-

⁴⁴ Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1980, pl. 201d.

⁴⁵ Themelis 1980, pp. 169-170, pls. 217e and 232e.

⁴⁶ Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1980, pl. 217d.

⁴⁷ Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1980, pl. 168.

⁴⁸ Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1980, pls. 169 and 253.

⁴⁹ Popham - Sackett - Themelis 1980, pl. 201d.

⁵⁰ Themelis 1980, p. 215.

⁵¹ Themelis 1980 explains the centaur as possibly symbolizing a death demon, while Caruso 2004, gives a different explanation, though he still recognises it as a chthonic rite.

⁵² Cfr. Kourou 2015, p. 96.

⁵³ Cfr. Themelis 1980, pp. 211-212; Catling 1985; Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 67.

⁵⁴ Catling 1985, p. 23.

⁵⁵ Catling 1985, p. 21.

⁵⁶ For the site of Viglatouri, cfr. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1984 and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998.

⁵⁷ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, pp. 61-68, figs. 4, 30.

⁵⁸ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 65.

⁵⁹ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, pp. 61-67, fig. 4.

⁶⁰ Cfr. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 66, fig. 30.7 and figs. 17, 33.3, 36.2, 38.4.

⁶¹ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 66, fig. 30, possibly nn. 1 and 5 (not specified).

ters and a few metal objects, including knives and a double axe⁶². For some graves a deeper pit “was dug in the MG period to place the cist in it”⁶³.

The deposition of offerings on the cover slabs, or in the pit by the “empty grave” at Viglatouri, is not a usual practice, but rather an exceptional ritual: evidently it was intended to honour a special dead person, who was possibly exhumed, or had been ‘buried in absentia’ (e.g. for someone drowned at sea or having been killed/died away from home). The ritual was meant to sanctify the grave. The animal bones suggest that a ritual feasting occurred on the spot; occasionally the bones left were collected afterwards and deposited in the grave cist⁶⁴. A quantity of PG pottery from the area, including intact vases⁶⁵, implies that possibly some of the graves belonged to that period. But the date of the rituals involving the goods placed on the cover slabs of the graves or in the adjacent pits is clearly defined by the pottery to the MG period⁶⁶. The rituals performed over the cover slabs of the graves or in the adjacent pit must have been conducted for the sake of an individual, presumably the one lying, really or virtually, in the tomb below. Therefore the deposition of offerings over an empty tomb belongs to rituals performed by the family, not the community. Perhaps for this reason the small burial ground with some empty graves at Viglatouri was covered by a layer of trodden earth and the site marked by an unworked stone, acting as a grave marker in the cemetery area⁶⁷.

Communal Rites

Communal mortuary rites are at any time or place difficult to identify, much more so in EIA Aegean communities with a social structure based on the family or tribe. The only safe criterion for their recognition lies in a long period of time intervening



Fig. 5 - Xobourgo: Pyre pit dug on bedrock (a) with a stone tumulus (b) lying below the later Archaic wall (c)

between the burial and the installation of the cult. Thus offerings at cultic platforms over much earlier graves make sense only when viewed as communal practices, while offerings and ceremonies over the cover slabs of an empty grave are better understood as a form of chthonic rite carried out by relatives at the time of committal, people still with emotional connection and lasting concern for the dead.

Cult activity performed outside Mycenaean graves⁶⁸ or in relation to some significant buildings⁶⁹, as known on the Mainland, has not been identified in the islands in EIA contexts. Instead two distinct kinds of communal mortuary practices are attested at the small islands and coastal sites of the Aegean: one performed on a circular, or more rarely rectangular or oval, platform made of pebbles/stones and clay over earlier graves and the other in pyre pits set inside an enclosure wall. Rites performed on cultic platforms are unanimously recognized as communal “ancestral cult”, but the character of the rituals at pyre pits is frequently uncertain. The sort of communal cult in the small EIA Aegean societies is not a public affair, but one performed by the tribal community (φυλετική κοινωνία). In these circumstances an enclosure wall around an assemblage of pyres implies a collective approach to the

⁶² For the MG pottery, cfr. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, figs. 33, 35-36. For the metal objects, cfr. figs 32.3, 44-47.

⁶³ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 66.

⁶⁴ Cfr. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 66.

