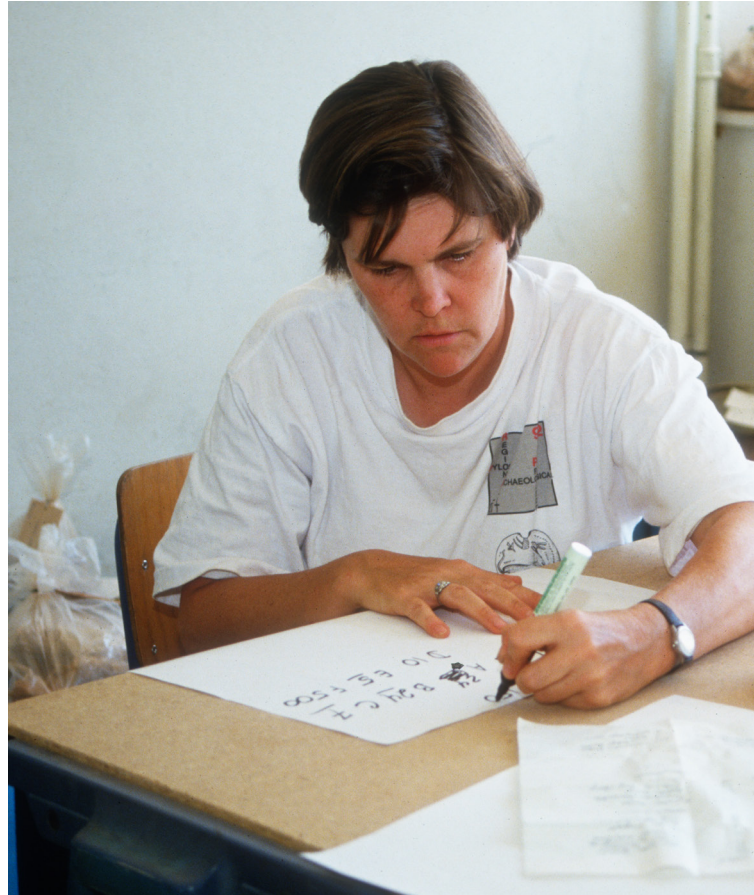


KE-RA-ME-JA

Studies Presented to Cynthia W. Shelmerdine



Cynthia in the Hora School House. Courtesy Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati and the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project.

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edited by

Dimitri Nakassis, Joann Gulizio, and Sarah A. James



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Preface

Dimitri Nakassis, Joann Gulizio, and Sarah A. James

The title of this volume, *ke-ra-me-ja*, is a woman's name that appears only once in the extant Mycenaean documentation, on Knossos Ap 639, a catalog of named women. We chose it because it means "potter" (Κεράμεια, from Greek κέραμος, "potter's clay") and combines two major strands of Cynthia Shelmerdine's many scholarly pursuits: Mycenaean ceramics and Linear B texts. It thereby signals her pioneering use of archaeological and textual data in a sophisticated and integrated way.

Like Cynthia, it is also one of a kind. The intellectual content of the essays presented to her in this volume demonstrate not only that her research has had a wide-ranging influence, but also that it is a model of scholarship to be emulated. The fact that the authors contributed in the first place is a testament to her warm and generous friendship. We hope that the papers in this volume both pay tribute to her past work and prove fruitful to Cynthia in her many continuing endeavors.



Biography of Cynthia W. Shelmerdine

Susan Shelmerdine

Cynthia Shelmerdine credits much of her early interest in archaeology to Emily and Cornelius Vermeule who became neighbors (and fellow dog walkers) during her junior year of high school. She followed this interest to Bryn Mawr College where, when she began Greek in her sophomore year, she realized ancient Greece was her true passion. After graduating with a degree in Greek from Bryn Mawr, she studied for two years at Cambridge University as a Marshall Scholar and began to combine her interests in archaeology and Greek in work on Linear B. From Cambridge, she went on to Harvard University where she earned her Ph.D. in Classical Philology in 1977 with a dissertation that grew out of work she had done on Late Helladic pottery from Nichoria with the University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition during the summers of 1972–1975. This early background attests to her firm belief in taking

an interdisciplinary approach to the study of early Greek history and signals three common threads in her scholarly work: Greek, Linear B, and Mycenaean pottery. Cynthia joined the Department of Classics at the University of Texas in 1977, teaching “all things Greek, from language to archaeology,” serving twice as Department Chair, and becoming the Robert M. Armstrong Centennial Professor of Classics in 2002, before retiring with emerita status in 2008 to continue her travels and her work on Mycenaean Greece. She returned to England in 2009 as a Visiting Associate at Oxford University and Official Visitor at Cambridge University and, in 2011, as Peter Warren Visiting Professor at Bristol University.

In addition to writing a teaching commentary on Thucydides VI and an elementary Greek textbook, Cynthia has published extensively on Pylos and the evidence of the Linear B tablets for

understanding Mycenaean society. Her ability to draw out the big picture from details and data in the tablets is well illustrated in this work, as it is in *The Cambridge Companion to the Aegean Bronze Age* (2008), to which she contributed and also edited. Cynthia has continued to apply her expertise in Mycenaean pottery as a codirector of the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project, in charge of museum operations and Bronze Age ceramics (1991–1996), and again as a ceramics

and historical expert for the Iklaina Archaeological Project (1999–present). Along the way, she has enjoyed sharing her love of ancient Greece and the Aegean Bronze Age with a wide audience as a regular lecturer and tour leader for the Archaeological Institute of America. As this volume suggests, however, it is her interest in and her work with students that she has enjoyed the most and that continues to fuel her passion for bringing Mycenaean society to the light of a new day.



Bibliography of Cynthia W. Shelmerdine

Degrees

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations for periodicals in the reference lists of the chapters follow the conventions of the *American Journal of Archaeology* 111 (2007), pp. 14–34.

A	Akones “mound”	CR	Crete
AR	Arkalochori	DA	Dark Age
ARM	Armeni	dat.	dative
ASCSA	The American School of Classical Studies at Athens	diam.	diameter
ca.	approximately	dim.	dimensions
CAP	Cambridge Amphora Project	EDS	energy dispersive X-ray spectrography
Chem.	chemical group	EH	Early Helladic
CHIC	Corpus Hieroglyphicarum Inscription- um Cretae	EM	Early Minoan
cm	centimeter	EPG	Early Protogeometric
comp.	composite (measurement restored on the basis of one or more overlapping but nonjoining fragments)	est.	estimated
		fem.	feminine
		FM	Furumark motif number
		fr.	fragment
		FS	Furumark shape number

g	grams	MY	Mycenae
GC-MS	gas chromatography-mass spectrometry	Myc.	Mycenae
h.	height	N	Nikitopoulou tomb group (Tourkokivouro)
ha	hectare	no.	number
HARP	Hora Apotheke Reorganization Project	nom.	nominative
HM	Heraklion Museum	pers. comm.	personal communication
Hom.	Homeric/Homer	pers. obs.	personal observation
HT	Hagia Triada	PG	Protogeometric
ICP-MS	inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry	PH	Phaistos
IKAP	Iklaina Archaeological Project	PIXE	particle induced X-ray emission
INAA	instrumental neutron activation analysis	PK	Palaikastro
IO	Juktas	pl.	plural
kg	kilograms	PN	place name
KH	Chania	POR	Poros Herakleiou
km	kilometers	PR	Prassa
KN	Knossos	PRAP	Pylos Regional Archaeological Project
KO	Kophinas	pres.	preserved
L	Lambropoulos/Lakkoules group	PY	Pylos
L.	length	Py/GC-MS	pyrolysis/gas chromatography-mass spectrometry
<i>lat. inf.</i>	<i>latus inferius</i>	RCT	Room of the Chariot Tablets, Knossos
LC	Late Cycladic	rest.	restored (measurement restored despite missing segments of profile)
LD	Lustrous Decorated	RLWM	Red Lustrous Wheelmade
LH	Late Helladic	SEM	scanning electron microscope
LM	Late Minoan	sg.	singular
m	meters	SY	Syme
M	tombs excavated by UMME at Nichoria	T	Tsagdi group
masc.	masculine	TH	Thebes
m asl	meters above sea level	th.	thickness
max.	maximum	TRO	Troy
MC	Middle Cycladic	UMME	University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition
mcg	micrograms	v	verso
MGUA(s)	“Minoan Goddess(es) with Upraised Arms”	V	Veves
MH	Middle Helladic	WAE/ICP or ICP-AES	inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectrometry
ml	milliliters	XRD	X-ray diffraction
MM	Middle Minoan	XRF	X-ray fluorescence
MN	man's name	ZA	Zakros



