

The Social Identity of the Child During the Early Helladic and the Beginning of the Middle Helladic Period in the Peloponnese

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Abstract

In the course of the Early Helladic and in the beginning of the Middle Helladic period (c. 3100 -1800 BC) communities in the Peloponnese recognised the social importance of a dead child and the role that it may continue to play from beyond the grave, for the benefit of the living. This was achieved by the continuation of the child's integration to society in the afterlife through the performance of ritual ceremonies. At the same time, through the association of the child burials with the households' living spaces, community members legitimized their household's right to occupy their land and achieved status for their family and their social group.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The identity of the child as a biological and cultural phenomenon and its impact on societies in the past has been the subject of intense scholarly research over the last decades. Child and childhood studies in archaeology were developed into a distinct academic field which gives emphasis on research from the child's point of view (Lillehammer 1989; Kamp 2001; Baxter 2008).

The study of the various socio-cultural mechanisms behind children's gradual assimilation to society and the different ways they interacted with the adult world reveal how these processes and interactions had shaped the ways past societies understood the social identity and value of a child. This, in turn, allows for a better understanding of the complex relationships between adults and children in the past. Since childhood is shared human experience that unites the experiences of those who live through it with those that do not, we may see the archaeological child as a link between us and the past. Childhood studies in archaeology challenge our own modern conceptions about children and childhood. In the process of data analysis new definitions and theoretical frameworks are created, leading to new interpretations of the archaeological record (Guy *et al.* 1997; Perry 2006; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008; Weiberg 2011).

This chapter sets the aims, objectives and research questions of the thesis, followed by a brief outline of the geographical and chronological background of the cultural and social/economic developments that took place in Peloponnese within the time frame the thesis is focusing on. This will be followed by a review of the new directions the research of the archaeological child in the prehistoric Aegean has taken with the application of new theoretical and scientific research tools on the burial record data leading to the development of new definitions and theoretical constructions that offer a better understanding of the child's social role, covering the time period from the Early Helladic I (hereafter EH I) to the end of the Middle Helladic I (hereafter MH I) periods. The chapter will close with a description of the material culture evidence from the EHI-III child burial contexts from the sites under study with focus set on the type, dimensions, appearance, manner of deposition, and ritual manipulation of the grave goods that aimed to transform these objects into a link between the dead and the living but it was also an expression of eschatological concepts that sought to reunite the deceased child with the surviving community and their living spaces, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.1. Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

This thesis aims to explore the nature of the *postmortem* relationship between a child and the surviving family/community within the cultural environment of the southern Greek mainland during the second half of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd Millenium B.C. More specifically, the study focuses on the ways in which communities retained the deceased child's identity as a community member and its agency in the world of the living. In order to achieve these aims, I aim to demonstrate how burial customs and ritual practices were employed by local communities as social mechanisms to facilitate the continuity of a child's socialising process after its death, investing it with a new social identity and providing it with a place in a community's cosmological belief system. After reviewing the available evidence for funerary customs associated with child burials, I will attempt an interpretation on how the social position of a child might have been conceptualised by the local communities regarding child burials in extramural cemeteries, especially at the beginning of the period under study. Afterwards, I will demonstrate how burial customs might have had eventually associated physically and symbolically the child burials with the settlements' structures by forging a strong symbolic link - steeped in eschatological meaning - between the deceased, the household members and their living spaces; an association that transformed the child into a force of influence of the world of the living. In the course of my research two questions arose. Firstly, how did the prehistoric communities of the periods under study conceptualise the social identity of a deceased child? Secondly, what role and what sort of value this social identity might have possessed in the afterlife and in which way(s) it could have affected the surviving family and the community as a whole? The analysis of the material culture from selected child burial contexts will aim to provide answers to these questions.

1.2. ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE EH I TO MH I PELOPONNESE: KEY POINTS

The EH I-III and the subsequent MH I main cultural spheres of influence encompassed the Central and Southern mainland Greece, as well as Euboea, the islands of the Saronic Gulf and the Ionian islands. The northern border forms an east to west line across the central mainland starting south of the Spercheios River in the east and ending to the southeast corner of the



Map 1: Map of Greece with the region of the Peloponnese faded out (authors own).

Ambracian Gulf in the west, while its south border is defined by the capes Akritas, Tainaron and Maleas in the southern Peloponnese and the island of Elaphonisos off the coast of Laconia (see Map 1; Rutter 1993:746; Voutsaki 2012a:100).

The study's chronological scope encompasses the EH I-III and the MH I subphases (see Table 1). This timeframe allows to follow the development in the burial and ritual treatment of child burials and the response of local communities to the loss of a child.

The EH covers the period between the end of the Final Neolithic (hereafter FN)

PERIOD	RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY	ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY
EBA I	Early Helladic I (EH I)	3100/3000 - 2700/2650 B.C.
EBA II	Early Helladic II (EH II)	2700/2650 – 2200/2150 B.C.
EBA III	Early Helladic III (EH III)	2200/2150 – 2100/2000 B.C.
MBA I	Middle Helladic I (MH I)	2100/2000 – 1900/1800 B.C.
MBA II	Middle Helladic II (MH II)	1900/1800 – 1800/1750 B.C.
MBA III	Middle Helladic III (MH III)	1800/1750 – 1700/1600 B.C.

Table 1: Chronological chart of the periods covered in the thesis, with relative and absolute chronologies (designed after Manning 1995; Kouka 2009; Voutsaki *et al.* 2009; Forsén 2012).

ca. 3200/3100 B.C. and the succeeding MH ca. 2000 B.C. In accordance with observed changes in material culture, namely pottery and architecture, the EH period is divided into 3 sub-phases denoted by Roman numerals: EH I, II, III (Forsén 2012:53). The succeeding MH period spans ca. 2000 B.C. to ca. 1600 B.C., with a similar tripartite division (MH I, II, III) (Manning 1995; Kouka 2009; Voutsaki *et al.* 2009; Voutsaki 2012a:100; Milka 2023:4).

The EH I phase in the Peloponnese seems likely to have developed directly out of the central and southern Aegean FN culture (Pullen 2008:20-1), but it is rather poor in material culture as regards the studied sites in this thesis. As with the scanty material culture from the studied areas, evidence for architectural remains from Kolonna: Aegina in the Saronic Gulf is rather inconclusive as structures were destroyed /overbuilt by succeeding construction phases (Gauss 2010:742). The site of Kolonna, although not strictly part of the Peloponnese in geographical terms, is included in this thesis due to its proximity to the Argolid and the

shared material culture between Kolonna and the mainland (Smith 2011b:36). Data from this period regarding sites under study come almost exclusively from burials and do not show any clear evidence of social differentiation and competition that would imply the presence of strong ruling elites within the communities of the region (Halstead 2012). Pottery is mostly utilitarian and there is almost no evidence of metal use (see Table 7 in Chapter 2).

This picture changes dramatically during the EH II phase. The period sees an increase in population, the development of fairly uniform and more hierarchical communities across the Peloponnese living in numerous settlements, some with elaborate fortifications (Gauss 2019a) and large, even monumental buildings in the form of rectangular, free standing “Corridor Houses” (Caskey 1960:288-9; Rutter 1993:761; Pullen 2008:24-36; Maran 2016) while others were positioned in strategic locations favouring overseas connections (Sampson 1988; Weiberg 2016:40-2). The most characteristic examples of such sites are Lerna and Tiryns in the Argolid, Kolonna: Aegina and Ayios Stephanos in Laconia (Caskey 1960; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008; Simpson and Janko 2011; Voutsaki 2012a). There is also ample evidence for intensified production of pottery and for the use of sealing and weight systems (Mazzoni 2013; Maran and Kostoula 2014), probably reflective of an administrative hierarchy and an overall clear development comparable to sites of the Anatolian world (Şahoğlu 2008; Rahmstorf 2016). A gradual social hierarchy and cultural complexity is evident, based on increased wealth and intensification of overseas cultural contacts (Rutter 1993:769-72; Manning 1997:150; Forsén 2012:61). Vessels used for feasting and drinking ceremonies like the so-called “sauceboats” of the lustrous “Urfirnis” style appear (Caskey 1960:290; MacGillivray 2008; Pullen 2011a:190-1; Forsén 2012:53) alongside elaborate and standardised grave goods, including metal ornaments and tools as well as evidence for treating human remains and honouring the dead (Wiencke 1989:503-508; Cavanagh and Mee 1998:18; Cultraro 2007:85-6). These are signs of a more ritual-focused, socially hierarchical society, possibly ruled by some form of an elite. The quantity and quality of material culture from this phase testifies to the presence of increased wealth and social differentiation (Rutter 1993:794-7; Pullen 2011a:192-3; Pullen 2011b).

During the EH III period however, major sudden changes took place. Some settlements were destroyed and succeeded by fewer, smaller sites, usually unfortified. The monumental buildings were replaced by smaller, free-standing apsidal or rectangular long houses that seem to become the norm in the new era, signalling a change in focus from the communal to the individual household as the main social unit. These changes are visible in the settlement architecture of few Peloponnesian sites such as Lerna and Asine in the Argolid and Olympia

in Elis (Banks 2013; Pullen 2008:36-7; Wiersma 2014; Worsham 2015; Wiersma 2020). A new set of wheel-made clay vessels that replace the old types (Rutter 1995; Weiberg and Lindblom 2014) alludes to a strong emphasis given in hospitality. This cultural shift to a “prestige” goods economy in turn likely reflects an ideological/social shift from well-defined hierarchical social distinctions to kin-based relationships (Rutter 1993:769-774; Pullen 2016; Weiberg 2016:38-40). The changes are in many ways so profound that many scholars regard them as the true origins of the different cultural context of the succeeding MH period. In any case, the causes of these changes continue to be a subject of debate (Coleman 2000; Philippa-Touchais 2011; Pullen 2013; Wiener 2013; Dickinson 2016; Voutsaki and Milka 2017). The MH I phase shows that the previous EH traditions regarding material culture (i.e. architecture, pottery styles, burial customs) continued in places like Asine and Lerna (Wiersma 2020:146-147). The period is generally marked by depopulation and abandonment of settlements like Zygouries in Corinthia (Voutsaki 2012a:102; Whittaker 2014:38). However, few sites like Argos and Tiryns or Ayios Stephanos were possibly organised in clusters that allowed interregional networking while forging cultural connections to increase their wealth, power and regional influence (Philippa-Touchais 2022).

1.3. EXPLORING THE SOCIAL VALUE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CHILD: APPROACHES TO BURIAL RECORD EVIDENCE

The analysis of the subadult burial record provides valuable information for determining a child’s biological and social/cultural identity (Weiberg 2007:210; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008:119; Smith 2011a:46; García 2015:67-8). Biologically, a subadult is defined by its physical remains. The systematic scientific application of paleopathology and bioarchaeology in research studies regarding the child burial record in the prehistoric Peloponnese, offers valuable data on factors that determine a child’s health, such as diet and feeding practices, disease, stress and influence of the natural environment (Triantafyllou *et al.* 2008; Ingvarsson-Sundström *et al.* 2009; Halcrow and Tayles 2011; Voutsaki *et al.* 2013; Mays *et al.* 2017:11, 42; Gallou 2018:62; 2021:438-9). These parameters are linked to skeletal development and exert influence on child mortality rates and demographic estimates referring to populations in the past (Guy *et al.* 1997:221, 227; Duhig *et al.* 2008:491; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008; Voutsaki 2012b; Volk and Atkinson 2013:182).

On the other hand, the application of new theoretical approaches in the analysis of the burial contexts provides insights regarding the deceased's connection to material culture and offers a better understanding of children's social identity and agency in the past (Qvortrup 2009:631-2; Garcia 2015:60-1). More specifically, artefact categories found in child burials of the prehistoric Aegean such as pottery, tools and weapons, offer insights into the ways that the use of social space and technology can form distinct identities and specific characteristics of the childhood as a unique experience (Marangou 1991; Voutsaki 1998; Hielte-Stavropoulou 2004; Smith 2011a; Gallou 2018; Chapin 2021; Gallou 2021).

As a result of the new approaches adopted by scientific and theoretical analysis of the child's agency in the communities of the prehistoric Aegean, specific questions were raised regarding the development of powers, associations and social knowledge that may be unique to children. Analysis of the subadult burial contexts focuses on data that may disclose the social/cultural mechanisms that enable the active contribution of children to the economic life through the production of material culture. It may also reveal how the manipulation of material culture by the adults, makes the acquisition of the child's *post mortem* social identity possible (Nordquist 1987:103-6; Marangou 1991:211-25; Hamilakis 1998:119-29; Kamp 2001:23-4; Perry 2006:89-90; Baxter 2008:170-1; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008:107-112, 119; De Lucia 2010:608-9; Gallou 2010; Georgiadis 2011:40-1; Smith 2011a:55-7; Gallou 2018). The Aegean burial record can additionally disclose information on funerary practices, like the ones attested in EH II and EH III child burials from Asine and Olympia (see section 1.4), as expressions of eschatological beliefs and social mechanisms towards a child's *post mortem* socialisation which reflect the social and cultural value placed on children by their communities (Marangou 1991; Kamp 2001:13, 16-7; Gallou 2010:162-71; 2021:439; Kamp 2015:163).

1.4. A CHILD'S "RITES OF PASSAGE" AND ITS "SOCIALISATION" AFTER DEATH DURING THE EH I-MH I PERIOD

An efficient way to estimate children's social importance in the past is to explore their role in ritual activities (Langley and Litser 2018). Communities may have harboured concepts of a child's social life as a series of stages that lead to certain age thresholds and are marked by ritual events that take the form of initiation ceremonies. A sequence of activities, such as feasts, isolation and instruction of the initiates, shaving, washing, bodily mutilations, clothing

and adoption of specific hair styles (Kamp 2001:5) would act as “rites of passage” marking the end of the previous life stage and the beginning of the next. The completion of these rituals would lead to the acquisition of a new social identity with the associated upgraded social status (Hielte-Stavropoulou 2004:9, 13; Weiberg 2007:274, 386). For example, Aegean Late Bronze Age iconography depicts children actively engaged in such ritual activities with their body development, hairstyles and, on occasions, clothing and accessories referring to particular age stages (Koehl 2016; Chapin 2021).

Data from the Aegean child burial record and from many other burial contexts of prehistoric Europe disclose evidence for burial practices that likely express similar concepts and beliefs regarding a child’s journey to the afterlife. The material culture that reflects such mortuary behaviour is archaeologically traceable (Marangou 1991; Cavanagh and Mee 1998; Hamilakis 1998; Marangou 2001; Smith 2011a; 2011b; Gallou 2018; Langley and Litser 2018; Rebay-Salisbury and Pany-Kucera 2020:4; Gallou 2021).

Material culture evidence from child burial contexts provide a clearer picture during the following EH period, indicating that the socialising process of the dead child continued in the afterlife in stages defined by thresholds and marked by communal participation in formalised drinking ceremonies in a similar fashion to the rituals performed during the child’s lifetime, with the use of ceramic vessels deposited as grave goods after the completion of the ritual. The cemetery of Elis: Kalyvia is our only source of information regarding ritualistic funerary practices in the Peloponnese during the EH I period. The *kterismata* found within the chamber tombs were probably used in funerary rituals that included drinking ceremonies (see Table 7 and p. 29 in Chapter 2). It was not, however, possible to associate them with individual burials of any age; it may very well be that the performed funerary rituals were associated with the burials as groups of either families or groups of families. With regards to infants and children buried alongside adults, it is also likely that people of such a young age were not yet perceived as completed persons. An infant or a small child that had perished before the performance of the appropriate socialisation rituals was lacking the social persona needed for their acceptance as fully-fledged social human beings by the adult community (Ucko 1969: 271; Baxter 2008:165).