⁶⁵ For the PG pottery, cfr. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, pp. 78-79, fig. 34.1 and 3.

⁶⁶ Cfr. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 65 for cist 6 (fig. 30.6) and p. 66 for cist 7 (fig. 30.7).

⁶⁷ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 68, fig. 19.

⁶⁸ Cfr. Blegen 1937.

⁶⁹ Cfr. e.g. Mazarakis Ainian 1999, 16.



Fig. 6 - Xobourgo: Stone tumulus (a), offering table (b) and vases with offerings (c) over a pyre pit.

cult and points to a tribe rather than to a single small family.

Rituals at pyre pits inside an enclosure wall

The practice of surrounding pyre pits by enclosure walls, however, is not common. Pyre pits are normally located inside a cemetery and amid graves, because they serve primarily as loci for family rituals for the recently dead. The case of a pyre pit beside a grave that had its own enclosure wall at Naxos indicates both the aristocratic mentality of the dead person's relatives, who wanted to make the burial stand out by setting it inside an enclosure, and also, in positioning a pyre pit inside the walls, their desire to perform the necessary purification practices⁷⁰. A grouping of pyre pits set inside an enclosure wall, however, tells a different story: here the physical separation transforms the enclosed area with its pits into a species of mortuary shrine adapted more to communal use than suited to a tribal society's needs.

A very distinctive case of pyre pits inside an enclosure wall has been revealed at Xobourgo on Tenos, on a small terrace just outside the settlement wall. The pits were cut into the bedrock in three clusters, with each cluster enclosed by a low, stone boundary. Unlike ordinary pits spread amid graves in a cemetery, the Xobourgo pyre pits were treated almost in the same way as tombs. A small tumulus of stones or earth was set above them (Fig. 5), a flat stone evidently used as a table of offerings was set by them and sometimes the pyre pit itself was marked by a stone marker. Besides ashes and charcoal, remnants of sacrificial rituals in the pyre pits include animal bones, pottery sherds, loom-weights, small pebbles, metal objects such as knives or fibulae, but also various kinds of foodstuffs (such as fruits, mostly figs and grapes, or olives and barley). The fire lit in the pit was extinguished by throwing into it small stones that eventually formed the small tumulus over it. A large coloured pebble constantly found among the stones of the small tumuli was apparently an integral part of the ritual, perhaps representing the final sealing of the pit. Lat-

⁷⁰ Grave II 1984 at the Metropolis burial ground, cfr. above n. 16.



Fig. 7 - Xobourgo: Two adjacent pyre pits linked with a hollow channel.

er new offerings, including vases with foodstuffs, were deposited above the pyre pit at the offering table (Fig. 6).

The presence of some double pyre pits, i.e. adjacent pits linked by a short and shallow channel (Fig. 7), or triple (Fig. 8), may perhaps be explained as designed to accommodate family obligations to more than one person inside the enclosure: they would authenticate further the communal or rather tribal character of the pyre-pits precinct and the sacred character of the area. Purification ceremonies at these pyre pits were performed then by each family, but inside a tribal mortuary precinct.

Ritual platforms over empty graves

Equally ambiguous is the character of rituals on a platform overlying an empty grave. Normally cultic platforms overlay earlier graves and usually more than one burial. But there are cases where a cultic platform is placed over a single grave, sometimes empty of content. An empty grave, whether so as a result of exhumation or representing a virtual burial, is something more than an ordinary grave;

the platform above it further endorses a more communal character in the rites.

In Euboea, at the site of Viglatouri and in the same burial ground where family rituals were performed on the cover slabs of empty graves, a few more empty graves exist that betray a different mortuary character, one which has more the profile of a communal rite. Cist 8 and pit 6⁷¹ were both found empty; some way above them was a paved circular platform on which animal bones, MG pottery and other offerings were found amid traces of fire. Here, because of the considerable intervening layer of earth between the burials and the platform, the time span between them remains uncertain. It is simply the ritual platform high above the grave that indicates a communal approach rather than that of a simple family ritual. Some uncertainty yet lingers.

A similar kind of ritual involving a small circular platform overlying an empty tomb has been found at Xobourgo on Tenos⁷². It is located on a narrow

⁷¹ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 65, fig. 30.8 (cist 8) and 30.6 (cist 6).