The Development of the Bronze Age Funerary Landscape of Nichoria

Michael J. Boyd

The site of Nichoria in east central Messenia, discovered and excavated by the University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition (UMME) during the 1960s and 1970s, is one of the few well-published Bronze Age sites in the region, and it has exercised considerable influence on the development of theories concerning the rise of the Pylian kingdom and the role of secondary sites within it. Most critical have been the identification of Nichoria with *ti-mi-to-a-ke-e* by Cynthia Shelmerdine, who was part of the excavation team and published the Late Helladic (LH) IIIA:2–IIIB:2 pottery (Shelmerdine 1981, 1992), and subsequent diachronic analyses of the development of the site and its eventual incorporation within the boundaries of the Pylian state (Bennet 1995, 1999).

Nichoria is located on the western arc of the Gulf of Messenia, about two kilometers inland and on the upland plateau about 100 m asl. The area is

liminal: to the east and south the land drops away steeply toward the coast in a broken landscape of steep ravines, while to the west and north lies the relatively flat central Messenian *kampos*, as well as the most direct route to Pylos (Rapp 1978). Both the habitation site and cemetery are situated on a small plateau amid ravines and bedrock outcrops.

Systematic excavations at the site uncovered substantial remains of the Mycenaean palatial period, along with earlier (Middle Helladic [MH] and some early Mycenaean phases) and later material. Architecturally, the Middle Bronze Age and Early Mycenaean periods were scarcely represented, although large amounts of pottery were excavated and studied. In contrast, architecture of the LH III period is abundant and suggests a well-organized settlement.

In addition to the excavation of the settlement, UMME excavated the well-known tholos tomb at the western fringes of the site, along with an

adjacent second structure that was designated the “Little Circle” (McDonald and Wilkie, eds., 1992). The two UMME structures are, however, part of a much larger funerary landscape: separate investigations in the area immediately west of the settlement uncovered further tholoi and other built tombs with a variety of construction and use dates (Parlama 1972, 1976; Choremis 1973). Taken together, these burial features constitute a rich and

long-lived dataset. In this paper I examine the mortuary evidence from Nichoria in relation to Middle Helladic and Mycenaean social order and identity, reviewing first the chronology of the site and the general background to the mortuary archaeology of the period, and then discussing the Early Mycenaean, LH IIIA, and LH IIIB periods in turn, in each case considering the wider context of the period.

The Chronology of the Nichoria Cemetery

Known mortuary features at Nichoria are summarized in Table 15.1, and their locations are shown in Figure 15.1. In total, at least 24 tombs have been excavated: two UMME tombs (henceforth M1 for the “Little Circle” and M2 for the UMME tholos), the Veves tholos (V), six in the Nikitopoulou group (N1–N6) on the Tourkokivou-ro ridge, two (or perhaps three) apsidal tombs with a cist tomb in the Akones “mound” (AI–AIV, following the excavator), two built tombs in the Tsagdi group (T1, T2), and, farther away, four apsidal cist graves and two tholos tombs in the Lambropoulos/Lakkoules group (L1–L6) and three chamber tombs south (Vathirema) and east (Rizomilo and Rizomilo Saïnoraki) of the main cemetery area. Open excavations at the site in the Lambropoulos area show that at least one further tholos tomb has been excavated since the reported excavations of the 1960s and 1970s. The Bronze Age tombs (except for the chamber tombs) are those closest to the settlement site.

Post-Bronze Age burials are discussed by William Coulson (1983a) and Fred Lukermann and Jennifer Moody (1978, 108–109). The Iron Age phase (end of LH IIIC to Middle Geometric) is not the focus of this paper, but see Coulson (1983b, 265–270) for a summary. For the Iron Age tomb dates, I use Coulson’s terminology (1983b; McDonald and Coulson 1983). The terminology, phases, and absolute chronology have recently been reviewed by Oliver Dickinson (2006, 17–19, 23), who proposes a gap of 200 years between the last Mycenaean use of the cemetery (LH IIIB:2 or the very early part of LH IIIC) and the extensive Dark Age (DA) I (end of LH IIIC or Early to Middle Protogeometric) expansion and reuse. Still later cult

activity in the Classical period is well represented in M2 (Wilkie 1983), in the Hellenistic period at the Akones group (particularly A4; Parlama 1972, 262), and also perhaps in the Vathirema chamber tomb, with Classical and Hellenistic pottery (Lukermann and Moody 1978, 108; Coulson 1983c, 337).

The construction dates of Mycenaean multiple burial tombs can be much harder to ascertain than their last date of use, due to the common practices of disassociation and dispersal of pristine burial contexts as part of “second funeral” rituals (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 76; Boyd 2002, 84–87, 89–90; discussed further below). The earliest material in a tomb is often taken to date it, but there is a clear possibility that still earlier material may have been removed (Boyd 2002, 87), and where no alternative method of dating is available, the chronology remains uncertain at best (Blegen 1937, 261; Wilkie 1992, 247). Furthermore, there is a possibility that material of early date may sometimes have been deposited long after its manufacture. There are often few clear-cut architectural indicators of date, even though the architecture, unlike the remains inside the tomb, is a direct product of the construction phase of the tomb. The dates given in Table 15.1 therefore refer only to the dated material within the tombs and do not unproblematically represent the full date range of use of the tombs.

This discussion is relevant to a consideration of the chronological development of the cemetery at Nichoria, which I propose contains a number of tombs most probably built early in the Messenian sequence (for the development of Messenian tholoi, see Boyd 2002, 55–58; forthcoming a). The tholos tomb is defined here on the basis of key architectural features (circular stone-built corbeled tomb)

Tomb Name	Register Number (based on Lukermann and Moody 1978, 108–112)	Identification	Principal Dimension	Reported Date Range of Finds
M1	—	Tholos tomb	Diam. 2.0 m	LH IIA
M2	—	Tholos tomb	Diam. 6.6 m	LH IIA–IIIB:2; Classical
V	6	Tholos tomb	Diam. 5.1 m	LH I–IIIB
N1	3	Horseshoe-shaped tomb	Axial length 1.66 m	DA I
N2	3	Tholos(?) tomb	Diam. ca. 4 m	LH IIIA:1–IIIB
N3	3	Tholos tomb	Diam. 3.4 m	LH IIIA–IIIB
N4	3	Tholos tomb	Diam. 3.4 m	MH–LH I; LH IIIA:1–2
N5	3	Tholos tomb	Diam. 5.2 m	LH I
N6	3	Tholos tomb	Diam. 3 m	LH IIIB–DA I
AI	4	Stone-built apsidal tomb	Axial L. 3.8 m	“Mycenaean”
AII	4	Cist grave	L. 1.35 m	Unknown
AIII	4	Stone-built apsidal tomb	Axial L. 3.1 m (?)	LH I
AIV	4	Stone-built apsidal tomb (?)	Axial L. 2.9 m (?)	Unknown
T1	30	Horseshoe-shaped tomb	Axial L. 1.27 m (min.)	DA I
T2	30	Horseshoe-shaped tomb	Axial L. 1.51 m	DA I
L1	12	Apsidal cist	L. 2.1 m	DA II
L2	12	Apsidal cist	L. 1.7 m	DA II
L3	12	Apsidal cist	L. 1.7 m	DA II
L4	12	Apsidal cist	L. 2.2 m	DA II
L5	11	Tholos tomb	Diam. 2.0 m	DA II
L6	—	Tholos tomb	Unknown	Unknown
Rizomilo Saīnoraki	14	Chamber tomb	Unknown	LH IIIA:2–IIIC:1
Rizomilo	13	Chamber tomb	Unknown	LH IIB
Vathirema	1	Chamber tomb	Chamber 6.0 x 3.7 m	LG–Hellenistic

Table 15.1. Nichoria cemetery, basic data.

without the arbitrary division based on size between tholos tombs and “smaller . . . built tombs” or “imitations” proposed by Dickinson (1983, 57–58, 60).