On the other hand, as we will see in the data examination from the child burial record in Chapter 2, evidence from EH II Asine reveals a pattern of standardised deposition of ceramics used for drinking, manifested in the equal number (three) of identical saucers found in each of the two pit burials (see Figure 9, Table 9 and p. 34) and in their strong typological similarities with those found in the pit burials from Argos (see Figure 3, Table 4 and p. 22-3),

Sparti (see Table 4) and Ayios Stephanos (see Table 10). These similarities along with the limited range of the deposited vessel types (Types 1 and 2), emphasise their role as a “funerary set” for use in drinking rituals (Smith 2011a:49-50). Furthermore, the chamber tomb of Elis that has housed a possible child burial contained two ceramic vessels of very similar appearance that were likely used in funerary rites (see p. 32). The miniature saucers found in child burials at Asine, Ayios Stephanos (Table 10, Figure 12), Sparti (see Table 4) and Zygouries (see Table 4) follow the same pattern of standardisation. Likewise, the EH III child burial record provides further data for standardised ceramic grave goods in the form of *askos* and *kantharos* sets from the Olympia burials (see pp. 45-8). There is also an *askos* vessel possibly associated with an EH III burial in Lerna as well as an intact obsidian blade deposited in another burial from the same site (see Table 12).

The manner of deposition of the grave goods may also indicate patterns of ritual practice. The inverted position of the vessels found *in situ* within a burial at Asine (see Table 9 and p. 34) has parallels in burials from Ayios Stephanos (see Table 10), Sparti (see Table 4) and Tiryns (see Figure 2 and Table 4). Furthermore, the presence of inverted full-sized saucers covering a miniaturized version of the same vessel type in a burial from Ayios Stephanos (see Table 10) and in a double adult/infant burial from Sparti (see Table 4) is indicative of their ritually charged meaning. The sets of inverted saucers perhaps signify the completion of a ceremonial stage.

The phenomenon of miniaturization (i.e. the scaling down of canonical and functional forms of material culture objects) has been identified in archaeological contexts all over the world (Tournavitou 2009:229; Rustoiu 2016:56). A miniature can be defined as an object that mimics in shape and form a regular sized object, but its smaller dimensions render it a miniscule version of its larger counterpart (Tournavitou 2009:213; Dewan 2023:81). Its form signifies or refers to the full-sized original item; however, the miniature retains its own meaning and function (Luce 2011:54; Fladd and Barker 2019:107)

The adult and child burial record of the prehistoric Aegean provides data for miniatures made of clay (bowls, jugs and “feeding bottles”) and of stone. Miniature metal tools are also present in burials and may signify a child’s specific biological stage or gender or perhaps refer to a child’s special skill or craft (Marangou 2024:89, 91).

The shapes of the miniatures of ceramic vessels match the full-sized vessel types of everyday use; however, their small size makes them unusable for cooking, serving or storing as they lack the required volume to contain substances. For that reason, miniatures have been usually associated with ritual practices (Tournavitou 2009:213; Rustoiu 2016:56; Fladd and

Barker 2019:108). With regards to miniature objects discovered in burial contexts however, this association is based simply on their unfamiliar form and/or size and should be approached with caution as the distinction of an object's use as practical/utilitarian or ritual/symbolic is a modern concept (Marangou 2024:69). It is likely that within a burial, the miniature's small dimensions are exactly what would cause it to lose its practical function, allowing for its transformation into a grave good imbued with symbolic meaning, prior to its deposition (Luce 2011:54). Miniatures were interpreted also as toys in the past; however, they were frequently made and manipulated by adults to convey ideas and values related to specific types of social or gender identities, or were symbolic of current and future roles assigned to an individual/group or were substitutes for items needed in the afterlife (Kohut 2011:147; Kamp 2015:161, 163).

In the field of Aegean prehistoric studies, any association of miniature objects with children can only be provided from burial contexts as there is a complete lack of child-related material culture from communal and domestic spaces (Marangou 2024:89). Miniatures in the past were regarded simply as symbolic substitutes for their normal scale counterparts and were considered non-functioning objects, indistinguishable from generic ceramic assemblages in archaeological sites' publications. Later research however, saw the need for a more extensive research and deeper understanding of the Aegean miniatures within their own funerary contexts (Marangou 1992; Dewan 2023:81). It is possible that such objects belonged to the child and may have been used for ritual activities during its short lifetime (e.g. rites of passage) or acquired an association with the dead individual during the funerary process. Perhaps their "appropriate" size would personify the child itself in a symbolic level, as the positioning of a miniature saucer at the child's nape in an EH II burial from Ayios Stephanos (see Table 10 in Chapter 2) might suggest, a physical testimony to the acquisition by the child of a new social identity in the afterlife.

The ritual 'killing' of grave goods by their deliberate breakage prior to their deposition in the burial has been attested in numerous burial contexts of the prehistoric Aegean. In the case of ceramic vessels, the act followed their use in drinking and/or liquid pouring ceremonies. The *kantharos* deposited within an EH III *pithos* burial in Olympia seems to have been intentionally damaged prior to its deposition, with both of its handles missing (see Table 13 and Figure 15; Rutter 1995:348, 437). In Asine, two of the three obsidian blades placed in one of the saucers from Grave I were deliberately broken in half, but only one half of each blade was deposited in the burial (see Figure 9 and Table 9).

There are also numerous reported cases of ceramic vessels found smashed within or outside Late Helladic (LH) chamber tombs. In burial sites of the Argive Plain in the Peloponnese, fragments of multiple drinking cups (*kylikes*) were found outside chamber tombs' entrances (Grinsell 1961:282-3). Furthermore, intentionally broken *kylikes* have been found either inside or at the entrance of LH chamber tombs in many other sites in the mainland (Åstrom 1987:215; Voutsaki 1993:85; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995:118; Cavanagh and Mee 1998:122) or outside Late Minoan (LM) chamber tombs in Crete (French 1990:77). Such practices, aiming to manipulate the cultural meaning of the vessels used in feasting/drinking funerary rituals, constituted a vivid demonstration of the continuity/evolution of older EH-MH traditions (Hamilakis 1998:122; Boyd 2015:120, 161).

The eschatological meaning behind the ritual destruction of an object's form may have been the belief that the object could not be used by the living any more since it belonged now to the world of the dead; the deceased owned it, and only they could use it (Gallou 2004:21). The "killing" of the object may have been also linked to superstition, for example the threat of pollution as a result of the "ownership" of the object by the dead (Parker Pearson 1999:26). Nevertheless, the ritual act underlined the state of interaction between the participants and the deceased and provided a powerful performative embodying experience that connected the living with the dead (Hamilakis 1998:122-3; Morrison and Park 2008:208).

An extension of the ritual breaking of the object is the process described as fragmentation, a widespread practice identified in many prehistoric funerary contexts (Chittock 2024:206; Chapman and Gaydarska 2015: 86, 91; Chapman 2000; Knappett 2020). Prior to the ritual event, decisions were likely made regarding which objects to damage and to what extent (Knight 2024:244). A vessel's apparatuses that were crucial to its functioning like the handles and the spout were broken off, but the main body of the vessel was deposited intact (Soles 1999:288; Morrison and Park 2008:208), as seems to be the case of the *kantharos* from Olympia. In this way, the vessel would cease to have any practical use for the living, signifying that is now "killed" (Hamilakis 1998:122; Soles 1999:288; Weiberg 2007:289). The three obsidian blades from Asine, along with the one found in the Lerna burial (see above p. 9) would have been used likely as razors or some other fine cutting tools for a variety of ritual acts such as shaving, hair cutting, or tattooing/scarring (Carter 1999:133, 150; Weiberg 2007:292; Weiberg 2013:34). The practice of incising the child's body in particular, may be associated with traditional body-healing methods (Gallou 2021:439). Also, given the very young age of the occupants of the graves, the blades may well have been used in the cutting of the umbilical cord immediately after birth, a ritual act symbolising the physical

separation from the mother as a first stage towards social independence (Smith 2011a:55). The presence in the burial context of two of the Asine blades as fragments (see above, p.11) indicates that the funerary custom of the ritual “killing” of a grave good was extended to non-ceramic objects as well.

Despite the scarcity of evidence, there seems to be a link between the fragments and the rest of a ritually broken object. After the deposition of the object in the grave the fragments may have been taken back to the settlement, remaining linked to the whole object they came from or being connected to a network of other fragments derived from the same or other objects (Chapman 2000:49–104; Chittock 2024:206; Chapman and Gaydarska 2015:86-7). We could also argue that fragmentation may have acted as a metaphor for the state of a dead person, particularly in secondary burials that involve the disturbance of the human skeletal form with intentional removal of bones (Chapman and Gaydarska 2015:101-5; Noterman 2024:69-85), a funerary practice also observed in EH and MH burial contexts (Caskey 1956:157-8; Taylour 1972:220; Dietz 1980:65). The deposition of a fragmented object in a secondary burial may mirror the fragmentation of the dead body (Chittock 2024:205-23; Noterman 2024:69-85). The missing fragment, linked to the missing skeleton part(s), may have served as reference to the dead beyond the burial context, and could have been used to negotiate their uninterrupted presence to living spaces linking the world of the living and the world of the dead (Vavouranakis and Bourbou 2015:172-3; Louwen 2024:51).

As we move from the late EH III into the MH I period, evidence for ritual activities during child burials are virtually nonexistent. This may suggest that burial customs regarding child burials were no longer included the deposition of -at least detectable-grave goods and a different, perhaps more intricate cosmological relationship between the dead child and the material culture was developed.

THESIS STRUCTURE

Following on from this chapter, Chapter 2 provides a review of the funerary customs evidenced by the child burials in the Peloponnese, as well as a closer look at child burials from specific sites that cover each of the EHI-MHI periods. Chapter 3 serves as the thesis’ main discussion chapter. Following the outlining of the data collection issues that my research has encountered, the chapter focuses on analysing and interpreting the burial record data in relation to the settlement evidence from the studied sites during the EH III and MH I

periods. The aim is to provide insights into communities' attitudes and beliefs that lived in those settlements regarding the *postmortem* social place and role of children during the aforementioned periods. The concluding Chapter 4 summarises the findings of my research on the EH I-MH I funerary customs associated with child burials as cultural expressions of eschatological beliefs that likely linked the dead child to the world of the living, with an everlasting effect in the whole community.

2. CHILD BURIALS IN THE PELOPONNESE FROM THE EH I TO MH I PERIODS - EVIDENCE FROM THE BURIAL RECORD

2.1. INTRODUCTION

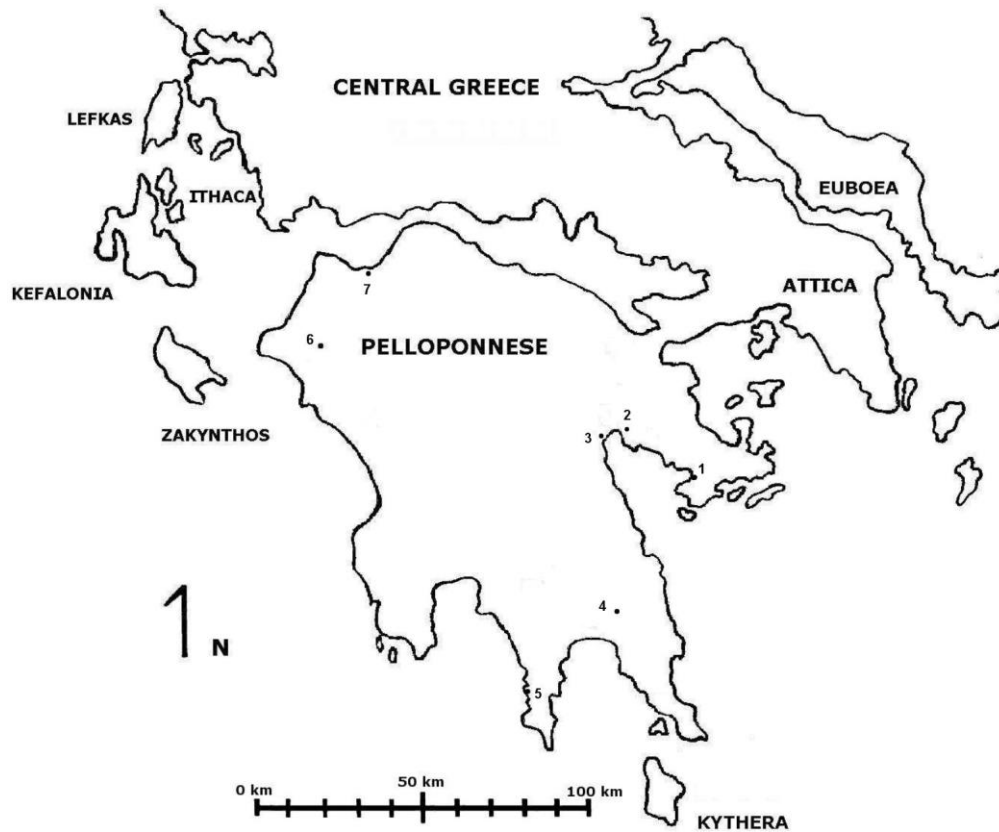
The aim of this chapter is to present and examine the evidence (location and types of graves and burials, funerary customs, presence and deposition pattern(s) of grave goods) from the burial record regarding the presence of child burials in the Peloponnese during the EH I-MH I periods. To that purpose, a brief account of the data from the FN burial record in the Peloponnese will be presented first. This part will hopefully provide the necessary background information for a better understanding of the developments in funerary customs during the succeeding period. What will come next is an account of the evidence from the EH I-MH I child burial record from various Peloponnesian sites followed by an in-depth examination of the evidence for child burials from selected sites used as case studies that cover the period in focus. Several reasons have led to the selection of specific sites for this examination. The sites of Asine and Lerna in the Argolid, north-eastern Peloponnese, were chosen because their intramural cemeteries are the best documented so far. The Elis: Kalyvia site in the western Peloponnese has provided the only – so far – securely dated EH I child burials in southern Greece. Olympia in Elis is the only western Peloponnesian site that allows for a better understanding of EH III burial practices while the EH II tomb in the ancient city of Elis displays unique construction features. Finally, in the Laconia region (south-eastern Peloponnese) the Ayios Stephanos' burial record includes the largest mortuary assemblage from the EH period in southern Greece (see Map 3).

2.2. REVIEW OF THE EH I TO MH I BURIAL RECORD FROM THE PELOPONNESIAN SITES

THE FN BACKGROUND

Burial contexts from the FN period, although relatively few in the region of the Peloponnese, provide us with sufficient data to identify some general trends in child burial practices of the

period (see Map 2; Georgiadis 2011:32). Infants, older children and adolescents were buried mainly within or very close to caves (Kouveleiki and Alepotrypa in Laconia) but there



Map 2: Location of the FN sites mentioned in the text. 1:Franchthi: Paralia, 2:Aria, 3:Lerna, 4:Kouveleiki Caves A and B, 5:Alepotrypa, 6:Elis: Kalyvia, 7: Kalamaki Elaiochoriou (author's own).