⁷² Cfr. Kourou 2011b, p. 411, fig. 5; 2015, p. 97.

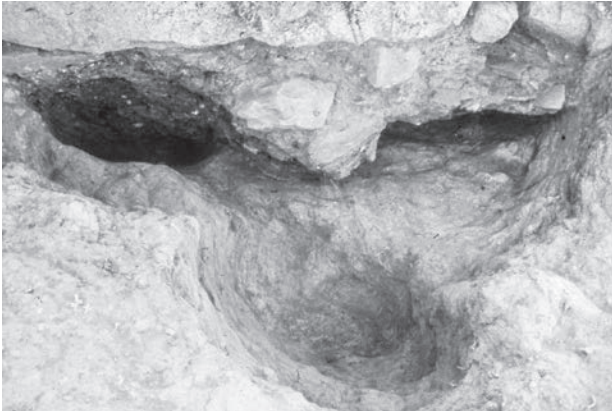


Fig. 8 - Xobourgo: Three linked pyre pits surviving lower than the Archaic wall. Please, use the upper part of the photo only



Fig. 9 - Xobourgo: Pebble and clay platform (a) and boulder (b) overlying an empty shaft filled with sand (c).

terrace, just outside the main gate of the cyclopean wall that fortified the small EIA settlement. The platform is made of pebbles and clay and had traces of fire on its surface. It overlies a large shaft grave (Fig. 9), found empty of contents, but filled with sand that had been brought up the hill from the coast located 6 km away. A huge boulder over the shaft apparently functioned as its marker, while a number of post holes around the platform imply that it was probably enclosed by an oval, evidently wooden structure. The date of the empty tomb below the platform is inferred from a number of LPG sherds found in the area close to the empty shaft grave. Two

iron swords wrapped up together and exposed to fire were found, out of context, by the foundation trench of the later Archaic wall⁷³. With them goes another small cist grave nearby, again found empty; this confirms the originally funerary context of the area, which in turn explains the presence of the empty grave below the pebble platform. The removal of the bones and grave offerings and the subsequent filling of the shaft with sand was part of a purification ritual. These last are attested in a variety of forms. For example, sand had been used to fill vases deposited inside or outside the funerary tumuli at the Tsikalario cemetery⁷⁴. Sand, sea water or pebbles were thought to have had a purifying quality in antiquity: the Xobourgo shaft grave was apparently filled with sand for purification purposes immediately after the removal of its contents. Purity is linked to sanctity: a grave needed to be purified before formal cult practice could occur – in this case performed on the pebble platform as a communal form of ancestral cult.

Ritual platforms over earlier graves

Ritual platforms are not associated only with empty graves; normally they overlay earlier ordinary graves. At Viglatouri a circular “stone structure” and a square stone platform associated with MG pottery were found above some PG graves further north of the oval building, as reported in the detailed presentation of the excavation⁷⁵. Both platforms had traces of fire, animal bones and a large amount of MG pottery, which had been broken on the spot. Mostly skyphoi and craters, that imply ritual dining, while other offerings, such as beads, spindle whorls, a stone grinder or a few metal objects, including a horse bridle, stress further the ceremonial nature of this cultic assemblage⁷⁶. A clay structure situated inside the southern part of the oval building and “consisting of a layer of clay about 1m in diameter” is evidently another cultic platform of this sort, as on it were found traces of

⁷³ Cfr. Kourou 2011b, pp. 401-402, fig. 4.

⁷⁴ Cfr. Zappeiropoulou 2001, pp. 290-292.

⁷⁵ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 68, fig. 30.2 (square platform) and p. 69, fig. 30.3 (circular platform).

⁷⁶ A cist located close to the platforms and containing a large number of animal bones and a bronze bowl has been identified as an eschara related to the same kind of rituals, cfr. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, p. 69, fig. 20.

fire and offerings⁷⁷. These MG cultic platforms overlying PG tombs at Viglatouri indicate a communal cultic approach and rites established long after the burials and thus addressed not to any particular dead person, but to the ancestors in general. Evidently in the MG period they were organized by the families or tribes of the settlement. Later still, with the social and political developments in the LG period, the area was reformed. The old platforms and graveyards were covered, and an oval building was erected above them, taking on the same function as a heroön.