In the detailed analysis below I will attempt to refine the basic (and perhaps misleading) picture suggested by the finds in the tombs.

Landscape and Architecture

The Bronze Age tombs form a cemetery to the northwest of the settlement site with four distinct but proximal foci (Fig. 15.1). The most prominent

focal point is the Tourkokivouro ridge, elongated in a northwest–southeast alignment and of natural formation. Here are the six tombs of the Nikitopoulou

group, clustering toward the highest, southeastern end, where the gradient is sharp on three sides. Approximately 57 m to the southwest lies the Akones group, the UMME tombs lie about 78 m to the east, and the Veves tholos about 55 m to the south. Following UMME's analysis of the Late Bronze Age road system (Lukermann and Moody 1978, 90–92; Walsh and McDonald 1992, 460–461), a main east–west route is thought to have passed to the south of the Tourkokivouro and Akones groups and north of the Veves and UMME tholoi. A north–south route would have run south from M2 (and aligned with its dromos; Wilkie 1992, 231) and north probably between Akones and Tourkokivouro. Hence, these four cemetery foci surround, emphasize, and to some extent define the crossroads, and they also mark the postulated main route into the Nichoria settlement, in the vicinity of the UMME tombs.

At Tourkokivouro, the natural topography was probably accented by the creation of a small artificial mound into which four of the Bronze Age tombs (and the later N1) were built. This arrangement is particularly reminiscent of other sites in Messenia with unusually small tholos tombs: Kaminia, near the village of Kremmidhia some 12 km to the west (Korres 1975a; 1975b; 1980; Boyd 2002, 116–119), and Gouvalari mound A (as well as mound B and mound 2), just 2 km southwest of Kaminia (Korres 1974; 1975a; 1975b; Boyd 2002, 108–113). These sites consist of small (diam. 4 m or less) tholos tombs set into a single artificial mound, and all three have evidence for a very early date of use. The tholos tombs in the Tourkokivouro mound range from 3 m to 5.2 m in diameter; in two cases (N3 and N6) the complete outline of the tholos is preserved (chamber and stomion, and in the case of N3, a peribolos). Tombs N2, N4, and N5 were only partly preserved when excavated, the stomia and parts of the chambers having been destroyed. This is because the stomia faced outward—downslope—and so were subject to erosion (or perhaps agricultural damage). The situation is mirrored at Kaminia, where three of the five tombs lack their stomia for similar reasons.

Like the Nikitopoulou tombs, the Akones group is said by its excavator to have been set in an artificial mound, possibly largely made up of redeposited MH settlement debris, and also set on top of a small rise in the landscape. The use of mortuary tumuli in the MH period and at the transition

to the Mycenaean period has been discussed extensively (e.g., Pelon 1976; Müller 1989; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 29–30; Boyd 2002), and notwithstanding the difficulty in the present cases of being sure of the existence and nature of the tumuli, the structures reported within the mounds belong to the final phases of the use of mortuary tumuli before the ubiquity in LH I of tholos tombs. Messenian MH mortuary tumuli exhibit considerable variety in construction technique and interment practices, but the use of multiple built constructions in a single tumulus is a late feature. Both Nichoria “tumuli” exhibit this feature. The construction of small tholoi in the Nikitopoulou group links these tombs with the Kaminia and Gouvalari mounds mentioned above, and the substantial built constructions in the Akones group, although morphologically different, similarly served to create multiple constructed foci in a single mound.

Most interments in the main phases of use of MH tumuli were in pithoi deposited within the mound or in pits or cists dug and built into the mound. While the mound itself was a focal point in the landscape, the burials within the mound became a hidden part of its matrix and lacked a visible memento on its surface (although we should bear in mind the possible use of organic markers). This invisibility began to change in some pithos burials in which the pithos mouth projected from the sloping side of the mound. The mouth, even if closed by a stone slab, would have been visible and accessible in a more permanent way than a pit or cist grave. The later mounds containing small tholos tombs or, as with the Akones mound, built chambers with entrances, had even greater visibility and accessibility, with one further, very significant feature: they offered interior spaces built on a scale designed to allow adult humans to interact with each other and with material within the space (for the line of succession from pithos to tholos tomb, see Korres 1996; Boyd 2002, 54–56).

The invention of the tholos form—including the discovery and mastery of the architectural techniques required to build a stable tholos tomb—took place experimentally in the construction of these small tholos tombs (Boyd 2002, 56; for the principles of the technique, see Cavanagh and Laxton 1981). However, these small, early tholoi in clusters seem to have been a short-lived phenomenon. The tholos technique offered the potential to build