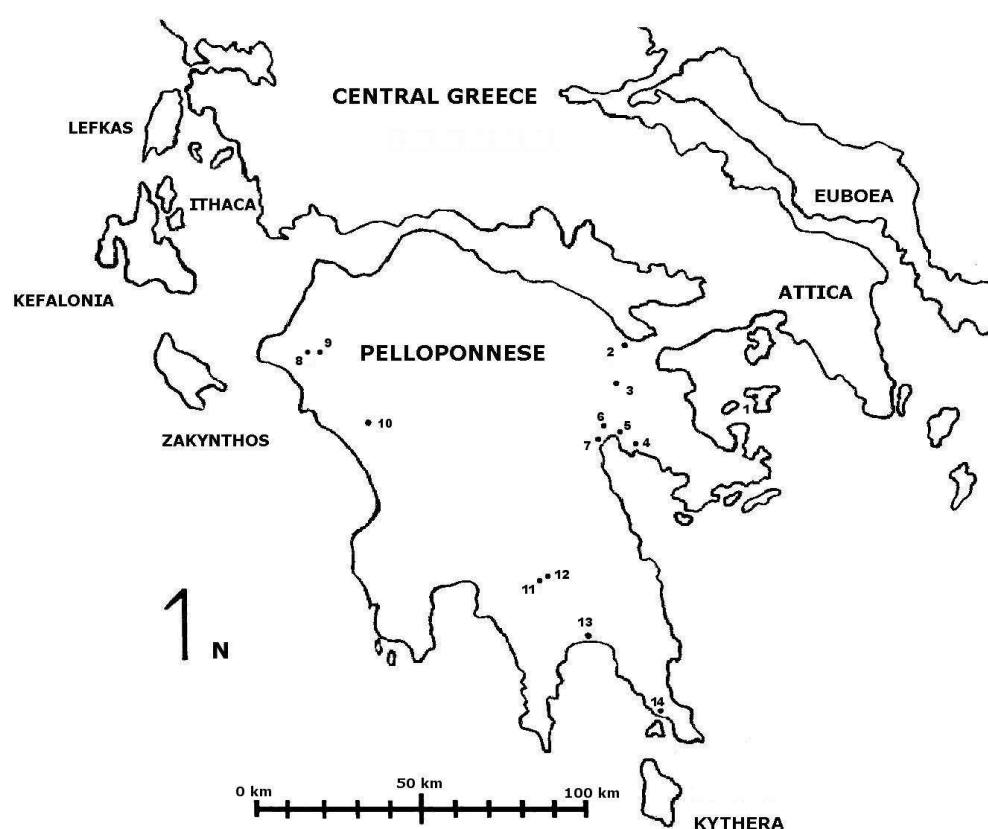
were also examples of extramural (Kalamaki Elaiochoriou in Achaea and Elis: Kalyvia in Elis) and intramural burials (Aria and Lerna in Argolid). The children were deposited in either single (Aria, Kouveleiki Cave A, Alepotrypa, Lerna) or in multiple burials amongst adults (Alepotrypa, Franchthi-Paralia in Argolid, Kouveleiki Caves A and B) in a contracted or extended posture, usually within simple pits or deposited in a more elaborate manner as in Alepotrypa. There was also a new type of child burial placed in a funerary ceramic vessel, exclusively reserved for sub-adults (Kouveleiki Cave A), as well as an example of a child

pithos burial within a chamber tomb in Kalamaki Elaiochoriou cemetery in Achaia (see Table 2).

LOCATION	FN CHILD BURIALS
Alepotrypa Cave	3x primary child burials within the cave deposited in a successive manner at the same spot: Two single burials, each one placed in a layer of stones, and at the lowest level a few bone fragments of a double burial.
	2x child cremations placed in a niche, bones only superficially burnt; children aged one and a half and three and a half years old, furnished with shell beads and covered with a large quantity of pottery sherds.
	1x pit containing multiple burials of adolescents and adults with some bodies placed in a contracted or extended position.
Kouveleiki Caves A and B	Cave A: 1x Single burial of an infant in an urn. Vessel was placed upside down within a larger one which was sealed by a flat stone.
	Caves A and B: Disarticulated remains of multiple sub-adult burials mixed with adult ones.
Franchthi: Paralia	1x child pit burial in a burial cluster outside the cave.
Aria	1x single pit burial of a child up to four years old, marked by a circle of stones and accompanied by a handled cup and a decorated bowl two vessels as <i>kterismata</i> . Found within the settlement.
Lerna	1x single primary burial of a neonate in a decorated beaker deposited under a house floor within the settlement.
Kalamaki Elaiochoriou	1x single primary <i>pithos</i> burial, probably of a child, in a rock-cut chamber tomb (Grave 9) within the cemetery; burial was placed sideways within a shallow pit. A few bone fragments survived. A bowl was also placed in the burial chamber.

Elis: Kalyvia	Child burials likely present among adult ones in some of the chamber tombs of the cemetery.
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Table 2: List of FN child burials from various Peloponnesian sites (compiled by the author, after Caskey 1957:159; Kontaxi 1994:838; Stravopodi 1994:836; Kontaxi 1996:711-12; Stravopodi 1996:710; Vasilogambrou 1996–1997:369; Douzougli 1998:132-33; Stravopodi 1999:1006; Bacvarov 2007:198; Papathanasiou 2009:24; Georgiadis 2011:37-8, 40-2, Table 1; Smith 2011b:31; Papathanasiou *et al.* 2018:425-6; Rambach 2018:341; Kaznesi *et al.* 2020:159).



Map 3: Location of the EH I - MH I sites mentioned in the text. 1:Aigina: Kolonna, 2:Cheliotomylos, 3:Zygouries, 4:Asine, 5:Tiryns, 6:Argos, 7:Lerna, 8:Elis: Kalyvia, 9: Elis, 10:Olympia, 11:Kouphovouno, 12:Sparti, 13:Ayios Stephanos, 14:Pavlopetri (author's own).

Major research into the topic of EBA and early MBA burial practices has evaluated data from sites that include adult and child burials positioned either within settlements or deposited in family tombs in extramural cemeteries (see for example, Cavanagh and Mee 1998, Ingvarsson-Sundström 2003, 2008; Weiberg 2007, 2011 and 2013; Vasilogambrou 2008; Taylour 1972; Lagia and Cavanagh 2010; Milka 2010 and 2023; Smith 2011a and 2011b; Gallou and Henderson 2012; Rambach 2018). This section aims to summarise the burial evidence provided by the EH I- MH I Peloponnesian sites selected for discussion in this thesis.

EH I

Two types of adult and child graves were in use during this period. The first type was the rock-cut chamber tomb attested in the organised extramural cemeteries at Elis: Kalyvia in Elis, Kalamaki Elaiochoriou in Achaea and also Pounta cemetery in Pavlopetri, along with the nearby site of Megali Spilia in Laconia. The second type was the simple pit grave that could be either intramural (Aigina: Kolonna) or extramural (Elis: Kalyvia). The chamber tomb burials from Elis: Kalyvia is the only source of information regarding burial offerings, comprised of pottery vessels and objects made of animal bone and stone (see Figures 5, 6, 7, Table 7 and p. 29).

LOCATION	GRAVE TYPE	
	CHAMBER TOMB CEMETERY	EH I CHILD PIT BURIALS
Kalyvia	24x rock-cut chamber tombs arranged in two parallel rows hosting furnished multiple burials of all ages.	A small number of shallow pit graves accommodating unfurnished single juvenile burials with bodies in a contracted posture, were positioned close or around the chamber tombs' entrances or dispersed across the cemetery.

Kalamaki Elaiochoriou	49x rock-cut chamber tombs hosting both single and multiple adult burials furnished with grave goods.	None.
Pavlopetri - Megali Spilia	More than 60x extramural rock-cut chamber tombs in use from at least the EHI to EH III periods. Found empty.	None.
Kolonna	None.	12x intramural primary burials all unfurnished: 9x child single burials up to 9m. old. 1x child single burial up to 3m. old. 1x child single burial up to 7y. old. 1x child double burial of twins up to 3m. old.

Table 3: List of types of graves hosting confirmed and possible child burials from various EH I sites mentioned in the text (compiled by the author, after Harding *et al.* 1969; Vasilogamvrou 1996 – 1997:366-80; 2000:45; Rambach 2007; Morgan 2008:42; Vasilogamvrou 2008; Kanz *et al.* 2010:479, Table 1; Smith 2011b;31-3; Weiberg 2011:782; Gallou and Henderson 2012; Zavvou 2012:21-2; Rambach 2018; Gallou 2020; C. Gallou, personal communication).

EH II

Extramural cemeteries with multiple burials continued to be in use (Pavlopetri), while new ones (Zygouries in Korinthia) were introduced. More data comes from a grave in Cheliotomylos in Korinthia and we receive important information on intramural pit graves from Sparti in Laconia and Tiryns and Argos in Argolid (see Table 4). Finally, a wealth of information regarding child burials comes from the sites of Asine in Argolid, Elis in Elis and Ayios Stephanos in Laconia (see 2.3).

	EH II CHILD BURIALS	<i>KTERISMATA</i>
Pavlopetri	4x small chamber tombs devoid of human remains.	None.
Zygouries	A few small teeth and a badly preserved skull fragment was present among 11 adults in Tomb VII.	Burials furnished with jars, saucers and sauceboats. Non-ceramic material included silver and gold pendant fragments, silver diadem fragments, bronze and silver pins, stone beads and a possible stone seal.
	1x double adult-child burial under layers of skeletal material in Tomb XXII.	
	1x fragment of a small skull among 15 adults in Tomb XX.	1x unpainted miniature Type 1 saucer described by the excavator as a “small patera” was recovered from Tomb XX.
Cheliotomylos	Multiple burials of 20 to 30 adults and children.	Bodies were laid above a layer of large amounts of EH II pottery, mainly sauceboats and saucers.
Sparti	1x child single primary pit burial. 1x double primary pit burial of an adult with an infant. 2x child secondary pit burials. 1x child single primary <i>pithos</i> burial.	2x inverted vessels of unknown type from the single child burial. 1x miniature spouted bowl or cup placed beneath an upturned saucer/bowl from the double burial. 1x child secondary burial was placed in a large saucer 1x child secondary burial was placed in a decorated, two-handled <i>skyphos</i> (drinking vessel).

Tiryns	1x neonate single primary pit burial 1x adult female single primary pit burial Both from Lower Town.	The skeletal remains from the neonatal burial were covered by a layer of EH II pottery and placed beneath an inverted EH II T-rim basin.
Argos	1x cist grave with no skeletal remains from the South Cemetery.	2x EH II Type 2 deep saucers.

Table 4: List of confirmed and possible/probable EH II child burials with associated grave goods from sites mentioned in the text (compiled by the author, after Blegen 1928: 46, 47-8, 51, 53, 55; Courbin 1954:176; Harding *et al.* 1969:130; Gercke *et al.* 1975:9-10; Forsén 1992:47, 49, 51, 72-3; Cavanagh and Mee 1998:15; Wiencke 2000:544, 546, Fig.II.75; Weiberg 2007:216-21; Vasilogambrou 2010; Smith 2011b 40-42, 44-5, 47-8, 63-5; Tsiaggouris 2017:188-9).

The small size of the four chamber tombs at Pavlopetri gives the impression that they could have housed burials of infants and children. The tombs formed a small cluster closer to the sea than the rest of the tombs as if they were deliberately separated (Harding *et al.* 1969:130; Smith 2011b:44). One of the larger chamber tombs in the cemetery contained saucers or sauceboats, sherds with finger-impressed and linear decoration, and fragments of obsidian blades (Zavvou 2012:23). The miniature saucer in Tomb XX from Zygyouries (Blegen 1928:53) is not necessarily associated with a child burial, however on account of a number of cases where miniature vessels were associated with children in EH burial contexts, for example in Asine and Ayios Stephanos, its presence may support this interpretation (see Tables 9 and 10, Figure 12; Smith 2011b:46). The multiple burials at Cheliotomylos were deposited in a well 17m deep and 1m wide. Despite the large number of bodies, the deposition seems to have been a single event (Forsén 1992:73; Weiberg 2007:216-21). Both of the single pit burial and the double pit burial from Sparti were possibly intramural, as

suggested by their location close to EH II wall structures and pottery (Zavvou and Themou 2009:107-9; Smith 2011b:42). The other two secondary pit burials and the *pithos* burial were



Figure 1: Plan of the EH II Tomb VII from Zygouries (redrawn after Blegen 1928:44, Fig.38).

probably also intramural as they were located very close to the remains of an EH II building (see Table 4; Tsiaggouris 2017:188-9). The Tiryns neonate burial (see Table 4) may be described as extramural since the contemporary settlement remains were located at some distance from it (Forsén 1992:49; Zangger 1994:197, 199; Smith 2011b:41). The basin that covered the burial was of a type that has a possible parallel from Lerna (see Figure 2; Wiencke 2000:544, 546, Fig.II.75). The cist grave from Argos was identified as extra-mural as it was located at some distance from the possible EH II settlement on the Aspis hill (Smith 2011b:40). However, this seems inaccurate as the excavator does mention contemporary architectural remains close to the burial (Courbin 1954:176). It was likely housing a child burial, as the two saucers were of the same type as those furnishing the contemporary infant

burials at Asine (see Figure 3; Courbin 1954:176; Smith 2011b:40). In addition, at the site of Kouphovouno in Laconia, to the south-west boundary of the modern city of Sparti, an EH II saucer seemingly accompanying the adult remains of the presumed EH II adult and infant double burial was likely intrusive from the overlaying EH II stratum (see p. 26; Smith 2011a:51).

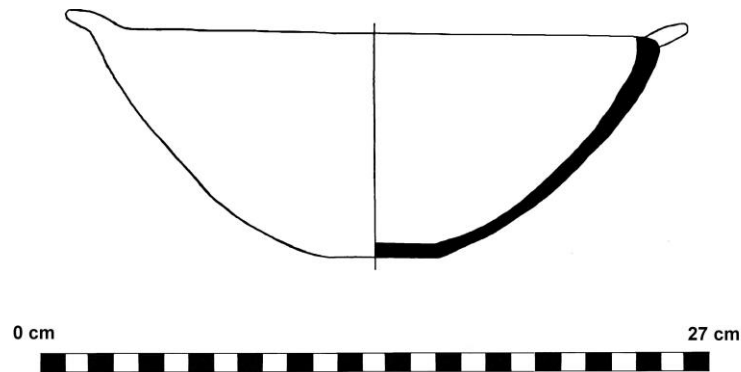


Figure 2: Late EH II T-rim basin Type 6 from Lerna, possibly similar to the one found in the EH II child burial at Tiryns (redrawn after Wiencke 2000, Fig. II. 75).