A comparable and well-preserved assemblage of MG ritual platforms above a PG burial ground has been excavated at the site of Metropolis on Naxos⁷⁸. The small platforms were slightly elevated, circular, or occasionally rectangular, in form. The rituals consisted of libations – numbers of pouring vases have been found – and also feasting, as is implied by the animal bones and traces of fire. The platforms evidently had been used several times, as indicated by the repeated repairs and reconstructions of each platform. They were enclosed by a low stone wall, which defined the area used for commemorative rituals in the EG and MG periods. The practice was disrupted in the LG period, when a huge tumulus raised above the platforms covered them entirely⁷⁹. A stone platform over PG graves is reported from Aegina in the Western part of Kolonna (“Zone Südbau-Ostraum, Nordweiterung”), but the available evidence is not enough for a full discussion of this significant platform⁸⁰.

Another impressive cluster of twenty-eight ritual platforms in the open air and covered with a thick layer of black ash has been excavated at Troy⁸¹. They are located outside the fortification walls of Troy VI on the western side of the citadel, set on a high terrace overlying the LBA cemetery and behind the temple of the West sanctuary a little lower on the hillside. This part of the hill was visi-



Fig. 10 - Stone platforms in front of the walls of Troy VI (after Chabot-Aslan 2011, fig. 24).

ble from almost everywhere on the west side⁸². In this prominent position, the platforms were constructed in two rows, parallel to the fortification wall (Fig. 10). The associated finds were drinking vases, mostly cups and craters, but also pouring vessels⁸³. A few ritual objects, like a fenestrated stand⁸⁴, suggest that the platforms were undoubtedly associated with a form of ritual feasting. They date to the late 8th and mostly to the 7th cent. BC, which is exactly the period when cultural traits from eastern and central Aegean were spreading in the area. In that time the North-East Aegean was culturally oriented towards Thrace, but from the end of the 8th cent. elements of Greek styles and ideas started penetrating the area rapidly. The presence of these ritual platforms just outside the walls of Troy and above the Late Bronze Age cemetery indicates an ancestral cult of the sort known from the central Aegean⁸⁵.

On mainland Greece, although burnt deposits with animal bones and Geometric pottery in front of Mycenaean graves attest to a form of tomb cult re-

⁷⁷ Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998, pp. 67-68, fig. 30.11.

⁷⁸ Lambrinoudakis 1988; Antonaccio 1995, pp. 199-207; Kourou 2015, pp. 92-93, fig. 11.

⁷⁹ Lambrinoudakis 1984, p. 339.

⁸⁰ Cfr. Felten *et alii* 2006, 17-19 fig. 13.

⁸¹ Chabot-Aslan 2011, pp. 412-423, figs. 22-24; Basedow 2006 and 2009. Cfr. also, Hägg 1983, pp. 190-191, fig. 2.

⁸² According to Chabot-Aslan 2011, p. 416 they were “aligned to create a visual axis that would have drawn attention to the Late Bronze Age citadel wall behind them”.

⁸³ Chabot-Aslan 2011, pp. 387-425.

⁸⁴ Cfr. Chabot-Aslan 2011, p. 418, fig. 27.

⁸⁵ Cfr. Rose 2008, 414; Chabot-Aslan 2011.

lated to the ancestors at various places⁸⁶, the ritual platform over earlier tombs remains rare. Only a few such platforms in the Argolid are known. The largest, associated with LG pottery, is a circular platform 2m in diameter at Mycenae, which is built on top of a partially collapsed Mycenaean chamber tomb (tomb 222), just south of Grave Circle B⁸⁷. In the cemetery of Barbouna at Asine, three more circular stone platforms with traces of burning are assumed to have played a similar role, although they were not topping earlier tombs. Their mortuary character is assured simply by their position inside a grave plot and their association with a deposit of LG pottery⁸⁸.