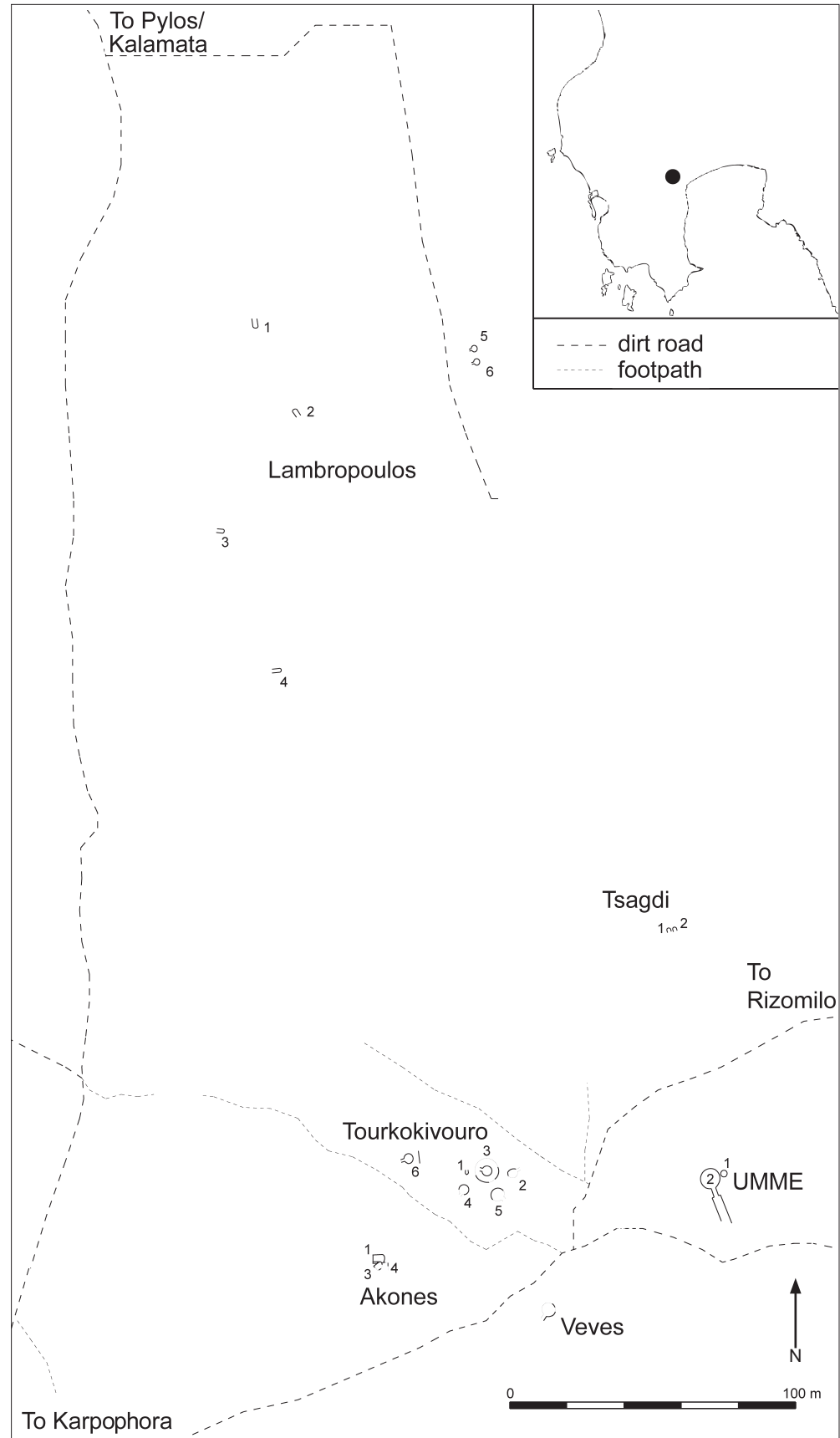


Figure 15.1. Map of Bronze Age tombs at Nichoria.

larger tombs, and its Messenian inventors seem to have taken advantage of this almost immediately. In this secondary adaptation of the tholos form (Boyd 2002, 56–57), larger tholoi (diam. up to about 6 m) were constructed within new tumuli (or occasionally underground), singly or sometimes in pairs, and the tumulus itself became a secondary aspect of the construction of the tholos, with the focus now on the entrance to the tomb and the interment activity taking place therein.

The Nichoria cemetery is important in preserving architecturally two of the “clusters” of the second type in Table 15.2 and in providing key data for the development of Mycenaean funerary practices. The new collective tomb types—quickly standardized in the tholos form of dromos, stomion, and chamber (Papadimitriou 2011)—offered access to the detritus of past funerals and the remains of the dead: they enabled new kinds of rites in relation to the dead, the incorporation of the material past in repeated and ongoing projects of presentation, and the juxtaposition of self and others in the creative context of the funerary locale.

Tomb Type	Focus	Burials
Tumulus	On and from the mound; nondirectional	Hidden and generally inaccessible after interment
Clusters of small built tombs	As tumulus, but with addition of several directional microfoci	Closed but marked by the entrances and accessible through them
Individual tholos tombs	Directed along the dromos and stomion	Accessible through the entrance

Table 15.2. Developments in MH–LH tomb architecture.

Reconstructing Action, Context, and Sequence in the Early Mycenaean Nichoria Cemetery

Funerary contexts are important because they preserve evidence for moments of human action. This has always been recognized with regard to pristine burials, from which analysts have tried to read as much information as possible from a context left untouched after the completion of the interment. But as so few pristine burials are found at Mycenaean sites, it is essential that we develop analytical approaches suited to the evidence that we do have: multiple-use tombs where a regular part of the activity was the rearrangement and representation of context (Wright et al. 2008, 644).

Early Mycenaean finds are reported from a majority of the tombs in the groups close to the settlement, but only in two cases (M1 and N5) is there no evidence of use in the Late Mycenaean period. These two present a complete contrast. The state of N5 at the end of its use life is striking. The floor had been carefully cleared of remains, both material and human, with just a few sherds noted. At

one point toward the northwest, however, there was a small concentration of material consisting of 46 beads of various types, six gold rosettes, a miniature silver double axe, and silver wire and foil (Choremis 1973, 31). These objects can all be identified as dress material employed during an earlier funeral (or funerals); after the dissolution of the original burial context(s) this material was gathered together and eventually deposited here. Assuming a prior period of use of the tomb for burials, the events witnessed here are later, and, moreover, the entire tomb must have been reordered, with the complete removal of bone, weapons, tools, intact pottery, and almost all sherd material. The deposition of the decorative material was clearly a deliberate and final act in the tomb. There is no evidence to date the deposit; while the material is early, its final gathering and deposition might have happened later. Clearly, however, the reordering of this tomb represents a decision to offer a particular kind of

presentation—without bones or the accoutrements of ritual—suggesting that a static and “final” picture was being expressed. It is even possible to imagine this deposit as a step in a process that saw first the removal of material from the tomb, then the deposition of precious adornments gathered from earlier funerals, and finally the closure of the tomb by its deliberate destruction. This would explain the lack of later material in this tomb, which is the only one in the Tourkokivouro group not to include LH III material (cf. Peristeria; see Boyd 2002, 64).

The contrast with M1 could hardly be greater. Tomb M1 was replete with skeletal remains, but it contained hardly any finds of material culture. Recognized by its excavators as a likely tholos (Shay 1992, 226–228; see also Boyd 2002, 160–161), this small tomb was excavated, recorded, and published in exemplary fashion (Shay 1992). Apparently out of use before the construction of M2, M1 provides our best secure deposit of the Early Mycenaean period at Nichoria.

As with the adjacent Tourkokivouro tombs, M1 was built into the side of a natural prominence, its entrance, now lost, facing west (downslope). Internally, below the “mass burial” (a group of skeletons apparently interred one on top of the other without care in a single event; Shay 1992, 210–219), the tomb held well-preserved evidence for Early Mycenaean mortuary practices. These included an extended inhumation at the bottom of a shallow pit, with disordered bones coming originally from at least 10 individuals deposited above the extended skeleton, most likely during or shortly after the interment. The latter was far from intact, with damage to the skull and missing vertebrae, ribs, parts of the skull, and right arm. It did not, however, exhibit evidence of deliberate disarticulation. The single object found in the pit, a LH IIA squat jug, was placed above the lower legs of the corpse. Fragments of a LH IIA Vapheio cup were found throughout the pit, including at its lowest levels, while fragments of a conical cup were found both in the pit and scattered on the floor of the tomb. The cup, with a diameter of about 9 cm, had been deliberately broken into 10 fragments, and the Vapheio cup was similarly fragmented (14 recorded fragments)—contrasting with the intact squat jug.

Outside the pit, and excluding the final “mass burial” from consideration, skeletal material was found in the southeast quadrant of the tomb and in

a small concentration to the west, immediately in front of the entrance and above the west end of the pit. The latter consisted of the mixed bones of four children with some large stones placed centrally above the pit. Because these bones were partly articulated and mixed together without any associated finds, and as they were immediately below the lowest member of the “mass burial,” it seems likely that they were also part of the latter event. Thus, the only activity preceding the “mass burial” is represented by the bones in the southeast quadrant. Remains of at least eight individuals were located in this area in a deposit about 50 cm thick, with most of the remains in the upper part. Seven of the identifiable individuals were disarticulated, and, as usual, only parts of the skeletons were represented, with skulls and long bones forming the main components. These bones were thoroughly mixed, although the excavators noted two instances of deliberate juxtaposition of skulls and leg bones. The deposit was, again, remarkable for the lack of material culture associated with it, all the more so since the eighth individual was an articulated skeleton placed on top of the bone deposit; when excavated, its bones were at the same level and commingled with the bones below—almost the reverse of the situation in the pit.