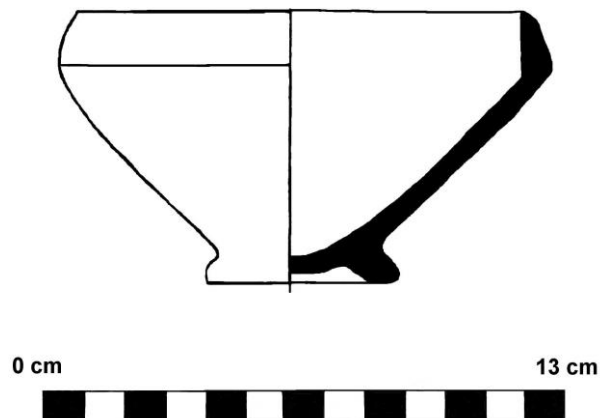


Figure 3: Type 2 deep saucer from the EH II possible child cist burial, Argos (redrawn after Wiencke 2000, Fig. II. 93).

EH III

The sites of Kolonna, Lerna and Olympia are the only ones in the region that provided evidence for intramural child pit and *pithos* burials from this period, many of them furnished (see 2.3). In Kolonna, although there had been early reports of child jar burials inside houses (Welter 1938:13), the presence of EH III child graves was confirmed by nine intramural unfurnished pit burials. Six of them belonged to individuals up to 9 months old, two were up to one-year-old, and one up to 3-months-old (Gauss 2019b:1124; Kanz *et al.* 2010:479, 481, Table 1). Additionally, intramural adult pit burials were found in Asine (Milka 2023:156).

MH I

Information regarding intramural child burial practices during this period is available from Asine, Ayios Stephanos, Lerna (see 2.3) and also Argos, Kouphovouno and Kolonna (see Table 5).

LOCATION	AREA	MH I CHILD BURIALS
Kolonna	—	18x infant intramural pit burials, likely deposited under house floors in pits and jars. All unfurnished: 3x burials up to 3 months old. 2x burials up to 7 months old. 13x burials up to 9 months old.
Kouphovouno	—	1x infant single primary pit burial (G3). Unfurnished.

Argos	Aspis hilltop	3x intramural primary burials aged between 6 months to 1 year old placed in a contracted position under the floors of houses. All unfurnished.
		1x infant single pit burial (TA 9) 1x infant single jar burial (TA 10) 1x infant double pit burial (TA 12) with a contemporary adult burial (TA 11).
		1x intramural juvenile burial (TA 3) aged 14 to 15 years old.
	Deiras ravine, south-west of Aspis hill	1x intramural child double <i>pithos</i> burial with an adult woman placed under the floor of a semi – underground domestic structure (P1). Unfurnished.
	“House of the <i>Pithoi</i>” South Quarter	6x intramural primary burials all unfurnished: 1x infant single pit burial (T.290) 1x child single pit burial (T.264) 3x adolescent single pit burials (T.279, T.291 and T. 299) 16- to 19-year-old, placed in a contracted posture under the floor. 1x intramural jar burial presumably of an infant (T.268), not very well documented.

Table 5: List of MH I child burials from sites mentioned in the text (compiled by the author, after Forsén 1992:105; Voutsaki *et al.* 2006:616, Table 1; Kanz *et al.* 2010:479, Table 1; Lagia and Cavanagh 2010; Cavanagh and Mee 2011:46; Smith 2011a:50; Philippa-Touchais 2013:79-83; Papadimitriou *et al.* 2015: 162, 169; Philippa-Touchais *et al.* 2016:456; Gauss 2019b:1127; Milka 2023:273-7; Balitsari 2024).

The child burials in Kolonna could only be dated broadly to the MH period due to poor

recording procedures and the overall lack of grave goods (Gauss 2019b:1127; Kanz *et al.* 2010:479, Table 1). At Kouphovouno, the assumed double adult/child burial was initially dated to EH II. However, almost all burials in the cemetery are dated to MH (Lagia and Cavanagh 2010) and in addition, double burials in the EH were very rare (Smith 2011a:51). The infant grave (G3) was stratigraphically above an EH II structure and since the EH III phase is non-existent at the site, it may be suggested that this burial is probably of MH I date and unrelated to the adult burial (G2) (Forsén 1992:105; Cavanagh and Mee 2011:46; Smith 2011a:50). Evidence for remains of a contemporary settlement indicate that the burials were possibly deposited among now eroded structures (Lagia and Cavanagh 2010:335; Cavanagh *et al.* 2025).

2.3. CASE STUDIES

Elis: Kalyvia

EH I

Excavations at the site have revealed an organised extramural cemetery of twenty-four rock-cut chamber tombs. Unfortunately, some tombs sustained extensive damage during works (Rambach 2007:63-4). Remains of EH I structures in the vicinity of the cemetery perhaps indicate the presence of a settlement (Morgan 2008:42). The vast majority of the tombs belonged to EH I, but some are certainly of an earlier, FN date (Rambach 2007:68; Smith 2011b:31). The tombs were dug at the edge of a semi-circular mound forming a curved line, oriented north-east towards the Pineios river (see Figure 4; Rambach 2007:63, 65). They were arranged in two slightly overlapping parallel rows with the outer row at a slightly lower level than the inner one. Because of the difference in height, the higher inner row of tombs had their *dromoi* (passageways) dug on the surface level, in contrast to the lower outer row ones that were dug deeper into the rock, in a shaft-like fashion (Rambach 2018:342). The *dromoi* led to small *stomia* (entrances) found to be unsealed at the time of the excavation (with only two exceptions) and of just enough space to allow for only one person to enter crawling in (Rambach 2018:342). These tiny openings, approximately 0.70m height x 50cm width, led to a spacious main chamber with a standard height of 1.00-1.20m and a flat roof

(Rambach 2007:65, Figure 14). Many chambers of adjacent tombs were interconnected with a small passage and had a large, slightly elevated, curved niche constructed at the rear of the

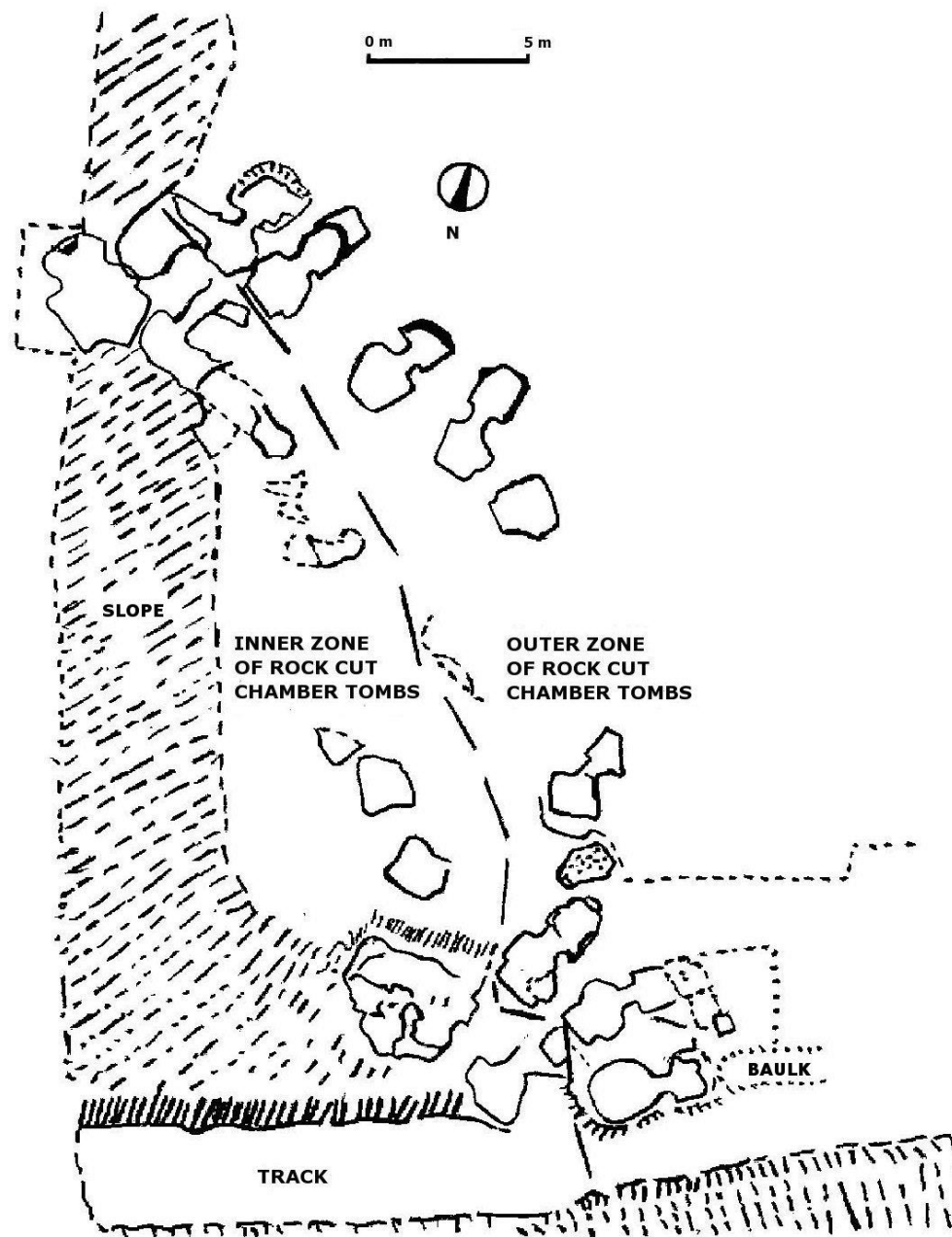


Figure 4: Plan of the EH I cemetery at Elis: Kalyvia with the chamber tombs arranged in two rows (redrawn after Rambach 2018:343, Fig. 34.3).

chamber with two additional smaller ones on either side (Rambach 2018:341). The number of bodies in most of the tombs was varying from 2 to 16 (5-8 numbered skulls on average) preserved in a very good condition. (Rambach 2007:65-6; Kossyva 2009:356-8).

ARCHITECTURE		BURIAL CUSTOMS
OUTER ROW	Tombs with uniform size and sub-rectangular shape. Well-defined rear niches.	Strict and consistent observance of burial customs. One or two primary burials in contracted posture, one body placed in the back niche and the other on the floor. The remains of the previous burials placed in one or both lateral niches. A twin burial is an exception with one body in expended posture. Both placed in the rear niche.
INNER ROW	Variable size tombs. Irregular and varied ground plans of tombs. Side niches in burial chamber occasionally missing.	Lack of consistency in burial practices. Bodies in extended posture, stacked on the floor of the burial chamber on top or across each other or turned face down. Final burials were found on top of the previous ones.

Table 6: List of similarities and differences between the two rows of chamber tombs at Elis: Kalyvia (compiled by the author).

Despite their shared features, however, the two rows of tombs were divided by substantial construction differences between them, mainly in size and ground plan (see Table 6; Morgan 2008:42; Rambach 2018:342). These differences may be explained in terms of their slight chronological difference, with the inner row graves been constructed as early as the FN (Smith 2011b:31) and those of the outer row during the EH I (Rambach 2007:65-6, 68; Rambach 2018:342).

The differences may also be reflected in the observed burial customs and the retrieved grave goods. Diagnostic pottery from the burials have provided further support to the different dating estimates for the two rows of tombs, as some of the shapes and decoration style testified to the cemetery's use from the FN, for example the pottery from Tomb 15 (Rambach 2018:346-8). Grave goods from the tombs comprised of handmade dark brown burnished pottery of fine quality with incised linear or patterned decoration (Rambach 2007:67) as well as non-ceramic objects such as a bone palette and pendants made of semi-precious stone and animal teeth (see Figures 5, 6 and 7, also Table 7; Morgan 2008:42; Rambach 2018:344-5).

CERAMICS	Small globular handled jars with tall neck as the most common vessel shape.	One – handled cups.	Bowls.	1x small double vessel (<i>kernos</i>).
OTHER	1x semi-tubed bone palette.	Pendants of semi-precious stone and animal teeth.	1x copper fragment.	

Table 7: List of grave goods from the EH I chamber tombs at Elis: Kalyvia (compiled by the author).

The majority of the ceramic assemblage, along with the non-ceramic material, from the cemetery have parallels in Attic and Cycladic burial contexts, like the double *kernos* which

was probably used in rituals (see Figure 7), testifying to the area's substantial cultural links with those regions (Rambach 2007:67-8). The juvenile single contracted pit burials (see Table 3) were, however, unfurnished (Rambach 2007:64; Morgan 2008:42; Rambach 2018:341). The cemetery's overall population has been calculated to about 150 individuals (Rambach 2007:65). The presence of child burials among the adults within the chamber tombs has also been noted (Rambach 2007:65)

With the exception of one tomb still in use during the early phase of EH II (Rambach 2007:341), there is no other data regarding the continuation of burial practices in the Elis: Kalyvia cemetery beyond the EH I period (Morgan 2008:42).

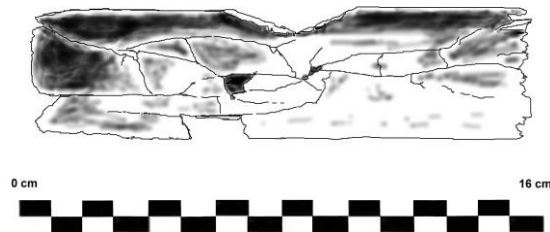


Figure 5: Bone palette from an EH I chamber tomb burial, Elis: Kalyvia (redrawn after Rambach 2007, Fig. 35).

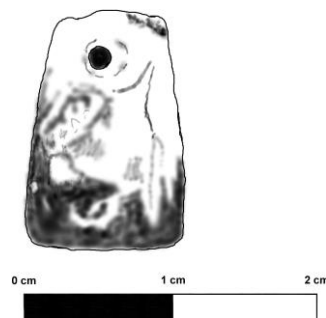


Figure 6: Pendant from semi-precious stone from an EH I chamber tomb burial, Elis: Kalyvia (redrawn after Rambach 2007, Fig. 37).

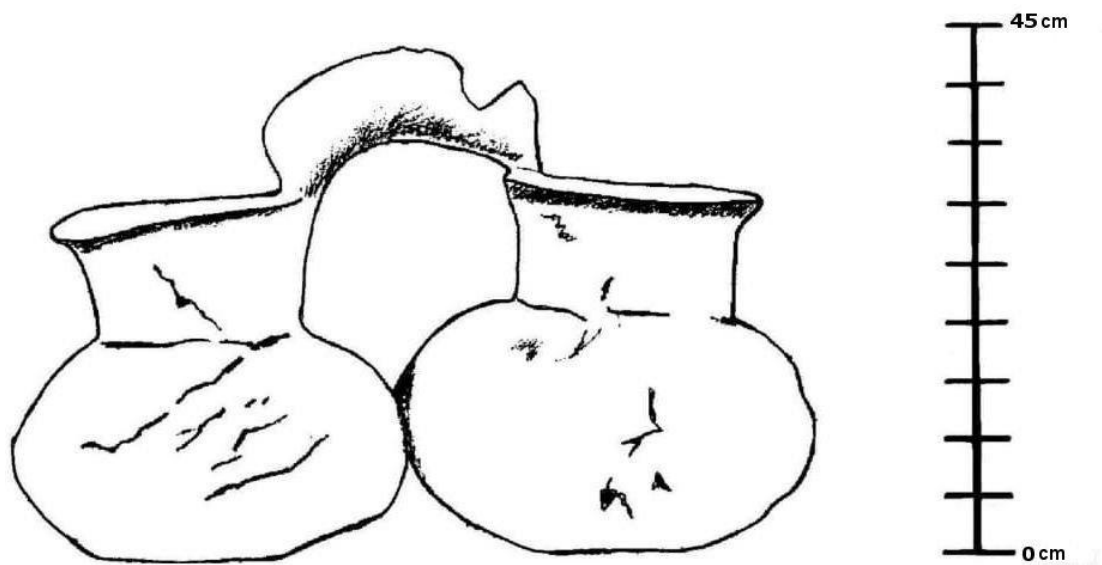


Figure 7: EH I double vase (*kernos*) from Grave 12, Elis: Kalyvia (redrawn after Rambach 2018:344, Fig. 34.7).