On this evidence it seems that the tradition of communal mortuary rites for the ancestors at a ritual platform set over earlier graves is a tradition that starts in the Aegean islands and possibly in Euboea in the PG period. An attempt to link this characteristic form of communal mortuary rite with another type of ritual structure as seen over the shaft grave IV inside Grave Circle A at Mycenae has proved erroneous. The structure was in fact associated with Mycenaean material: thus it is explained as an altar or bothros for liquid offerings and claimed that it “constitutes the earliest evidence of Grave cult in Mycenaean times”⁸⁹. However, the structure, which is now lost, was not a platform⁹⁰. Better related to the EIA platforms is a large Mycenaean stone platform found at the Mycenaean acropolis of Salamis⁹¹. The platform is dated in LH IIIB2-IIIC early and is located by a Mycenaean tumulus, considered as a cenotaph. But until the mortuary character of the tumulus is fully documented this platform cannot be directly linked with later similar structures.

Better evidence for the start and the origin of this EIA mortuary tradition is provided by a mortuary platform excavated not in the open air, but inside a building, the *Heroon* of Lefkandi; the platform was

constructed in MPG/LPG, i.e. at the same time as the building⁹². But this platform was never used, because the Heroon was covered by a tumulus immediately after the burials had taken place. Whether the platform in the Heroon of Lefkandi was constructed for sacrificial rituals to be performed by the chieftain in his lifetime, or afterwards, depends on one's interpretation of the building. It did not retain traces of fire, nor had it any offerings on or around it. Even so, the mortuary character of the platform cannot be doubted, albeit inside a building. In this respect this platform is the earliest known EIA platform overlying burials and set inside a building.

Ritual platforms not related to burials

In the EIA circular platforms made of pebbles or stones and clay occur at various places that had no direct relation with graves⁹³. Some of them are found inside a building, others in the open air related to a building⁹⁴. The function and character of these normally circular platforms (but other forms, such as oval or rectangular, also exist) are not identical and not always clear, although they are mostly considered to have an association with ancestral and chthonic cult⁹⁵.

The earliest platforms known without a direct relation to graves are reported from the Lefkandi settlement (Xeropolis, Region II) and are dated to the EPG period⁹⁶. Some of these platforms were excavated inside a building identified as structure C, while another one was located just outside the building lying close to a long wall identified as city wall. No animal bones or offerings were found on them, but two bull figurines and a fragment of another, possibly belonging to a centaur figure⁹⁷, found in the area, outside the city wall in a rubbish

⁸⁶ Cfr. Blegen 1937; Antonaccio 1995.

⁸⁷ Hägg 1983, 191, n. 14; Antonaccio 1993, pp. 50, 52 and 201. Two or three later examples over Mycenaean chamber tombs in the Argolid, at Prosymna and Deiras, indicate that the practice was carried on further down into the Archaic period, cfr. Antonaccio 1995, p. 201.

⁸⁸ Hägg 1983, p. 190, fig. 1.

⁸⁹ Antonaccio 1993, p. 49.

⁹⁰ Cfr. Strøm 1993.

⁹¹ Cfr. Lolos 2009, 6 fig. 12; 2010, 5 fig. 8.

⁹² Coulton 1993, pp. 51-52, pls. 7 and 8c.

⁹³ For a typology of them, cfr. Kourou 2015, pp. 93-96.

⁹⁴ Cfr. Hägg 1983. Also, Mazarakis Ainian 1999, pp. 16, fig. 3, describing a stone platform above an apsidal PG building (building C).

⁹⁵ A good example of a platform for chthonic cult is a platform at the entrance of the cave sanctuary of Zeus Parnesios on mount Parnes in Attica, which is now destroyed, cfr. Palaiokrassa - Vivliodetis 2015, p. 160, referring to the description of an older excavation report. The cult at this cave sanctuary (identified from graffiti) had several aspects to it, including one of Zeus Chthonios (Palaiokrassa - Vivliodetis 2015, p. 161) to whom evidently the platform belonged.

⁹⁶ Lemos 2010, p. 135.

⁹⁷ Cfr. Lemos 2017, 501.

fill are thought to validate a ritual role for the platforms and consequently a form of communal cult, even though without bunt sacrifices.