Substantial and repeated rearrangement of the human remains deposited in this tomb is attested by the skeletal material in the pit above the extended inhumation and in the disarticulated and rearranged material of the southeast quadrant. The evidence for Mycenaean postburial rituals (sometimes called the “second funeral”: Cavanagh 1978; Wells 1990, 135–136; Voutsaki 1993, 151–153; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 76; Boyd 2002, 84–87; Gallou 2005, 113–114; for a contrary view, see Papadimitriou 2001, 178–179) suggests these activities resulted in the dispersal of primary burial contexts, along with the mixing and breaking of bones and material culture. Here in M1 we see evidence for at least two (and probably many more) such interventions. The first is in the pit, where collected bones and skulls were placed within the fill. This placement implies the careful gathering and curation of the material before or at the time of the interment. These acts included not only the rearrangement of the skeletal material and the mixing of the bones of individuals, but also the careful separation of the bones from any associated material goods, which

were then or later removed from the tomb entirely. The final arrangement within the pit may have been the culmination of several prior episodes of gathering, rearrangement, and removal of material items. The second such series of interventions is evidenced in the southeast quadrant and shows remarkably similar end results. Here again a number of interment contexts were mixed, rearranged, stripped of material accoutrements, and deposited in a single location, the consequence of a number of individual interventions. The resulting picture both compares and contrasts with N5: in both cases, the floors of the tombs had been carefully cleared, but whereas in N5 the end of the use life of the tomb was marked by a single deposit of gathered dress items and a complete absence of bones, in M1 the picture is marked by bone redeposition with almost complete removal of all material culture.

The final phases within M1 began with the interment of the extended skeleton on top of the bones in the southeast quadrant. Prior to the succeeding “mass burial,” no attempt was made to disarticulate the remains of this burial, and when the “mass burial” was executed, remains of the lower adult male—specifically the lower leg bones—and the skull of an adult female (Nic 13) were found at the same level—and so presumably commingled—with the bones of the extended burial (Bisel 1992, 353; Shay 1992, 219). We must assume that the extended inhumation was conceptually separated from the “mass burial” by its excavators because it was found in a more or less canonical position—extended on its back—unlike the members of the mass burial. However, the lack of any material culture associated with this skeleton marks it as unusual in itself, and the mixing of these bones with parts of the “mass burial” suggests that the extended burial may have predated the mass burial by a very short period. The lack of attention to this corpse might indicate an unwillingness to engage much with a corpse whose death may have been caused by the same reasons postulated by the excavators for the mass burial—sudden and calamitous epidemic.

The contrasting pictures of these two tombs do not offer anything like a complete picture of the Early Mycenaean cemetery. However, they introduce two key elements of human action: ongoing processes of rearrangement of material within the tombs and practices that involve not only the introduction, but also the removal, of material from the

tombs. These practices also hint at the interconnectedness of the tombs in the wider cemetery. To fill out our picture of the early Mycenaean cemetery, I turn to another of the Tourkokivouro tombs, N4, which contained both earlier and later material. Tomb N4 had three concentrations of mixed skulls, bones, and pottery grouped to the southeast, north, and west near the chamber wall; further material was gathered in a pit under a stone slab covering in the center. In addition, broken bones were found throughout the tomb, and other finds from the floor included a ewer, a spindle, a ring, four arrowheads, and 12 beads (Choremis 1973).

It is apparent that the final act in N4 was not a primary burial, since no intact skeleton was found in the tomb. The latest datable material belongs to the northern group of finds, which, according to their excavator, includes pottery of LH IIIA:2 date (all dates attributed to material are from the excavator’s study; Choremis 1973). The disarticulated skeletal remains again demonstrate secondary rituals, and the presence of six skulls suggests at least six such interventions (though it must always be kept in mind that material can be introduced and removed from the tomb as part of these activities). The unpublished status of the other bones found broken on the floor or in the pit adds to the possibilities. This dissolution of primary burial contexts may seem to be destructive in nature, yet there is an order to the presentation of material in N4, even if the precise logic of that order is hidden from us. Most acts in the funerary sphere can be seen as meaningful and, indeed, as overburdened with meaning; there is no reason to believe *a priori* that people would have behaved with wanton abandon in the destruction of so many funerary contexts in Mycenaean Greece. Indeed, the evidence—so long overlooked—shows that the material in Mycenaean tombs was usually systematically ordered in ways that were significant for the participants in those rites. Arguably, archaeologists’ often disappointed interpretations of “looting” have arisen from an unwillingness to engage with the complexity of human agency so richly preserved for us within these tombs (Boyd 2002, 31–32). For, although these actions were indeed destructive, the motivation was the creation of a new kind of order, and after the breakage came redeposition and the presentation of newly created contexts. This is the process that Julian Thomas (1996, 171) has usefully referred to

as “the production of context”—the reordering of things, people, and places in a continuous restructuring of locale in order to present certain practices as meaningful in particular ways. Nor should we envision a single orgy of destruction and reordering that represented a radical change in the social order: instead, the production of context was an endless project, carried out by each tomb user on every visit, leading—once the tomb stopped being used—to a funerary context that bore the cumulative traces of continuous or punctuated reordering over (in the case of N4) several hundred years.

Without a detailed osteological study, we only have the broad comments of the excavator on the disposition of bones within the three concentrations in the pit and on the floor. All skeletons had been disarticulated, and some of the bones were broken. The excavator’s suggestion is that the number of bones indicates the presence of considerably more than six individuals within the tomb. But is there any structure to the deposit of osteological material? The skulls were associated with the three concentrations of material and other bones. The excavator contrasts the “great quantity of fragmentary bones” (Choremis 1973, 39) on the floor of the tomb with the few bones found among the otherwise “dense mass” of sherd material within the pit (Choremis 1973, 39). This pit was not, in its final phase, used for the interment of bones, but rather for the deposition of (mostly) broken pots—which, unlike the bones, are not mentioned as having been strewn over the chamber, although whole pots are associated with the material concentrations. Therefore, it would seem that one part of the logic operating in the ordering of the tomb toward the end of its use life was that skulls and longer bones were associated with whole pots in three distinct areas, while broken pots were deposited in the central pit.

Two distinct periods of use are evident in the tomb. The MH/LH transition is mainly represented by the pottery associated with the southeastern and western concentrations and the pottery from the pit; the kylix fragments associated with the western group presumably belong to the later phase. The northern group contains material dated to LH IIIA:2, while a single LH IIIA:1 ewer was found intact in the middle of the chamber. The earlier phase predominates, and the items of this period were rather carefully curated during the later

phase. The majority ended up in the pit, but some intact items remained associated with material on the floor. Pottery of both phases includes both drinking and carrying/pouring vessels. All early carrying/pouring vessels, along with some drinking vessels, were deposited in the pit, but some (by then antique) drinking vessels were preserved in the latest arrangement on the floor, accompanied by some drinking vessels and all of the carrying/pouring vessels of the later period. While drinking rituals are attested in both periods, earlier rituals might have involved breakage of some drinking vessels, while in later periods liquids were brought into the tomb in contemporary vessels but might have been drunk from the antique cups not broken during earlier rituals.

All of these observations allow us to ask about the meaning derived from and invested in the production and reproduction of context within this tomb. The glimpses we have relate both to the tomb’s early period and to how an already old tomb was perceived and utilized in the later period. In the early period, people took advantage of the architectural space of the tomb to inter multiple individuals in a private space that allowed for a clear separation between the public phase of the funeral—procession through the landscape to this prominent point—and the private phase, where a few mourners bore the body into the tomb and, unseen from outside, laid it on the floor. A ritual involving pouring and drinking liquids may relate to the funeral or to later actions interfering with the pristine burial context—or both. The secondary actions, performed after the dissolution of the flesh, involved the disarticulation of the corpse, the mixing of bones with other contexts, and perhaps the removal of items originally adorning the corpse. In time the tomb came to contain bones and material culture from several different episodes, which would be liberally rearranged to form an appropriate setting for each new funeral or to incorporate the newly disarticulated ancestral corpse once the flesh had decayed.