Elis, Elis

EH II

Further data regarding chamber tombs and burial practices of the period in focus comes from the ancient city of Elis in the Elis region, where a single small cist grave was discovered close to the ancient theatre. The grave features a slightly trapezoidal shape with its sides lined with upright stone slabs (orthostats) and was incorporated within a rock-cut chamber tomb. An additional orthostat was sealing the tomb's entrance, placed in front of the lateral slabs. The tomb had approximately 0.50m depth, 0.60m width and up to 0.80m length. It was covered by a large and rough capstone, overlapping both the orthostat and the upright slabs with a stone deposit placed over it, forming perhaps a kind of platform. The positioning of a cist grave within a chamber tomb is a unique feature with no recorded parallels in the prehistoric Aegean burial record; it seems to have been a hybrid structure associated with the EC II Keros –Syros culture, combining Cycladic characteristics with Helladic elements. Although no skeletal remains were reported from the grave's interior, its small dimensions

could lead to the hypothesis that it might have accommodated a child burial (Koumouzelis 1980:56-7; Smith 2011b:77). Within the chamber tomb, abundant traces of fire were found, along with two jars placed behind the entrance. The jars contained ash mixed with soil, evidence of in situ burning thus identifying the burial as a possible cremation (Koumouzelis 1980:57, 60). However, the jars contained no bone fragments, so it is more likely that the ashes may have belonged to some kind of other organic material or fabric. Perhaps it is evidence of a fumigation ritual to purify the tomb, not unlike the one hypothesised to explain the soot layer found on the floor of the Tomb I at Lithares in Boeotia, Central Greece (Cavanagh and Mee 1998:18). The vessels were similar. They featured thick sides (0.07m) and their surface was covered with dark burnished slip. Their rounded body, cylindrical necks and tubular lugs combined Cycladic with mainland features. One jar featured perforated lugs, while the other one bore a narrow semi-circular relief band on either side of its lugs (see Figure 8; Koumouzelis 1980:60-1). The analysis of the grave type along with the mortuary evidence and the vessels' typology points to strong Cycladic influence as a result of overseas cultural contacts (Koumouzelis 1980:55-57, 60-3).

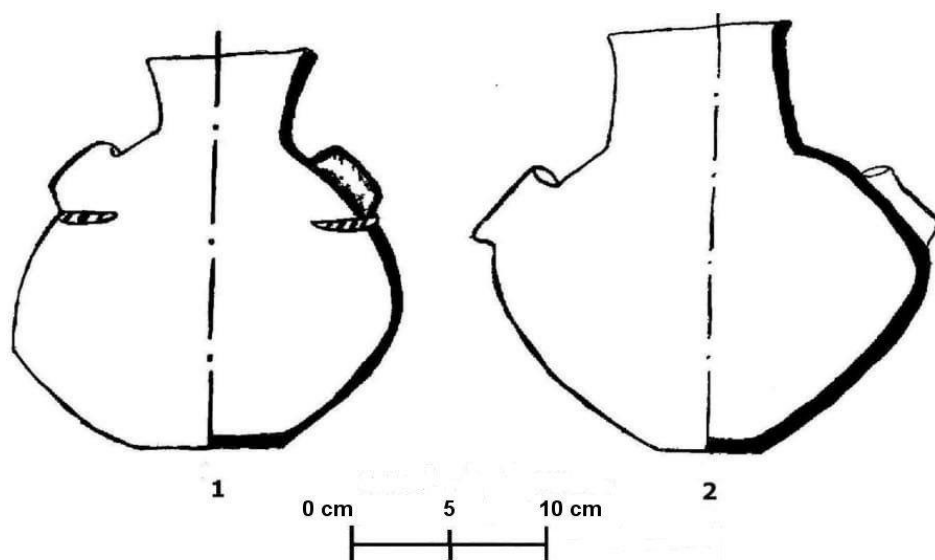


Figure 8: Jars with collared necks from the EH II chamber tomb in Elis, Elis (redrawn after Koumouzelis 1980, Fig. 18).

Asine

EH II

At Asine, the Lower Town area has provided data of 24 burials of all ages covering the EH II-MH I periods (see Table 8 and Figure 10).

The EH II child burial record is represented by two pit graves cut in natural shallow cavities. It is unclear whether they were intramural or extramural because, according to the excavators, no contemporary architectural remains were located in the vicinity of the graves. They did, however, report evidence of domestic activity, i.e. a *bothros* containing a number of ceramics, nearby (Frödin and Persson 1938:212-214). A possible third child grave from Terrace III of the Lower Town could be positively identified as intramural as it was located close to a wall of the EH II House R (Persson 1938b:340-1; Pullen 1987:537).

Grave I was of square ground plan (0.9m x 0.9m) defined in its northern edge by a row of stones. At a depth of 0.40m it accommodated a poorly preserved single infant skeleton, in east-west orientation, of which only fragments of the crushed skull and remains of *tibiae* and *femorae* were preserved (Persson 1938b:338). Grave II featured similar dimensions and ground plan, and reportedly contained scant remains of a single infant skeleton, but in the absence of any publication no further details are available (Pullen 1990:10). Both burials were furnished (see Table 9). The possible third grave was a rock-cut cavity which, according to the excavator, resembled a “bathtub”. It featured dimensions of 0.70m x 0.30m and was found empty (Persson 1938b:340-1; Pullen 1990:10).

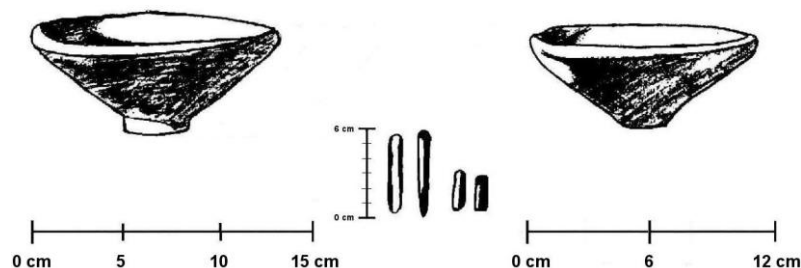


Figure 9: Grave goods (saucers and obsidian blades) from the EH II Grave I, Lower Town, Asine (redrawn after Frödin and Persson 1938:340, Fig. 230).

GRAVE TYPE	EH II	EH III/MH	MH I
Simple Earth Pit	2x infants.	None.	4x adults. 3x children. 2x infants.
Stone Lined Earth Pit	1x infant.	3x adults.	1x adult and 1x infant in a double burial.
Burial Jar	None.	None.	3x juveniles.
Cist Grave	None.	None.	4x adults.
TOTAL	3	3	18

Table 8: List of number and age of occupants of EH II to MH I burials by grave type from the Lower Town at Asine (compiled by the author).

The two securely dated EH II child burials were furnished with three handmade pottery vessels each. Four obsidian blades, two complete and two broken, were found inside one of the saucers that accompanied the burial in Grave I (see Figure 9 and Table 9; Persson 1938b:338). The grave goods of the burial in Grave II comprised of vessels very similar to the ones from Grave I, but they were found inverted. It is likely that they were originally deposited that way; however, the possibility that they were initially stacked cannot be excluded either. A similar depositional arrangement for the vessels of Grave I is also possible (Persson 1938b:339-40; Cultraro 2007:91).

In addition to these burials, the remains of an adult and an infant were associated with EH II pottery sherds. However, the extreme level of disturbance and decay of those remains makes

their association with specific burial(s) or any pottery assemblage impossible, therefore a more secure dating is highly challenging (Ingvarsson-Sundström 2003:66).

Grave I <i>Kterismata</i>		Grave II <i>Kterismata</i>
Ceramics	Other	Ceramics
1x saucer Type 2 shallow, inverted conical shape with ring foot, interior glazed, painted with dark brown paint. Height: 6.5cm Diameter: 11.5cm	1x complete obsidian blade. Length: 5.5cm Width: 1.3cm	1x saucer Type 2 shallow with inverted conical shape, slightly convex sides, partially painted dark brown. Height: 5.5cm Diameter: 11.5cm
	1x complete obsidian blade. Length: 6cm Width: 0.8cm	
1x saucer Type 2 inverted conical shape with low and narrow ring foot, unpainted and partially glazed. Height: 0.5cm Diameter: 14cm		1x saucer Type 2, inverted conical shape with very shallow ring foot, interior painted dark brown and glazed. Height: 4.5cm Diameter: 13.5cm
1x miniaturized saucer Type 2, very shallow with slightly convex sides and a broad slightly rounded base. Height: 2.7cm Diameter: 7cm	2x obsidian blade fragments.	1x saucer Type 1, very shallow, with slightly flat base interior painted dark brown and glazed. Height: 4.5cm Diameter: 15cm

Table 9: List of grave goods from the EH II infant burials at Lower Town, Asine, (compiled by the author).

MH I

Evidence for the EH III period is restricted to a few adult pit burials (Milka 2023:156) but from the beginning of this period the Lower Town became the focus of both intense habitation and intramural burial activity (Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008:16; Milka 2023:132). The area comprises the earliest of Asine's three MH cemeteries with the second one (the East Cemetery) located to the east of the settlement which was in use from the MH II period onwards and the third one in the neighbouring Barbouna hill dated from the MH III (see Figure 10; Ingvarsson-Sundström *et al.* 2013:149; Voutsaki *et al.* 2012:447, 450).

The Lower Town has produced a total of 110 graves spanning the MH. Of those graves, 18 are dated to late MH I and were usually located between ruined and abandoned structures, while few were also positioned under houses that were still in use at the time of burial (Milka 2006: 54, 56; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008:17; Voutsaki *et al.* 2012:447, 450; Ingvarsson-Sundström *et al.* 2013:149, 153; Milka 2023:134-141). Cist and jar burials are present too (see Table 8; Voutsaki *et al.* 2009:8-9). However, the majority of the burials were placed in simple pit graves, a few with a stone-lined perimeter (see Figure 11; Ingvarsson-Sundström *et al.* 2013:153; Milka 2023:156). A number of pit burials belonged to neonates and infants (aged from 1 to 10 months old), all unfurnished (Persson 1938b:342; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008:88). They were almost all single inhumations (Persson 1938b:342) with the exception of one double adult-child burial (Milka 2023:139). Recent research has also confirmed the existence in some burials of additional human bones that did not belong to the deposited bodies, such as the neonate bones in grave MH98 (see Figure 11; Milka 2023:194). The bodies of the children were laid to rest in a contracted position on their side, typical for MH burial practice, and were reportedly accompanied by very few grave goods, particularly ceramic jugs and cups or shells (Persson 1938b:342-6). The burials did not follow any fixed orientation, although there was a tendency to place the head towards east and north. Research on infants and children has shown that they were suffering in life from dental diseases causing growth disruption, periosteal lesions as the body's response to infections and arrested bone development due to malnutrition and/or environmental stress (Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008:90-2). No *pithos* burials have been identified, however a very small number (two or three) of juveniles were buried in small jars, from 0.36m to 0.75m tall (see Table 8; Voutsaki *et al.* 2012:452; Ingvarsson-Sundström *et al.* 2013:153).

From the late MH I, the need of family groups to bury their dead in a manner that sets them apart from the rest of the community led to the establishment of the first organised burial

ground away from the settlement – the East Cemetery (see Figure 10; Milka 2006:56; Ingvarsson-Sundström *et al.* 2013:153, 157). Despite this development and the establishment of the later, third extramural cemetery on the Barbouna hill (Milka 2023:230-60), the Lower Town continued to be used as a burial site throughout the MH period (Ingvarsson-Sundström *et al.* 2013:149).

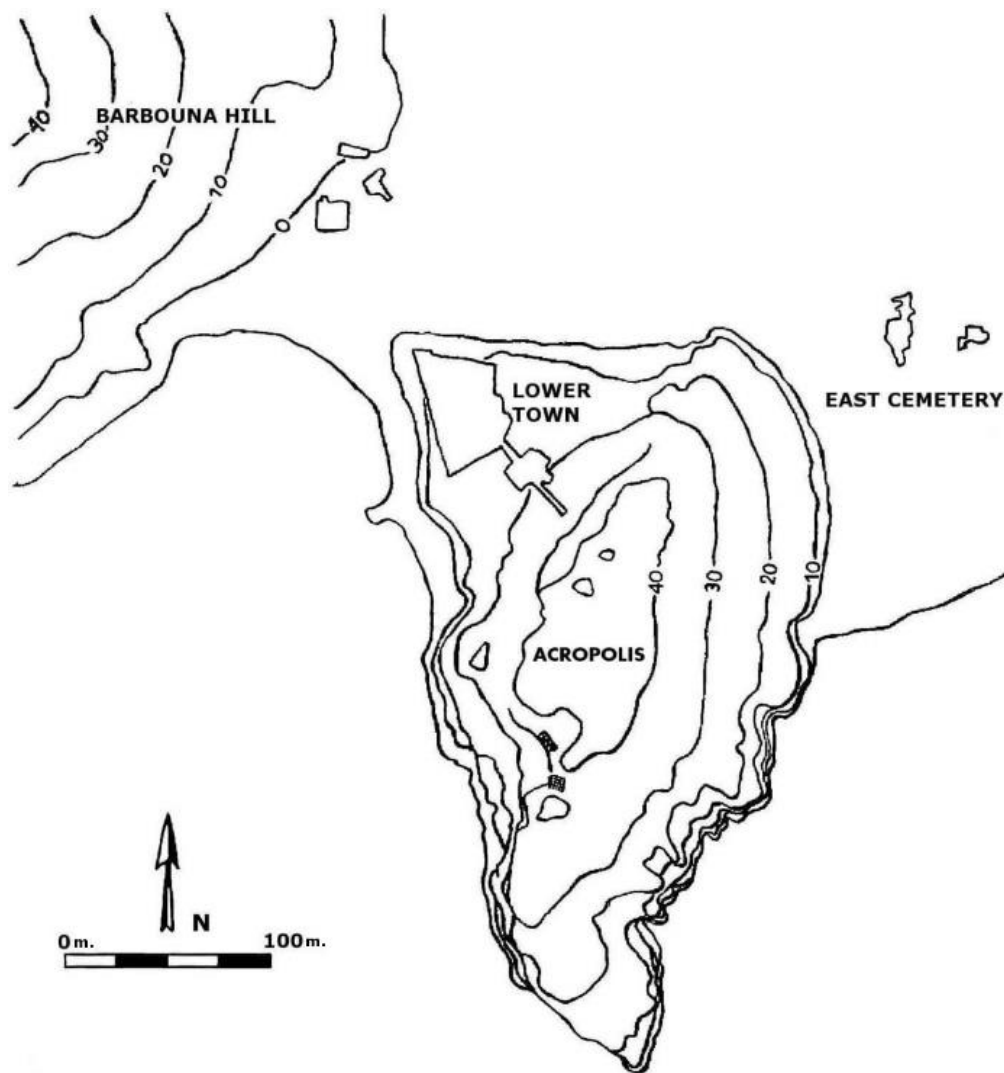


Figure 10: Plan of the Kastraki promontory in Asine with its burial sites (redrawn after Nordquist 1987:153, Fig. 8).