Three much later circular stone platforms excavated at Mende-Proasteion in the Chalcidike peninsula are reported to be inside a building (building H), but the description of their location allows of doubt: were they inside the building, or found at a lower and earlier level, perhaps in the open air⁹⁸? No offerings are reported with the platforms and their function remains uncertain. Pottery finds from the site, including a fragment of a clay figure “reminiscent of the famous Lefkandi centaur”⁹⁹, are comparable to Euboean. They are dated by the excavator to the late 8th and 7th cent. BC, which is the time that Mende was officially established as a Euboean colony in the north in the 8th cent. BC. But the site’s contacts with Euboea can be traced back to the PG period¹⁰⁰, which explains the tradition there for platforms, whether they are dated to the PG or the LG periods.

The best known early ritual platform inside a building has been excavated at Nichoria in Messenia¹⁰¹. This well-known platform found in the building called Unit IV-1 is directly associated with sacrificial dining as it had traces of fire (“carbonized material”) on its surface and a large quantity of animal bones and pottery sherds from skyphoi or cups were associated with it. The platform is recognized by the excavators as belonging to the first phase of the building, dated to their “DA II period”, i.e. 975-850 B.C. The building is assumed to be roofed and belonging to a chieftain; thus the platform is usually explained as belonging to a kind of ancestral cult, albeit it is not related to some grave.

Another early stone platform has been found inside a PG apsidal building at Klazomenai (Liman Tepe) on the coast of Asia Minor¹⁰². Nothing was found on the platform to indicate its use. Traces of fire on the floor of the building are explained as due

to fire that destroyed it; they do not seem to have any close association with the platform. The presence of PG trade amphorae of Catling’s type I at the apsidal building of Klazomenai¹⁰³ indicates visitors or traders connected with Central and North Aegean, where such pots, attributed to a source somewhere in coastal Phthiotis¹⁰⁴, were widely circulating. Similarly the platform type looks to the central Aegean for parallels and models. Late Bronze Age pottery from Klazomenai indicates that the site had relations with the Mycenaean world, but the building belongs to the first phase of the Greek establishment in the PG period. Thus the platform can only be associated with rituals related to the founding of the new settlement and to its connections with the Aegean world.

Of the ritual platforms reported from Oropos the most significant for appreciating the role and function of this type of structure is a rectangular platform found inside an oval building (building IA). The platform dates to the early 7th cent. and was “investigated partly on top of the ruined (LG) oval building IA”¹⁰⁵. Ashes, calcined animal bones, smashed vases and a variety of offerings, including figurines, a lamp and a boat model in clay found around the platform form a rich cultic assemblage, which is claimed by the excavator to validate the building as a “heroon”. Another small circular platform outside the building is also recognized by the excavator as related to the same cult¹⁰⁶, while a pebble floor and a few more circular or rectangular structures in the same area are reported as cultic platforms, all suggesting an interesting cluster of ritual establishments related to the buildings¹⁰⁷.

The last ritual platform to be considered here is a small stone platform once thought to have been inside a small archaic temple at Miletos¹⁰⁸. But it finally proved to have been built in LG times, originally in the open-air, higher up and above a tower of the fortification wall; the small building, in which it was enclosed, was a later Archaic addition.

⁹⁸ Cfr. Moschonisioti 1998, pp. 257-258, figs. 3-4 (building H): “A circular stone paved area, 1,80m in diameter, along its western wall was excavated, while two similar constructions stood on the floor, on a level about 30cm deeper than the later find”.

⁹⁹ Snodgrass 1994, p. 90 with n. 14.

¹⁰⁰ Cfr. Moschonisioti 1998, p. 259; Kourou 2012, p. 167.

¹⁰¹ McDonald - Coulson - Rosser 1983, p. 442, pl. 2.27; Hägg 1983, p. 192, fig. 4.

¹⁰² Aytaçlar 2004, p. 19, fig. 3.

¹⁰³ Cfr. Aytaçlar 2004, p. 21, figs. 4-5.

¹⁰⁴ Cfr. Catling 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Mazarakis Ainian 2002, pp. 161-164, fig. 8.2.

¹⁰⁶ Mazarakis Ainian 2002, pp. 161-164, fig. 8.4.

¹⁰⁷ Cfr. Mazarakis Ainian 1996, pls. 15b and 35b; and Mazarakis Ainian 1997, pp. 56-57, pls. 20b (pebble floor) and 27.

¹⁰⁸ Cfr. Mallwitz 1959-1960; Hägg 1983, p. 191, fig. 3.