Although the tomb may have been used for burial in the LH IIIA period, we have no direct evidence for it, and the general lack of objects related to the dress of the corpse, especially with the northern group, might suggest that the late interventions did not involve primary burial. It is clear that users of the tomb sought and found an engagement with

the material past in the tomb that led them to arrange ancestral objects in ways meaningful to them while introducing some new equipment for rituals of drinking or libation. The old material in the tomb—like the skulls and bones, imbued with inferred and implied ancestral meaning—formed a resource which tomb users set about reordering to recontextualize those meanings within their own wider projects and ambitions. Thus, the material past—full of whispers of past lives, identities, stories, and power—was made and remade as part of the representation of the present order of things.

The general topography of the Mycenaean cemetery at Nichoria was produced in the Early Mycenaean period. Aside from the tombs already discussed, both the Veves tomb and the Akones mound were also in use at this time. Hence, the arrangement described above, with the tombs forming four focal points clustered around a crossroads and close to the entrance to the habitation site, was created in the Early Mycenaean period and continued essentially unchanged into the later period. At Tourkokivouro, aside from N4 and N5, two other small tombs were built into the mound and a third at a short distance. Early Mycenaean finds are not reported from these tombs, and so they may be Late Mycenaean additions, but, given the patterns of use already demonstrated, it is at least possible that they were earlier features from which the first material was later completely removed. Their location and small size hints at this possibility. Roughly 55 m to the south, the Veves tomb, more typical in size for Messenian LH I tholoi (5.1 m diam.), contained material of LH I–IIIB date. The mixed state of the remains resulting from the long period of use led the excavator to conclude the tomb had

been looted, and for that reason his report is very summary in nature (Choremis 1973).

To the west, the Akones group consists of three unusual apsidal built tombs and a small built cist. Only a brief account has been published (Parlama 1972, 1976; see also Papadimitriou 2001, 37–42). Both mixed bones and extended skeletons are reported, but later use in the Geometric, Archaic, and Hellenistic periods complicates interpretation of the terse account. Architecturally, these tombs would have been rather impressive, ranging from 3 to 4 m in length and perhaps built into a mound composed mainly of MH settlement debris, as suggested by the excavator. Their entrances would have faced outward from the mound in three different directions. Both the Akones and Tourkokivouro groups fall within the second group listed in Table 15.2: clusters of small built tombs within a mound but creating, through their entrances, multiple directional foci. This pattern mirrors closely that observed at Gouvalari (Boyd 2002, 108–113). The small distance between these two sites makes it likely that close interaction and intersite mobility contributed to the similar development of the cemeteries. The resemblance persisted over the long periods of use of both cemeteries, with small tombs continuing to be employed in the LH II and LH III periods, even when larger tholoi had become the norm. Nichoria differs from Gouvalari only in having built tombs not of tholos form in the Akones mound. However, this architectural divergence may have been of minimal importance: the Akones tombs were similar in size to the small tholoi with outward-facing entrances, and they were apparently used on multiple occasions both for primary interments and secondary rituals.

The Nichoria Cemetery in the LH IIIA:1–IIIA:2 Period

The Late Mycenaean period is marked in the Nichoria cemetery both by continuity in the use of existing tombs (and possibly the construction of some of the tholoi of the Tourkokivouro group) and by the construction and use of a larger (6.6 m diam.) tomb. The latter, M2 (Wilkie 1992), is one of the best published of all Mycenaean tombs. Its main phase of use is dated by the excavator to LH IIIA:2–IIIB:2, and it seems likely that there was a

gap of unknown length between the construction and first use of the tomb and later episodes of use attested by surviving deposits within the tomb. The excavator makes a strong and cogent case for a construction date within LH IIIA:2, and this may well be correct. However, the evidence would also allow for a construction date in LH IIIA:1 or even in LH II. Since the evidence from this tomb

is relevant in interpreting the cemetery as a whole, it is worth a reexamination.

The excavator's argument for a LH IIIA:2 construction date of M2 is based mainly on the pottery found in the tomb (Wilkie 1992, 246–247). The tomb was built after the final closure of M1, as the construction of the chamber of M2 damaged the chamber (and probable stomion) of M1. The scant material culture in M1 dates to LH IIA (although this alone does not securely date the latest burials); no sherds later than LH II are, however, reported from the fill above the burial layers in M1. Hence, M2 cannot have been built before LH IIA. Few deposits laid as part of the construction process of M2 seem to have been excavated, but a fill behind the dromos lining contained sherds of MH–LH II date. Although it was reported that only a few sherds were found in the fill, it is surprising that no LH III pottery was found if the construction took place in that period. Late Helladic IIIA:2 sherds were found in a thin layer at the base of the dromos, but as the dromos may have been filled and cleared many times, there is no guarantee that this low level is an especially early level.

Within the tomb, the excavator regarded three groups of finds that predate LH IIIA:2 as unrelated to the construction date of the tomb. The first of these comprises the metal objects in pit 3, which mainly date to LH IIIA:1 (Wilkie 1992, 263–264), with some items perhaps being slightly earlier. These are interpreted as heirlooms (Wilkie 1992, 253, 264). The second is the material found in pit 4, which includes sealstones and jewelry dated between LH IIA and LH IIIA:1; these are also considered heirlooms by the excavator (Wilkie 1992, 248, 270). The third is the pottery from the tomb that predates LH IIIA:2. This is regarded by the excavator as stray material introduced into the tomb by some process during its LH III use cycle (Wilkie 1992, 247–248). Some of this pottery comes from the fill of pit 1: the soil is recognized as being different in character from the matrix that the pit was dug into, and so it must have been brought from outside to fill the pit at some point after its construction. It contained MH, LH IIA, and LH IIIA:2 sherds. The excavator argues that the LH IIIA:2 sherds belong to objects originally deposited within the tomb, whereas the LH IIA and MH sherds are intrusive. Other objects in the pit likely to predate LH IIIA:2 are again described

as heirlooms (Wilkie 1992, 249). The fill of pit 2 also contained LH II sherds, some joining with LH II sherds on the floor of the chamber.

Occurrences of pottery predating LH IIIA:2 are rare, but the presence in pits 1 and 2 of pottery of LH IIA–IIB date, LH IIB pottery on the floor of the tomb, the presence in each of the four pits of material predating LH IIIA:2, and the lack of LH III material in the fill behind the dromos walling must surely at least suggest (though certainly not prove) that the construction date of this tomb could fall within LH IIIA:1, LH IIB, or even LH IIA. All of the material within the tomb is in a secondary position, and so it would not be surprising if there were a cycle of use predating the main pottery group. Architecturally, the tomb has no special features that would place it within the LH III period.

The sequence in M2 can be divided into several episodes, some of which cannot be ordered on the basis of the available evidence. The first is the construction of the tomb at an indeterminate date within LH IIA–IIIA:2. The second is the initial use phase of the tomb, of which there are no intact deposits, also at an unknown date within LH IIA–IIIA:2. It is to this early period that a burial involving body armor reminiscent of the Dendra cuirass should probably be assigned. Numerous highly fragmentary bronze pieces from this set were found redeposited throughout the tomb, with the sole exception of pit 3 (Wilkie 1992, 253–255).

The third episode is represented by a deposit in pit 3, material which was either introduced into the tomb at this time or relocated from existing deposits in the tomb at an indeterminate date within LH IIIA:1–IIIA:2. This deposit probably predates the destruction and removal of the main elements of the body armor, because it is the only deposit anywhere in the tomb not to contain fragments of that armor. This would make it the earliest intact deposit in the tomb, although it is itself a secondary deposit. It need not predate the deposit of the armor in the chamber, however; indeed, the excavator suggests that the bronze objects making up this deposit may have originally been part of the cuirass burial context (Wilkie 1992, 253), and this seems quite likely. The material consisted of seven bronze vessels and a fragment of another, a sword and four other bladed items, and a mirror (Wilkie 1992, 252). The selection of these objects, their deformation, and their deposition in pit 3 would therefore

predate (perhaps by a short time) the processes that led to the destruction of the armor and the removal of its major components from the tomb.