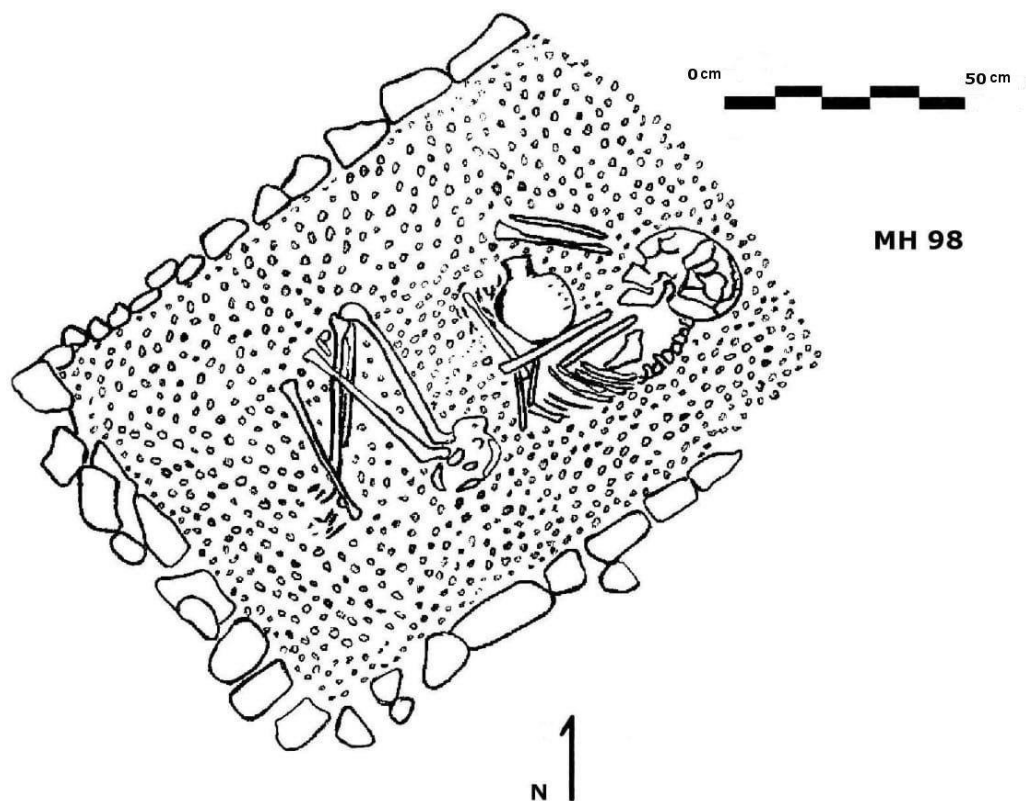


Figure 11: Plan of the MH I stone-lined pit grave MH98 where infant bones were included among the remains of an adult female, Lower Town, Asine (redrawn after Milka 2023:158, Fig. 107).

Ayios Stephanos

EH II

Throughout the EH II the site of Ayios Stephanos was a thriving settlement. Its intramural cemetery included 157 inhumations of all ages, dating to almost all Bronze Age periods, with the exception of the EH III and likely the EH I. A small group of 16 to 17 pit graves concentrated in Area Alpha are securely dated to EH II. Of those graves, 11 accommodated single primary neonate and infant burials extremely degraded in most cases. Five of those

burials were studied; the bodies in burials A4, A5 and A13 were deposited in a contracted posture and randomly orientated, while from burials A3 and A16 only the skulls and a few bones survived (see Table 10; Taylour 1972: 237; Taylour and Janko 2008b:141-2).

BURIAL	COMMENTS	<i>KTERISMATA</i>
A3	1x 1-8 month old neonate. Only the skull was found.	1x almost complete pedestaled saucer, incurving rim, slightly carinated. Dark painted and glazed interior. Positioned upside down. Height: 9cm Diameter max: 13.8cm
		1x coarse miniatures stemmed saucer or cup with incurving rim, unpainted, underneath the pedestaled saucer. Height: 5.2cm Diameter (max): 7.6cm
A4	1x 3-6 months old infant, very badly preserved. Found in a contracted posture, lying on its right side, orientated west to east.	Sherds from a large coarse jar of undetermined shape, interior possibly painted black. Incised vertical lines decoration. Height (estim.): 10cm Width (max): 20.5cm
A5	1x 1-5 year old child. Poorly preserved, found in a contracted posture, lying on its right side, orientated west to east.	1x miniature of a saucer with incurving rim, placed upright at the nape of the child's neck. Similar to the A3 miniature vessel. Traces of black paint. Height: 4.8cm Width (max): 8.7cm
A13	1x infant of undetermined age, only partially preserved, orientated north to south.	No <i>kterismata</i> found.

A16	1x Up to 1 year old infant. Only the skull and a few rib bones were preserved. Close to a group of stone “polishers” or “grinders”. Oriented north to south.	1x Miniature of a fine quality pedestaled saucer with straight rim and splaying base. Glazed and painted black inside and outside. Similar to the A3 miniature vessel. Dark painted. Height: 9cm Width (max): 12cm
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Table 10: List of EH II child pit burials and grave goods from Ayios Stephanos (compiled by the author).

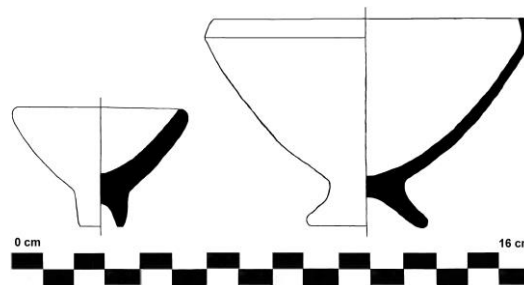


Figure 12: Full - sized and miniaturized saucers from the EH II A3 neonate burial, Ayios Stephanos (redrawn after Taylour 1972, Figs. 36.1 and 36.16).

Since it had not been possible to associate any burials with the few surviving wall remains of this period’s domestic structures (Taylour 1972:221), the graves had been dated stratigraphically with the use of data collected from the scattered EH pottery and the grave goods of the burials themselves (MacGillivray 2008:161-76). Most of the studied infant burials were accompanied by grave goods of which some were miniature versions of full-sized vessels (see Table 10 and Figure 12; Taylour 1972:209).

The possibility of further EH infant burials positioned in proximity to Burial A13 existed but could not be confirmed due to a small number of skeletal fragments and the absence of grave goods (Smith 2011b:44). The settlement was abandoned later in EH II and was not reoccupied before the end of the period (Janko 2008:565; Zavvou 2012:6).

MH I

74 burials in pits, jars/*pithoi* and cists belonged to the MH period, and burial customs of the previous EH period continued at the site. In total, 13 MH I sub-adult pit and *pithos* burials were excavated (see Table 7).

Area Eta			Area Zeta
Pit Burials	Burial 4: 1x infant laying on its right side, no skull found. Surrounded by MH I pottery sherds, 1x pierced schist disc found in the vicinity is possibly associated with the burial. Burial 5: 1x infant or child burial, heavily disturbed with only fragments of skull and bones found.	Burial 8: 1x infant burial with only the skull and a few ribs surviving. Burials 9 and 10: Neonate burials with only the skull and a few ribs surviving. Burial 11: 1x infant burial with only the skull surviving. Burial 12: Neonate remains in a pile beneath a layer of stones. Small quantity of sea shells and 1x broken shaft – hole axe found in the vicinity of the burial.	None

<i>Pithos</i> Burials	Burial 1: Bone fragments of 1x infant in a contracted posture. Found among dispersed <i>pithos</i> sherds.	Burials 2 and 3: Infants found among dispersed <i>pithos</i> sherds. Burial 7: 1x child remains in the vicinity of the “Dull Painted Jar” dispersed sherds.	Burial 6: 1x disarticulated skeleton of an infant covered by a dark layer of red earth indicating intense burning. Bones badly burned. Sherds of two different <i>pithoi</i> found, probably combined to form a makeshift <i>pithos</i> burial.
Cist Burials	Burial 6: 1x 13 year old juvenile in extremely contracted posture, probably a trussed burial. Two upright slabs of the stone lining surviving <i>in situ</i>.		None.

Table 11: List of MH I sub-adult burials from Ayios Stephanos by grave type (compiled by the author).

Infant, newborn and foetus burials were practised exclusively within the settlement area and, in some cases, while the structures were still in use (Taylour and Janko 2008b:121-143). Because of the lack of funerary goods and of the very bad state of preservation of the burials, their dating has been based on stratigraphic data in relation to their proximity to contemporary buildings and on stratigraphically related pottery sherds. The graves were usually positioned quite close to each other. Skeletal remains were rarely articulated which complicated every effort to identify individual burials. Nevertheless, the number of infant and very young child burials is indicative of the high mortality rates of the young during the MH period at the site (Taylour and Janko 2008b:121-2).

Lerna

EH III

Despite the wealth of data from the EH II period regarding the material culture associated with its living inhabitants, the first evidence of EH graves in Lerna comes from the succeeding EH III period in the form of nine confirmed, and one probable, EH III neonate and infant single pit burials located exclusively within the settlement, among this period's typical apsidal buildings (Voutsaki and Milka 2017:105). During the excavation, the limits of the pit graves were proven hard to determine and as a result, their shape and dimensions usually coincided with the skeleton's size and position (Milka 2023:42). All burials were single inhumations with the bodies placed in a contracted position. Most of the individuals' age ranged from neonatal up to one year-old. One burial belonged to a 2-3-year-old infant and another two in Graves BA-5 and BB-3, appear to have been born premature (Angel 1971:43-9; Voutsaki and Milka 2017:100; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2003:132-6). A small number of the child pit burials were accompanied by few (if any) grave goods (Angel 1971:43-9; Voutsaki and Milka 2017:100). Pit grave BB-3, which was located next to the EH II "House of the Tiles" was unfurnished, but a small number of handmade ceramic vessels were found near it (Rutter 1995:75, 78, 93, Cat. Nos. P66, P32, P215). It remains unclear whether this assemblage may be associated with the burial (Caskey 1955:37; Milka 2023:70). Pit graves BD-27 and AH-2 are the only ones that included any grave goods (see Table 12 and Figure 13; Voutsaki *et al.* 2009:153, 155; Milka 2023:71).

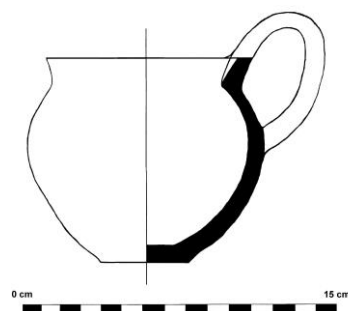


Figure 13: One-handled cup from the EH III BD-27 child burial, Lerna (redrawn after Rutter 1995, Fig. 61).

Stratigraphic analysis has shown that the burials belong to two distinct chronological groups. The majority of the pit graves belong to the early EH III group (see Table 12; Rutter 1995:225, P1138; Voutsaki *et al.* 2009:153, 155; Smith 2011a:52). The late EH III group includes pit grave AH-2 which was covered with a stone slab and the “semi-cist” grave AD-1, named as such on accounts of a single slab found inside the grave, likely forming part of its structure (Milka 2023:54).

Early EH III Group		Late EH III Group	
Grave	<i>Kterismata (possibly associated)</i>	Grave	<i>Kterismata</i>
BB-3	1x footed cup. 2x “ouzo cups”. Height: 6.6cm Diameter: 3.5cm 1x <i>askos</i> , mottle dark grey, varnished. Height: 8.7cm Diameter: 7.6cm 1x tankard rim sherd Length: 12cm	AH-2	1x Obsidian blade.
		BD-27	1x cup, one-handled.
		GRAVE #4	None.
		GRAVE #5	None.
BA-5	None.	AD-1	None.
B7-10	None.		

Table 12: List of grave goods from the EH III infant and child burials at Lerna (compiled by the author).

MH I

Pit graves continued to be used as the standard type for neonate and infant burials in the succeeding MH I period at the site (Voutsaki 2004:353) unfurnished for the most part, initially in *pithoi* (up to 0.59m high) laid on their side (Milka 2023:40). Graves were usually oriented either north-east/south-west or north-west/south-east, and were clustered between and inside the free-standing buildings (Voutsaki *et al.* 2013:137). Towards the end of the period *pithos* burials gradually disappeared and cist graves were introduced (Voutsaki and Milka 2017:100; Milka 2023:43).

Intramural burials were not restricted to a specific age group and noticeable is a growing preference for burials in ruined and abandoned buildings rather than contemporary houses, as well as the practice of overbuilding those graves with new structures, thus using parts of the settlement alternatively as an inhabited zone and as a burial ground (see p. 68 in Chapter 3; Milka 2023:23). The child pit burials at Lerna were initially unfurnished and only towards the end of the MH I grave goods in the form of pottery start to appear (Voutsaki and Milka 2017:116). The presence of small vessels (cups and jugs 6 cm to 7 cm in height), many of them of miniature types, is also notable (Milka 2023:81-2).

Olympia

EH III

Substantial activity at the site of Olympia is documented from the EH III, where a number of apsidal buildings and at least six furnished child *pithos* burials were excavated. The single burials were located within the settlement, very or fairly close to the remains of the domestic structures (see Figure 17 in Chapter 3; Kyrieleis 1990:183-4) and probably belonged to two separate chronological groups (see Table 13; Rutter 1982:483; Kyrieleis 1990:184). Two of the *pithoi* reportedly contained skeletons that belonged to individuals between 1-2 years of age (see Figure 14; Smith 2011b:82) whereas the other four *pithoi* were found devoid of any human remains (Rutter 1982:483). Grave goods comprised exclusively of pouring (*askoi*) and drinking (*kantharoi*) vessels (see Table 13 and Figures 15, 16; Rutter 1995:348, 437). Dating evidence for the burials was initially provided by their proximity to the structures. The buildings' distinctively apsidal form places them to the EH III and the burials' stratigraphical

association with them may advocate for the same date (Kyrieleis 1990:184). However, more precise dating information can be extracted by examining the contents of the burials themselves (Rutter 1982:472, 481).

GRAVE GOODS	EARLY EH III GROUP			LATE EH III GROUP		
	Burial I	Burial II	Burial III	Burial Unit 14	Burial Unit 16	Burial Abutting Tumulus
PITHOS	Type XX Large with wide mouth. Placed in a semi-cist grave.	Type XX. Large with wide mouth.	The vessel was broken during excavation process. Not published.	Not published.	Not published.	Not published
KANT HAROS	Type XI. burnished vessel placed at the shoulder of the <i>pithos</i> .	-	-	Type XI Grey, handle-less vessel. Possibly broken prior to deposition	-	-
ASKOS	Type XX. Burnished and unpainted.	-	Type XX.	Type XX.2 Dark Paint.	Type XX.1 Unpainted	Type XX.

Table 13: List of grave goods from the EH III child *pithos* burials from Olympia (compiled by the author).