Fig. 11 - Xobourgo: The eschara and the bench that served ritual ceremonies in LG.

The conclusions from this survey of ritual platforms not directly related to tombs is that they are first attested in the EPG period, or perhaps a little earlier, at Lefkandi and are associated with a significant building and/or a defensive wall. Thus their cultic role should be linked with rituals honouring the past, as suggested by Lemos¹⁰⁹, or perhaps with ceremonies evoking its splendour. At present they go on to be basically found at sites linked with Euboea by tradition (Mende) or possibly by trade (Troy, Klazomenai, Miletos). They represent another distinct tradition of “ancestral cult”, although the platform type may have acted too as a model for later mortuary platforms. In this systematization, however, Nichoria remains an isolated case in every respect. Similar platforms have been reported from Sicily at Megara Hyblaea¹¹⁰, Selinunt¹¹¹ and Himera¹¹², but for the moment their role and function are

uncertain¹¹³. It was basically the coastal and island communities in the Aegean that in the EIA developed the tradition of mortuary ritual platforms inside or outside of cemeteries.

From family to communal rites

Mortuary rites at coastal and island sites in EIA Aegean present a strong individualism, a quality that was probably imposed by the geography of the area that favoured a social system based on family or tribes until late in antiquity. Tradition was powerful, allowing only a very slow pace for change, in turn dependant on and adjusted to social developments. Yet, we can follow the evolution of mortuary rites and their gradual transformation from family to communal rites at three island sites.

In the burial ground of Metropolis at Naxos, the use of ritual platforms established in the EG/MG period above earlier PG graves was discontinued in the LG period¹¹⁴. At Viglatouri in Euboea, similar

¹⁰⁹ Cfr. Lemos 2010, p. 135.

¹¹⁰ Cfr. Gras – Treziny - Broise 2004, 524-526 και 541-543 (Megara Hyblaea).

¹¹¹ Mertens *et alii* 2003.

¹¹² Adriani *et alii* 1970.

¹¹³ Cfr. Guzzo 2013, who identifies them as granaries.

¹¹⁴ Cfr. Lambrinoudakis 1984 and Lambrinoudakis 1988; Kourou 2015, pp. 92-93 (with references)

ritual platforms are established in the MG period over earlier PG graves, but in the LG period they are replaced by an oval building, reasonably explained a *heroon*. At Xobourgo on Tenos, the ritual platform established in the MG period over an empty tomb lies on a narrow terrace, just outside the settlement wall, on which a number of pyre pits arranged in groups inside three enclosure walls were constructed soon afterwards¹¹⁵. But towards the end of the LG period rituals at the pyre pits were discontinued: the area was paved with schist slabs and the pyre pits were sealed. The lay-out of the place changed and ceremonies at the pyre pits gave way to rituals at a large hearth, an *eschara*. A bench was added opposite the *eschara* (Fig. 11), which was serving now more than an individual family or tribe, as is implied by the volume of the huge deposit of sooty earth, embers, animal bones and pottery sherds and other offering remnants at and by the *eschara*. A sacrifice of this scale followed by a large meal implies a communal cult, which, as it was performed at an *eschara*, was evidently one with a chthonic character¹¹⁶.

It is evident in all three sites that the use of the ritual platform over earlier graves is established in the EG or MG period and discontinues in the LG period. Cultic evolution is parallel at these sites, but due to local social and cultural diversity has a different outcome: it discontinues at Naxos, it is renovated with a *heroon* building at Viglatouri and it is sub-

stituted by a chthonic cult at an *eschara* at Xobourgo¹¹⁷. The timing of these changes is not fortuitous but coincides with important social developments. In the MG period travelling, and consequently trade and contact, among Aegean sites increases to a great extent. The larger families or tribes in developing settlements needed to have, or acquire, an ancestral background for standing and social visibility. Thus ancestral cult, performed by the families, is developed, first being centred on a ritual platform over earlier tombs or at pyre pits inside an enclosure wall defining a private area for the family or the tribe. But in the LG period the nature of the settlement shifts towards the new polis system; communal mortuary rituals acquire an even more collective character with a *heroon* or a chthonic cult around an *eschara*. The evolution of family rites in the islands can thus be argued to closely follow major social changes.