A fourth episode entailed the rearrangement of floor contexts and the placement of a sealed deposit in pit 4, again at an unknown date within LH IIIA:1–IIIA:2. Much of the datable material in the pit 4 deposit is Early Mycenaean (Wilkie 1992, 248), but the deposit itself is secondary. The presence of fragments of the body armor mentioned above suggests this deposit postdates pit 3 and therefore falls within the LH IIIA:1–IIIA:2 bracket. The deposit consists of the remains of four individuals in disarticulated state, with the bones divided into four discrete groups. No pottery was deposited here, and objects were small or broken: sealstones, beads, small bits of gold, and bronze objects. By this stage, therefore, at least four burials had taken place in the tomb (unless any of this material was introduced from elsewhere; we might imagine the skull lost from the extended burial in M1 in the construction stage of M2 to have been deposited here), and several original contexts had been rearranged. The bronze cache had been crushed into pit 3, and the cuirass was damaged and probably removed from the chamber. Bones had been reburied in pit 4, but very little of the material culture of the funerals was placed with them, nor any of the pottery items likely to have been present originally. The fragmentary material in pit 4, along with the destructive interference documented on the cuirass, suggests that by this stage the deposits and materials had been heavily remodeled.

A fifth episode consisted of the rearrangement of floor contexts and of the deposit in pit 1 in LH IIIA:2. The early history of this shaft grave (pit 1) is completely obscure. It may have been constructed at the same time as the tomb or later; its final phase, which the excavation documented, involved the complete removal of all material from the lower chamber, which was then resealed. It was found intact, but empty, during excavation. (Nancy Wilkie, rightly in my view, dismisses the possibility that pit 1—and, by analogy, pit 2—was originally a cenotaph; Wilkie 1992, 250.) The fill above the cover slabs seems to have been composed of the redeposited original fill, including some of the original material content of the upper pit fill. It also included sherds of LH IIIA:2 date that were found to join with others that remained on the floor of the tomb.

The bone material came from at least two individuals, but this material is not described in the final report and may have been very scant, perhaps part of a mix of material redeposited from the floor at the same time as the main fill of the shaft was put back.

The number of subsequent episodes of use in LH IIIA:2–IIIB:2 cannot be determined, but they affected the tomb floor and pit 2 only. The latter pit was also a shaft grave, though with the lower grave not stone-built but formed by a narrowing in the shaft allowing for the placement of cover slabs. As with pit 1, the lower chamber had been emptied out, but in this case the cover slabs were disturbed; the fill of the pit was a mix of soils recognized as relating to different phases. Thus, this pit was most likely filled at least three times: after the initial burial, after the initial burial was removed, and once again after a third intervention (in LH IIIB:1 or perhaps LH IIIB:2), when the pit was refilled with a mix of the original fill and later soil that had accumulated on the tholos floor in the LH IIIB period. During this final intervention, the cover slabs were disturbed but not completely removed, and a LH IIIB:1 cup was placed with them, along with parts of a flask of LH IIIA:2 or LH IIIB:1 date. Although these items seem like deliberate deposits, the other contents of the pit, as in pit 1, are mainly fragmentary metal objects and beads, some joining with items found on the tholos floor. Only a few bone fragments are reported to have come from this pit. Its fill would seem to match that of pit 1; therefore, we can propose that the fills were formed in similar episodes of deposition (perhaps at the same time). The difference in pit 2 is the LH IIIB intervention, which saw the deposition of the cup and the flask at the bottom of the grave. Most of the other items in the fill result from the same fill having been returned to the shaft, somewhat mixed with soil deposited on the floor of the tomb in LH IIIB.

The arrangement of material on the floor of the tomb at the end of its use life is not reported in detail (although all the objects are cataloged and described). It is reported that material was found all over the floor, except the southeast quadrant. Bones of at least eight individuals were among this material, probably not concentrated in groups. The material on the floor was fragmentary, including the pottery, none of which could be fully restored, despite careful recovery methods (Wilkie 1992, 255). Much material had been removed from the tomb,

as is perhaps confirmed by the generally low overall total of vessels, especially when considering the longevity of the tomb's use. Wilkie inferred that a final burial in the tomb was associated with two pots, both almost complete, one probably and one certainly LH IIIB:2 in date (1992, 256–257). However, no burial survived intact, suggesting that if there were a burial in LH IIIB:2, it was followed by a further intervention (assumed to be an episode of “plundering” by Wilkie [1992, 257–259]). An alternative possibility, perhaps better fitting the evidence as we have it, is that these two pots and a further LH IIIB:2 kylix in the stomion attest to low key and irregular ritual activity occurring long past the main time of use of the tomb.

The final distinct phase of use occurred during the Classical period (Wilkie 1983). This probably caused some disturbance to the floor, but it may not have been significant.

To summarize, although a construction date of LH IIIA:2 is possible and fits the evidence, a date sometime within LH IIIA:1 or slightly earlier is perhaps even more likely. Some of the deposits in the tomb are well dated, and a number of episodes of activity can be defined. The main period of use of the tomb is likely to have come to an end sometime in LH IIIB:1, and later episodes in LH IIIB:2 were of a minor character.

Tomb M2 has been accorded considerable significance in the interpretation of the political role of Nichoria during the Mycenaean palatial period. John Bennet (1995, 1999) has suggested that the presence of a megaron at Nichoria in LH IIIA:1 indicates political independence; the fact that it went out of use in LH IIIA:2, at the same time as the construction of M2, marks a significant discontinuity best explained by Nichoria having assumed a subordinate role within a political hierarchy dominated by Pylos (see also McDonald, Dickinson, and Howell 1992, 766). We have now seen that M2 may well have been constructed before LH IIIA:2 (although the destructive removal of the cuirass burial might just as well be argued to represent Bennet's “discontinuity”). However, the argument does not explain the full range of activity in the Nichoria cemetery. It is conspicuously not the case that earlier tombs were deprecated in the LH IIIA:1–IIIA:2 phase: we have already seen evidence for the continuing use of N4, including careful curation of earlier material in later phases, and the Veves tomb

itself was in use into the LH IIIB period. Other tombs on the Tourkokivouro ridge were in use during LH IIIA–IIIB (see Table 15.1), suggesting the ongoing acceptance and utility of these (probably by then antique) tombs for that section of the population using them. From the little we know, this seems not to have been the case with the Akones group, but here the evidence argues for discontinuity at the end of LH I. There is minimal evidence for use of the Tourkokivouro group during LH II, suggesting that this group perhaps experienced a hiatus at the end of LH I. Unlike the Akones group, however, these tombs were reused during LH III, and the LH II period is well attested in the Veves tomb and M1, showing that there is no general discontinuity of use at any point for the cemetery as a whole until late in LH IIIB or LH IIIC. Rather, the foci of tombs in use shifted over time. The sequence for the cemetery overall, as far as can be reconstructed from the variable evidence at hand, is summarized in Table 15.3.

The construction of M2, the largest of the Nichoria tombs, can be seen as a major event, but not one completely eclipsing the general continuity of the cemetery. At 6.6 m in diameter, it is larger than Veves (5.1 m) or N5 (5.2 m), but well within the

Time Period	Akones	Tourkokivouro	Veves	M1/M2
LH I	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
LH II	No	No	Yes	Yes
LH IIIA:1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
LH IIIA:2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
LH IIIB	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
LH IIIC	No	Yes	No	No

Table 15.3. Shifting foci of tomb use by period.

general range of mid-sized tombs. Its construction marked another shift in focus within the cemetery, but far from the other tombs being abandoned, the evidence rather suggests a renewed period of activity. This activity necessarily referenced, and revered, the histories of tombs and individuals buried in them and the cemetery as a whole. Moreover, activity was far from exclusively focused on M2.