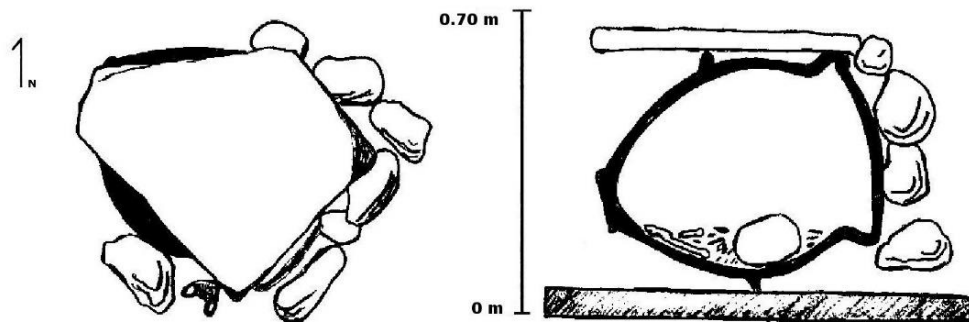


Figure 14: Plan and cross-section of a child *pithos* burial in a semi-cist grave covered with a stone slab, EH III, Olympia (redrawn after Smith 2011b:82, Fig.2.15).



Figure 15: Above left, earth that surrounded the *askos*, preserving some of the vessel's painted decoration. Below, a *kantharos* missing its handles. Grave goods from the EH III *pithos* burial of an infant in Unit 14, Olympia. Olympia Archaeological Museum. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dandiffendale/3274762763> [Accessed 16 January 2023].



Figure 16: Grave goods from an EH III infant's *pithos* burial (*Pithos 1*) at Olympia. Olympia Archaeological Museum. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dandiffendale/3274762763> [Accessed 16 January 2023].

2.4. CONCLUSION

The analysis so far has shown that information regarding child burials in the EH I and EH III Peloponnese is limited to only a small number of sites. Furthermore, most of the evidence from the EH II-MH I periods comes from sites located in the NE and SE Peloponnese. We

are left with an incomplete picture regarding the presence of child burials in the EH I and EH II extramural cemeteries with concrete evidence provided only from the Western Peloponnese. Even so, a lack of specific information about the child burials from within the Elis: Kalyvia chamber tombs should be noticed.

With regards to the EH II-III burials' proximity to domestic structures, the evidence is rather inconclusive for the majority of the examined sites. The close association of child burials to houses is generally more evident during the subsequent MH I period where graves are frequently located within houses.

The increasing use of *pithoi* and jars from the EH III period, mainly for neonate and infant burials in addition to the plain pit burials, should be noted. The evidence from the case studies shows that the adoption of the *pithos*/jar burial type spread from the North-East to the Western Peloponnese during the EH III and to the southern region during the MH I period. Inadequate information published in some reports, however, forces research to simply infer the presence of children in these burials or renders the association of a *pithos* vessel with those burials uncertain.

Whether single or deposited among/or with adult burials, child inhumations in many sites were found furnished with grave goods that provide evidence for the expression of ritualistic behaviour during funerals. This additional source of information allows for a more detailed look into the child burial practices particularly during the EH II and EH III periods, in sharp contrast to the poor association of *kterismata* from the EH I chamber tombs with specific child burials. The apparent unfurnished state of MH I child burials on the other hand, although it may allude to the deposition of *kterismata* made of perishable materials (see p. 62 in Chapter 3), it could also demonstrate a shift in funerary practices that reflect a change in the way the communities of this period conceptualised the child's *post mortem* social identity and status, as it will be discussed in Chapter 3.

3. THE CHILD'S SOCIAL IDENTITY IN EH II - MH I TIMES: BURIALS, HOUSES AND COSMOLOGICAL BELIEFS

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate the evidence provided by the EH II-MH I child burial record from the Peloponnese based on the burial data presented in Chapter 2, in order to demonstrate how the burial practices of the period may reflect the local communities' perception of the child's social role as uninterrupted by its physical death and with a continuous exertion of influence in the world of the living. To that end, Section 3.1 will first outline the issues that have arisen during my research and the measures I took to resolve them. Next, Section 3.2 will outline the general features of the house during the EH II-MH I period, present how it was likely perceived by its inhabitants and exemplify how this perception was reflected in the communally expressed ritualistic behaviour. Section 3.3 will focus on *pithos* child burials from the EH III-MH I periods and how the mode of their deposition may possibly allude to their deliberate association with certain house areas. Finally, in Section 3.4 I will present a hypothesis, based on the available data, on how funerary rituals linked to child burials may offer a view on how communities in the prehistoric Aegean conceptualized the crossing of the threshold between life and death and what eschatological beliefs and ritualistic practices would ensure the continuation of the child's *post mortem* socialising process and the assumption of a new social identity that would enable it to retain its social agency and impact in the world of the living. Furthermore, I will theorise the process through which the physical association of the child burial with the house may have shaped the child's *post mortem* social identity through its reconnection with the surviving household members. The possible ways that this process confirmed and secured the households' property rights and social position and the likely role that the *pithos* burial played in it, will also be explored. I will argue that the cosmological link between the child burial and the house was forged by their physical association which defined how the living space was perceived by the household, their social group and ultimately the whole community.

3.1. Problems and Limitations in Research

In the course of my research, I encountered a number of issues regarding the collection of data from the Peloponnesian EH II – MH I child burial record prior to their presentation in Chapter 2. More specifically, with regards to the relationship between burial grounds and settlements it became obvious that the terms “intramural” and “extramural” used in scholarship to typify child burials, were used arbitrarily and rather symbolically, especially in cases of single or a few dispersed examples coming from EH II sites such as Asine, Argos or Tiryns (see Table 4 and pp. 22-3, 33-4). The issue in hand was that during the period under study most of the settlements were lacking defensive walls or any kind of a wall structure that could be identified with certainty as such. The research path I took to meet this challenge was to categorize child burials with reference to their distance and their stratigraphic relationship to the settlements’ structures. The evaluation of the data would determine the use of the appropriate term. To that end I consulted the original excavation reports along with the published plans and maps. In cases where settlement boundaries were not clearly defined, I used a different approach by looking at the published evidence of material culture associated with domestic activities that would have taken place within the settlement’s living space, such as assemblages of pottery strewn on the house’s floor or deposited in *bothroi* (Hutchinson 1935; Strasser 1999; Macheridis 2016).

My research on the published data revealed that in many cases the degree of the burial /house association was greatly varied, from certain/likely (Lerna, Olympia, Argos, Ayios Stephanos, Sparti, Aigina: Kolonna, Asine) and merely conjectured (Kouphovouno, Asine), to highly unlikely (Pavlopetri, Elis:Kalyvia, Elis, Zygyouries, Cheliotomylos) or impossible to determine (Tiryns). The terms “intramural” and “extramural” were not really relevant in cases where sites alternated their use from inhabited areas to burial grounds, like in Lerna. The moment when a whole settlement or part of it becomes a cemetery, a burial described as “intramural” loses its point of reference.

While further analysing the available information, I faced challenges caused by the nature of the data and the way there were handled by research in the past. The published data provided by sites like Asine and Ayios Stephanos allowed only for the speculation of the burials’ exact location. The agency of factors like heavy disturbance from erosion and/or continuous habitation meant that the burials could only be inferred by the presence of disarticulated and displaced skeletal remains that appear as simple concentrations of bones, belonging in many cases to multiple individuals, or as a few fragments. This has resulted in a

difficulty to associate burials with remains of specific individuals. Cross-reference of the original excavation reports and original publications became crucial in order to overcome this problem wherever possible. In examples of graves devoid of skeletal remains, identification of child burials rely heavily on data associated with the small size of the grave like in Pavlopetri, Elis or Asine (see pp. 21, 31-2, 33) or the presence of miniature pottery deposited as grave goods which is typically associated with children; even more so when their morphological features had confirmed parallels in ceramics found in identified child burials from other sites like Asine or Ayios Stephanos (see Tables 9 and 10).

The effects of disturbed stratigraphy in cases such as Kouphovouno and Asine, resulted in the publication of inaccurate dating results from those sites, since the possibility of later material intrusion into earlier burial contexts was not initially taken into consideration (see pp. 26, 40). In cases of a complete absence of *kterismata*, the process of dating the burials has relied on the grave's structural features and its possible typological parallels from other sites or on whether it could be associated with datable surface material in its vicinity as in the case of Lerna (see Table 12 and p. 43). Further published data from sites such as Argos, Aegina, Asine, Elis and Olympia were missing vital information that would be beneficial to my research. This is due to over-simplified reports with limited information that would allow addressing issues such as a burial's proximity and exact stratigraphic relationship to a domestic structure, probably a result of poor excavation and recording techniques. Additionally, as a result of poorly (if any) published data, earlier scholarship have proposed conflicting dates regarding the identification of specific child burials. The problems created by these shortcomings were addressed through the use of updated data provided by the most recent scholarship resources.

Despite the aforementioned challenges though, the analysis of the child burial record has demonstrated the variety of funerary customs that were developed and practised by the prehistoric Aegean communities during the period under study.

3.2. THE HOUSE DURING THE LATE EH II-MH I PERIODS

The Late EH II-MH I periods witnessed the rising of the individual household as part of new social realities, reflected in the innovative architectural styles and the associated cosmological beliefs and ritual expressions. What follows is a brief description of the main characteristics of the domestic house unit of the period and how it was conceptualised,

followed by an analysis of the available evidence for communal ritual activities reflecting those concepts.

The house of the late EH II-MH I period was characterised as structure by relative uniformity. The buildings were constructed as free standing units in a dispersed manner that demonstrates a need for isolation and independence (Weiberg 2007:99). The ground plan was in most cases apsidal (Lerna, Olympia, Tiryns), although many rectilinear structures also existed (Ayios Stephanos, Asine). Walls were built of mudbrick or wattle-and-daub on a stone foundation with a roof made of logs and reeds. Internal space was divided into usually one or two rooms of different sizes often for storage and/or cooking purposes. Demarcation of property became increasingly prominent, with the house walls defining the living space and emphasising the household's prominence as the most important social and economic unit (Nordquist 1987:87-89, 96; Wiersma 2020:145-6,154). On the other hand, the close proximity of certain houses to each other suggests that they were possibly grouped together, a deliberate construction arrangement representing kinship-based relations (Worsam 2015:128). Examples of such "paired" set of houses come from Olympia (EH III Apsidal Houses IV and V) and Lerna (EH III/MH I Apsidal Houses 68A and 99E) (see Figure 17; Milka 2010:437; Worsam 2015:170). Kinship relations not only linked the household members to each other but to other households as well through social and economic alliance-creating mechanisms, such as marriage and mutual participation in ritual events (Gillespie 2002:73). The homogenous architectural appearance of the settlements is a reflection of an essentially uniformed society without any clear evidence of social inequality among the communities' members (Wiersma 2020:145).

Another characteristic feature of the domestic structures was the temporality of their construction. Walls were often constructed of not sturdy materials, and there was an overall lack of both refinement and interest in long-term house maintenance (Weiberg 2007:99-100). Related to this temporality was one of the main characteristics of this period's houses: their frequent replacement, evidenced by the number of successive construction phases seen in many settlements. Buildings were deliberately destroyed by fire on a regular basis or simply demolished in order to be replaced with new ones, partially using the previous foundations and generally following the ground plan, size and orientation of the preceded structures, resulting in a long series of successive buildings (Wiersma 2020:147). It has been suggested that each of the rebuilding phases was a cultural expression in a symbolic level of a sudden change in the household composition, like the death of an important member, such as its leader or another prominent resident (Weiberg 2007:100; Worsam 2015:127). The presence

of such long sequences has been confirmed in Lerna (for example, the “Chieftain’s House” series in Area BE), Asine (House S series in Terrace III) and Ayios Stephanos (Structures Eta and Zeta) (Worsham 2015:87, 103-5, 177-8, 182-4). In addition, signs of regular structural modifications are noticed in the houses of Lerna, with the in-between full-scale rebuilding phases further emphasising the temporary nature of each structure (Caskey 1954:12-20; Worsham 2015:127).

Although the new buildings incorporated several or all of the previous foundation walls during their construction, in most cases the new structure was deliberately built misaligned in relation to its predecessor. Nevertheless, the incorporation of the older foundations to the new ones demonstrates that respect was paid to the location, general orientation and ground plan of the earlier building (Worsham 2015:127,165-175; Wiersma 2020:145).

There is inconsistent but definite evidence for the destruction by fire of the buildings between phases observed in many house sequences at Lerna, Asine, and Ayios Stephanos in the form of burnt layers between rebuilding phases. Apart from parts belonging to the collapsed structure, these layers in many cases contained concentrations of burnt pottery sherds mixed with other material such as stone tools and animal bones, and they may have formed deposits within the house or placed into pits purposefully dug into the floor (*bothroi*) (Macheridis 2016). In Lerna, on the floor of the first erected EH III structure in the so-called “Chieftain’s House” series (W-1), the deposition of a complete, articulated skeleton of a calf among sherds of drinking vessels was interpreted as evidence of a sacrifice and associated drinking ritual prior to the next construction phase (Caskey 1965:146). In EH III House W-9 from the adjacent building series, a large deposit of twenty-two vessels scattered on the floor possibly constitutes evidence of another ritual activity before the erection of the succeeding EH III W-52 House, but evidence is inconclusive (Worsham 2015:28). At Asine the EH III House R contained two ash deposits mixed with sherds from numerous vessels, many of them used for drinking (Persson 1938a:214-219). The number of vessels and the concentrated positioning of the sherds found, led to the hypothesis that they constituted a deposit placed on the floor after a drinking ritual which possibly also included the deliberate destruction of the vessels (Worsham 2015:97). In Area Nu at Ayios Stephanos, the floor of MH I House Nu I contained a deposit of crucibles and sherds of numerous complete vessels associated with the burnt destruction layer (Taylour and Janko 2008a:102, 118; Worsham 2015:93). There is also data from *bothroi* (Macheridis 2016). In Lerna, out of a total of 223 *bothroi*, 63 were found to contain evidence of what seem to be the remains of ritual activities mixed with debris collected and deposited in the *bothroi* after the house-burning events (Worsham 2015:28, 31).

A number of *bothroi* were cut into the “Chieftain’s House” building series (Worsham 2015:26-7); one of them which was associated with the EH III burnt house W-86, contained a number of complete vessels while another one contained six crucibles and metal objects the value of which would convey status appropriate for inclusion in a ritual deposit (Rutter 1995:159-161). An additional *bothros* contained the skeleton of a canine (Worsham 2015:20, 26-7). In another house sequence, EH III W-52 house’s floor was cut by a number of *bothroi*, one of which contained obsidian tools and the bones of two piglets placed in a jar. This deposit may be indicative of feasting activities as part of a foundation ritual (Worsham 2015:20, 28-9). In the same floor, another large *bothros* was associated with vessels linked to drinking ceremonies (Rutter 1995:136), while two more contained stone tools and animal bones mixed with building debris (Worsham 2015:29-30). In Terrace III at Asine, a *bothros* in House S (EH III/MH I) was reported to possibly contain mudbricks mixed with pottery and charcoal (Worsham 2015:95), while the subsequent MH I/II House T contained sherds of nine EH III vessels (Persson 1938a:212-14). There is no evidence of *bothroi* at the site of Ayios Stephanos, but in Olympia several pits were dug into the Tumulus during EH III. The pits were concentrated at the side of the mound which was nearest to the apsidal houses. They were deliberately filled with deposits of burnt debris from the destroyed structures and mixed with large quantities of EH III and MH I pottery. The material was deposited in a single event, and it is similar to the one retrieved from the Lerna’s *bothroi*. This mixture of material may indicate that ritual activities such as feasting and drinking ceremonies took place prior to the house’s destruction (Worsham 2015:172-3).