Abbreviations

EIA	Early Iron Age
EG	Early Geometric
LG	Late Geometric
MG	Middle Geometric
PG	Protogeometric
SPG	Sub-Protogeometric

¹¹⁵ Cfr. Kourou 2002, pp. 258-261 and Kourou 2011b, pp. 400-403.

¹¹⁶ For the use of the *eschara* in chthonic cults, cfr. Ekroth 2002, pp. 23-54

¹¹⁷ For social diversity in EIA Greece, cfr. Whitley 1991.

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NOTA KOUROU, *Mortuary Practices in Early Iron Age Aegean. Family Rituals and Communal Rites*

This paper attempts to classify and discuss mortuary rituals archeologically documented in Early Iron Age Aegean. The term mortuary is used here to define rituals that take place after the burial. After going over those that represent family care for the recently dead (marking the grave, purification, *perideipnon* and other meals, as well as periodic food offerings and libations to the grave) some other particular and not very common rituals denoting chthonic ceremonies over a tomb are discussed. Communal rites representing rituals put forward by the community over earlier graves attributed to important members of the society come next. They include ceremonies at pyre pits inside an enclosure wall and ritual platforms over earlier and sometimes empty graves and they represent a form of ancestral cult. The paper ends by discussing the transition from such forms of family and ancestral cult to “official” chthonic rites in the LG period.

FERNANDO GILOTTA, *Frammenti di una cerimonia in musica a Gordion*

A fragmentary dinos of Phrygian provenance sheds light on the multifaceted relationships between East Greece and Western Anatolia in the VII cent. B.C., particularly in the field of ‘musical ideology’. References are also made to contemporary homologous evidence from Orientalizing Etruria, with regard to Caere and its most prominent vase painter, the Heptachord P.

CLAUDIO GIARDINO, CESARE D’ANNIBALE, *Pizzica Pantanello (Metaponto): la più antica testimonianza di attività metallurgiche dall’Italia meridionale*

During the 1970’ and 1980’s excavations conducted by the Institute of Classical Archaeology of the University of Texas at Austin, under the direction of Joseph C. Carter, revealed the remnants of a Neolithic/neolithic settlement at the site of Pizzica

Pantanello (two kilometers from Metaponto in Basilicata). The 1983 season focused on the excavation of 25 prehistoric pit features, the only surviving structural manifestations associated with the Neolithic households at Pantanello. The distribution of these pits reveals several concentrations that may infer some form of activity clustering. Although the pits were filled with refuse from the settlement, their initial function based on their contents suggests a connection with storage and industrial activity. Daub samples submitted for radiocarbon analyses returned dates of 4420-4400 and 4250-3700 cal. BC (2 σ).

In concordance with these dates, the ceramic assemblage is indicative of two main periods of occupation; the first represented by red painted *figulina* ceramics typical of the fifth millennium to the beginning of the fourth millennium BC; the final occupation at Pantanello is marked by ceramics of the Macchia a Mare tradition, the earliest expression of the initial stages of the Eneolithic in southern Italy. Of particular interest from this latter phase is the recovery of several vessel fragments displaying exposure to extreme heat, one of which retained traces of molten metal on its rim (Pit D Level 1: n. 161-B). This fragment along with two other overfired ceramic sherds (Pit D, n. 162 and Pit C, layer 1, n. 132) likely ceramic kiln wasters and a green stone flake (Pit E, layer 5, n. 222) that was initially retained to be a corroded copper fragment were subjected to archaeometrical investigations.

The analyses conducted on these fragments included optical microscopy, X-ray fluorescence (XRF), X-ray diffraction (XRD), scanning electron microscope (SEM) associated with energy dispersive spectrometry (EDS). Since Sn values are too low to be recognized by EDS, instead light traces of tin detected by XRF – a very sensitive analytical technique for metallic elements - let suppose the presence of a copper alloy in the molten residues. These analyses ascertained that one of the ceramics, from a conical bowl (n. 161 – B), was indeed a crucible from which copper was poured. This fragment testifies to the beginning of metallurgical activity in the area of Metaponto from the initial stages of the Eneolithic period. The presence of a copper crucible in such an early context offers new insights into the diffusion of metallurgy in the Mediterranean,

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