Tomb N3, at the apex of the Tourkokivouro group, is the most architecturally impressive tomb in the cluster and the only one of the main group to have its stomion preserved, with evidence also of a peribolos. The latter architectural embellishment would have been necessary given the position of the tomb at the summit of the ridge, whereas N2, N4, and N5 were built into the slope and so were, effectively, partly underground. The position of N3 at the summit required that it have its own mound, retained by the peribolos wall, to maintain its corbeled construction (see Cavanagh and Laxton 1981 for tholos tomb statics). The lack of such periboloi for the lower tombs partly explains the loss of parts of the architecture through erosion downslope. It also offers a hint of a structuring of the relationships between these tombs, with the one on the summit having slight architectural refinements and the three lower tombs occupying seemingly subordinate positions. This contrasts with what we know of the comparable (still incompletely excavated) mound at Kaminia, where five tombs range around the side of the mound like N2, N4, and N5, but with no evidence of a central tomb comparable to N3.

The material from N3 belongs entirely to phases within LH III. There are three main contexts within the tomb: a lower level, its associated pit, and an

upper level. Although it is possible to posit alternative sequences, the simplest hypothesis suggests that the upper level was laid on top of the deeper remains at a late phase. It is unusual, however, for the main floor of the tomb to be below foundation level. The end of the earliest documented phase is evidenced by the pit, which contained at its base an extended articulated burial, the skeleton arranged to suggest the body had been wrapped tightly in an unadorned shroud. As with the pit in M2, the bones of at least seven other individuals were found in the pit fill; no artifacts were observed. Again as with M2, the inhumation and filling of the pit took place as one act, the new inhumation becoming a focal point for the deposition of bones collected for that purpose. This represented a major reordering of material in the tomb, and the closure of the pit also closed that context so that it was no longer encountered in visits to the tomb but was monumentalized through the use of covering slabs on the floor.

A second instance of production of context highlighted by this tomb is the final ordering of the lower level before the remains were covered by the upper floor. This phase is also marked by an intact inhumation (a contracted burial on top of the cover slabs of the pit). Two groups of bones took up most of the available space away from the entrance and the cover slabs of the pit. Some pots were deposited between the concentration of bones on the floor and the articulated skeleton on top of the pit closure slabs, hinting that they may have been used in the final rituals that produced the arrangement as excavated. This phase concluded with the covering of all of the remains in soil to create a new floor level at the depth of the foundations.

The Cemetery in the LH IIIB:1–IIIB:2 Periods

We have seen that in the LH IIIA period the use of the cemetery was by no means confined to M2; in fact, the cemetery as a whole was being used more intensively in that period than in any other. This impression is confirmed by the apparently sporadic use of the tombs in the LH IIIB period, culminating in the disuse of all but one of them before the end of the period. The evidence for the use of M2 in LH IIIB:1–IIIB:2 has been discussed above. In N3, the final phase of use on a newly laid floor

that covered the LH IIIA levels resulted in three concentrations of material placed around the walls, one on each side of the entrance and one opposite the entrance in the rear. These three discrete concentrations each included one skull. The three datable objects date to LH IIIA:1 (two objects) and LH IIIB; the former had been removed from the lower level before it was covered over (as shown by joining fragments), while the latter must represent the final instance of use of the tomb. This arrangement

became final when the tomb—whether through accident or inducement—collapsed at an unknown later point. Nearby N2 contained a mixture of LH IIIA and LH IIIB objects, though, again, mostly LH IIIA. Tomb N6 was remodeled after the end of the Bronze Age but was found to contain some LH IIIB material. The Veves tomb also contained a small amount of LH IIIB material.

Overall it seems that there was a continuing use of a number of tombs, and therefore of the cemetery as a whole, but on a much reduced scale from preceding periods and with less deposition of material. Primary burials may have been rare, and it is even possible that all LH IIIB activity was restricted to secondary rituals. Bennet (1999, 146) has suggested that tholos tombs in Messenia other than those at Pylos went out of use by the end of LH IIIA. While this is not the case at Nichoria, the clearly changed—and diminished—pattern of use observed in LH IIIB goes some way to confirming

his analysis. Moreover, recent research suggests that even at Pylos the intensity of tomb use was very low in LH IIIB, with tholoi IV and V out of use before the end of LH IIIA and only tholos III continuing in use at this time (Murphy 2008; this vol., Ch. 16; Schepartz, Miller-Antonio, and Murphy 2009, 158–159).

Evidence from the dromos and stomion of M2 shows that the process of reopening the tomb became progressively less elaborate; later episodes may only have involved removal of a small section of blocking wall and a small volume of soil from the dromos. There can be no suggestion of a grand procession with the corpse in this case; these final visits were to perform secondary rituals only. This observation is well matched with the evidence from tholos III at Englianos (Blegen et al. 1973, 73–74) and the recent, very careful excavation of a chamber tomb dromos near Nemea has shown a similar pattern (Wright et al. 2008, 635–641).

Becoming Mycenaean: Action, Meaning, and Identity in Tomb, Cemetery, and Wider Regional Context

The funerary practices evidenced around the MH/LH transition at Nichoria place that community at the heart of the rapid development from traditional Middle Helladic mortuary forms and practices through the stages outlined in Table 15.2 above. Along with the closely comparable sites of Kaminia and Gouvalari, as well as related developments seen in the early tombs at Volimidia (for extensive references, see Boyd 2002, 138), the “MH–LH grave” at Peristeria (Korres 1976, 485–506; Boyd 2002, 167–174), and early tholos tombs such as those at Koryphasion (Kourouniotis 1925–1926; Boyd 2002, 125) and tholos V at Englianos (Blegen et al. 1973, 134–176; Boyd 2002, 147–152; Murphy, this vol., Ch. 16), Nichoria was part of a regional milieu in which shared or competing rituals, architectural forms, and material production, circulation, and consumption were innovated, scrutinized, and embellished within and between communities and groups. Key among these developments were the architectural advances of multiple-use tombs built to accommodate—and conceal—the living participants in innovative

rituals involving the presentation of the corpse within an ordered architectural and ancestral setting, drinking or libation over the corpse, and rituals involving the reordering of the material content of the tomb. The consumption of rare or exotic materials, especially in the dress items of the corpse, is also attested, though not very intensively. Leaving aside the question of preservation, the Nichoria cemetery displays a clear difference from the Peristeria “MH–LH grave,” from the almost contemporary tholos 3 at that site, and from more distant Mycenae with its shaft graves (Boyd, forthcoming b). The innovations in practice attested at Nichoria show that the early Mycenaean mortuary identity—in all its variations—was usually expressed here without great emphasis on exotica and the dress of the corpse; these were to become a key part of the funerary scene later in the LH I period and into LH II.

The cemetery’s next major period, LH IIIA:1–IIIA:2, sees much continuity in its use (after a hint of less intensive activity in LH II); the construction of M2 was followed by the rather spectacular

cuirass burial, and some early material came to be deposited in M2, perhaps gathered from nearby tombs. Although by now “ordinary” tholos tombs had been the norm in Messenia for some time, and the construction of M2 shows Nichoria’s participation in that wider phenomenon, interest in the smaller tombs continued (and indeed some of them may even have been constructed in this stage). By continuing actions involving the reorganization of contexts and the deposition of contemporary pottery in juxtaposition with the older pottery in the tombs, as well as primary burial rites, the place of these by now ancient and unusual tombs was maintained within both local and regional customs, and the possibility for local variability in wider traditions was honored and celebrated.

Indeed, it is possible that the destruction of the presumed entrance and part of the wall of M1 during the construction of M2, rather than being merely accidental, was in fact quite deliberate, so as to incorporate the very fabric of the earlier tomb into the later.

During LH IIIB, some tombs were not used and others were perhaps entered only sporadically. With no evidence for burial in this period, it may be that the tombs were used only occasionally, and rarely for primary burial. This pattern is maintained into LH IIIC and beyond, but with the expansion of the cemetery northward in the DA I–II periods, some of the Bronze Age tombs were once again reused and partly remodeled, staking a claim to a tradition begun here many centuries earlier.

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