The mixed and usually scattered appearance of these deposits had led to their initial interpretation as simple domestic refuse (Stanton *et al.* 2008: 237; Worsham 2015:28, 172). Others saw in them evidence of violent destruction and hypothesized the advent of newcomers in those areas who burned the previous houses along with household items (Caskey 1960:301-3). However, these deposits are associated with the ruined or burnt structures in a way that stratigraphically belong to or even predate the destruction layer, indicating that they were already deposited before the house’s destruction (Taylour and Janko 2008a:26-30, 113-9). There is no indication of extended depositional processes; it rather seems that they were all deposited in a single event. Frequently, the material is concentrated in a specific area and many times it includes pottery sherds that belong to vessels associated with feasting and drinking ceremonies along with other associated material such as stone tools and animal bone. The ritualistic nature of these deposits demonstrated the reverence of the inhabitants towards the structures as agents of their destruction and subsequent deposition

of material in its ruins, suggesting cultural affiliation with the builders of the successive structure (Stanton *et al.* 2008:237-8, 240; Worsham 2015:131-2).

These ritual activities would have taken place before the house destruction event, as suggested by the presence of drinking vessels such as jars and jugs. The evidence for these ceremonies would have been deposited on the floor of the house prior to its destruction followed by the construction of the new structure and manifested archaeologically as a layer between the building phases. Since this deposit was the result of an action that immediately preceded the destruction of the house and marked the transition from one building to the next and commemorated the occasion, we may understand its presence as the physical evidence of a “funeral” ceremony (Westholm 1938:94-99; Worsham 2015:31, 87-98, 131-2).

The site of Olympia provides a probable example of this claim. Apsidal House IV (EH III) was located east of the contemporary circular Tumulus with its opening directed towards the centre of the mound. Due west of the house and at the base of the Tumulus, a stone platform with a line of stones in its west was erected. The arrangement gives the impression of a demarcated or enclosed area, resembling a *temenos*, while in the vicinity of the house, burnt ashy patches and deposits of complete vessels were identified. This house along with the rest of the contemporary apsidal buildings was replaced during the MH I period by rectilinear structures (Worsham 2015:165). The new houses were built in a slightly displaced position in relation to the ones of the previous phase, but they followed the same orientation as the old ones and incorporated segments of the replaced buildings, also observed in other sites, such as Lerna, Asine and Ayios Stephanos (see Figure17; Rambach 2013:177).

It would seem that the demolition material along with additional ceramics found inside the pits dug into the Tumulus belonged to the earlier EH III construction phase of the apsidal houses. The vessels, found next to the stone platform, were perhaps associated with feasting and drinking ceremonies that would have taken place at the time of the house’s destruction in front of the Tumulus, a form of a house “funeral” ceremony with the material deposited within the pits taking the form of a termination or dedication deposit (Worsham 2015:172-3). The overall area in front of House IV may be interpreted as a place of a Tumulus-focused cult activity dedicated to the preservation of cultural memory, a venerated space of perhaps community-wide significance (Worsham 2015:171; Rambach 2004:1229–1231).

If the ritual act of a structure’s demolition symbolised the house’s “death”, then its consequent rebuilding would constitute its “re-birth”. By deliberately displacing/misaligning the new structure’s walls with respect to the older foundations, the builders were able to

manifest change but also preservation of the new structure's individual character by not building it as an exact replica of the previous one.

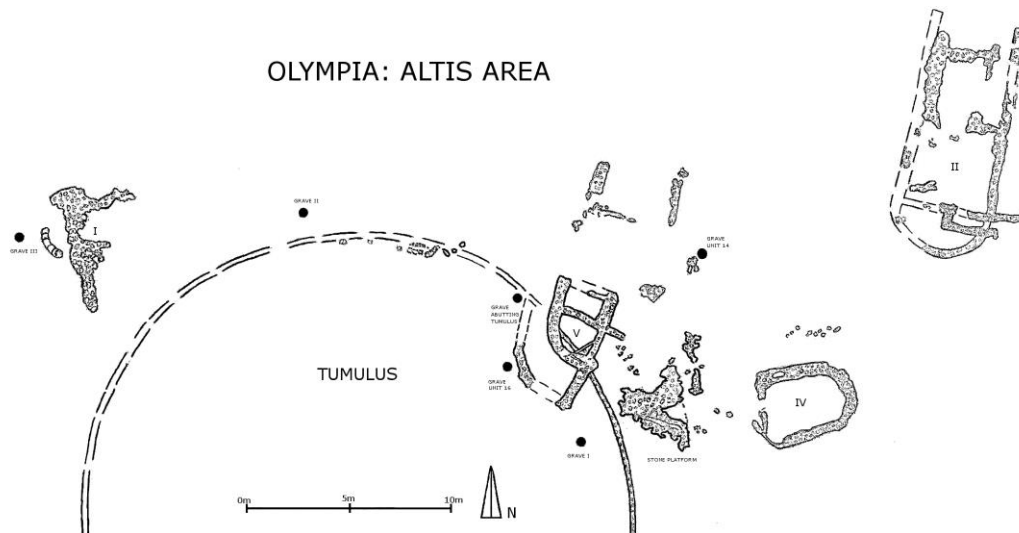


Figure 17: Plan of EH III Houses I, II, IV and V and contemporary child pit graves located around and within the Tumulus' boundary. Altis Area, Olympia (redrawn after Rambach 2004:1245, Pl.1).

At the same time the partial re-use of the older structure's architectural elements manifested the continuity of the house's physical presence in a specific location within the settlement. This ritual act underlined both the temporary and permanent nature of a building that was undergoing a symbolic "death" and "renewal" cycle, reflecting the perception of the house as a perpetually living entity. The partial incorporation of the old "dead" structure into the new "alive" one would have embedded the house's location in the memory of its occupants. The resulting psychological effect would have been a sense of preservation and continuity that would ensure the continuation of the house's physical existence in space and time beyond the life spans of its occupants. At the same time, it would secure the household's territorial rights in the area, redefine/reconstruct them as a social group and reaffirm and/or renegotiate existing social values and beliefs or construct new ones (Voutsaki 1998:44-6; Gillespie

2002:73; De Lucia 2010:614; Worsham 2015:18-9, 127, 132; Wiersma 2020:145-7). The “ability” of the house to “perpetuate” its existence as a structure through a series of “life cycles” might have been crucial for the use of its premises as a burial ground for child burials during the EH III-MH I periods. The practice of the new funerary customs is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the adoption of the *pithos*/jar burial type.

3.3. PIT AND *PITHOS*/ JAR CHILD BURIALS IN EH III - MH I HOUSES

At Olympia, Graves II and III were located on either side of the Apsidal House I, and Grave III may have been dug directly into one of the house’s walls. The rest of the *pithos* burials (Graves I, Graves in Units 14 and 16, Grave abutting Tumulus) were positioned around the Apsidal House V with Grave in Unit 14 located close to the projected eastern wall of the structure (see Figure 17; Smith 2011b:81, 83). At Lerna, in Area BE, House 98A and two auxiliary rooms formed a complex built around a central courtyard (see Figure 18). The first room (Room 44) featured a circular hearth and complete clay vessels were found in the vicinity including a buried *pithos*, leading to the hypothesis that the room functioned as a kitchen. Inside the second room (Room 45) five *pithoi* buried into the ground were found among additional scattered pottery sherds. This room was interpreted as a storage facility (Caskey 1956:150). In fact, the whole complex was understood to have a large storage capacity (Voutsaki *et al.* 2013:139). After the destruction of the house complex by fire, its occupying space was converted into a burial ground until it was overbuilt by House 100 in the MH II. Ten pit burials were placed in or over the courtyard and the two storage/cooking rooms – but not in the main structure of the complex – and one of them (BE 28), probably temporary with the house, was positioned in the courtyard and contained a neonate (Milka 2010:437-8).

As the data from the child burial record has shown in Chapter 2, in contrast to the pit burials which included both sub-adults and occasionally adults, the *pithos* burials of the EH III and MH I periods were reserved exclusively for neonates and infants (McGeorge 2013:11-2; Kopaka 2019:101) with the few jar burials of juveniles from Asine providing an age-related exception (see Table 8). In Area DE of Lerna, two MH I *pithos* burials were associated stratigraphically with the rectangular MH I Late House AR. Burial DE 68 located at the interior, contained a foetus or neonate while the second DE 50 burial found abutting the building’s external wall, was housing the remains of an infant up to one year old. House AR

was identified as a kitchen area and/or room for storing produce, an interpretation based on a hearth located at one corner and on the pottery strewn on the floor (see Figure 19). Similarly, the “House of the *Pithos*” in Area D where two skeletal fragments of an infant were found, was named so after a very large storage *pithos* was located in its NE surviving corner, partially embedded below floor level. The “enormous” number of sherds from large vessels - including fragments of more *pithoi* - that were retrieved from the floor indicates that this structure was probably another storage room (Caskey 1954:29; 1956:148; Milka 2023, Fig. 22).

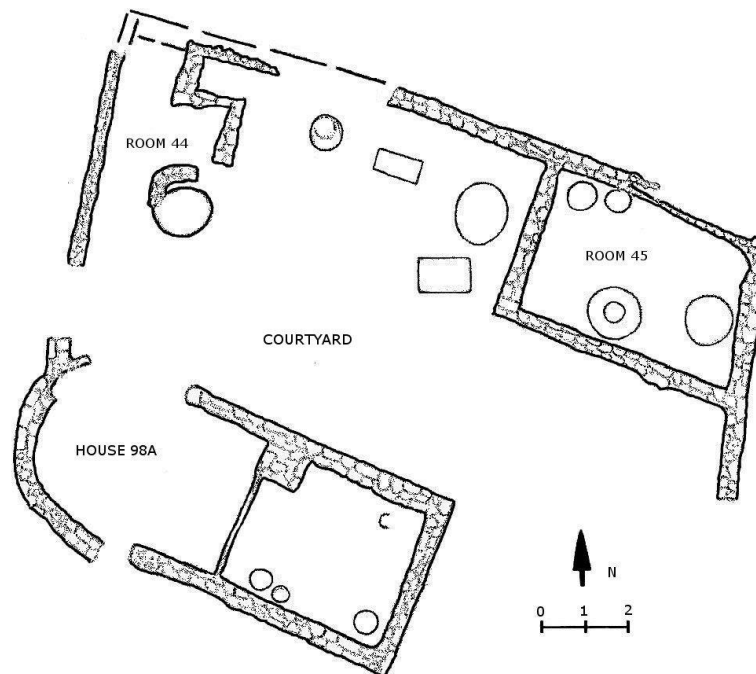


Figure 18: Plan of the MH I House 98A complex. Area BE, Lerna (redrawn after Milka 2023 Fig. 6).

There seems to be a pattern that child burials follow in all three areas of Lerna; the opening of graves inside houses/rooms containing large storage vessels and interpreted as storage/kitchen areas. *Pithos* and jar burials, in particular, may have carried strong symbolisms related to female fertility and reanimation/reincarnation that associated them

with such areas (see pp. 67-8). Unfortunately, similar buildings related to storage use have not been identified at the sites of Asine, Ayios Stephanos and Olympia. On the other hand, the MH I “House of *Pithoi*” in Argos, a semi-underground structure with a rectangular layout has seen an extensive storage use. Large quantities of ceramics, i.e. up to 26 *pithoi* and large jars among numerous jugs, cups and bowls were discovered among the five pit child burials and the possible infant jar burial. All burials were laid beneath the destruction layer of the house indicating that they were interred while the house was still in use. This seems to be the case for the house burials at the Aspis hilltop settlement as well (see Table 5 in Chapter 2; Balitsari 2019:477-80; 2024:26; Philippa-Touchais 2013:80).

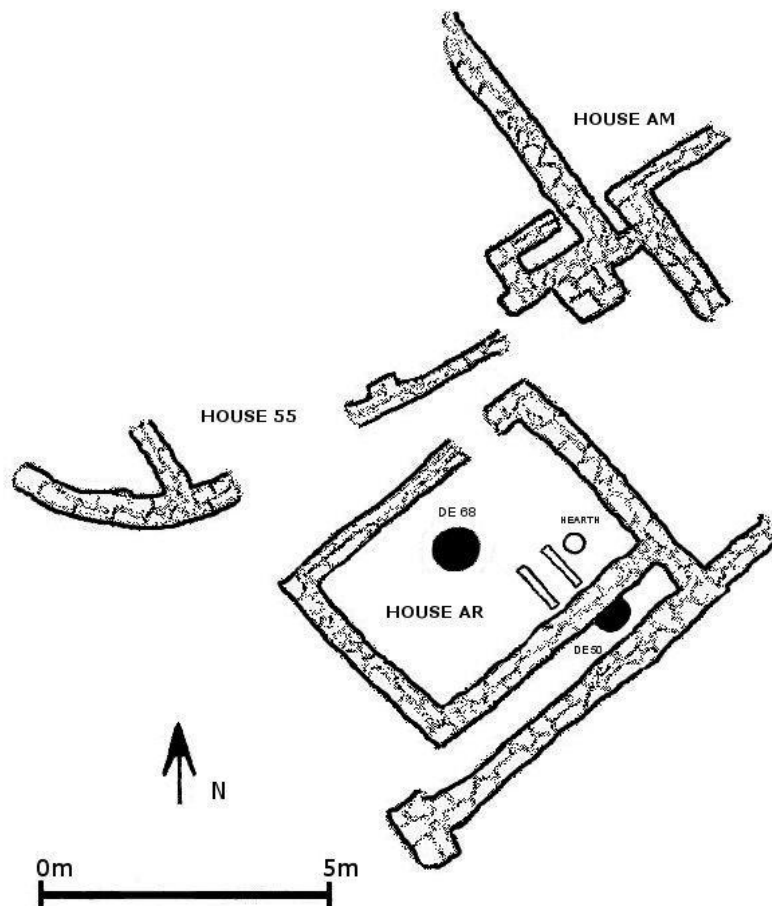


Figure 19: Plan of the MH I House AR with contemporary *pithos* burials DE 50 and DE 68 and adjacent structures. Area DE, Lerna (redrawn after Milka 2023, Fig.13).

In Area Zeta at Ayios Stephanos, infant burial Zeta 6 was dug deep into the earliest stratum of MH I within the area occupied by Structure Zeta II (Taylour and Janko 2008b:121-2; Worsham 2015:182). The human remains were found covered by a large, fragmented portion of a coarse *pithos*, with sherds of another similar *pithos* positioned directly under the skeletal fragments. This unusual form of burial was interpreted as an attempt to create a makeshift *pithos* burial with the use of large sherds from two separate vessels, one beneath and one over the body (see Table 11 in Chapter 2). The sherds were dated to the early MH I and because they were too few to reconstruct the vessels, they were discarded (Taylour and Janko 2008b:121-2). This peculiar arrangement of the sherds could simply mean that the body could not fit through a single vessel's mouth, perhaps because of the ensuing *rigor mortis*, which necessitated the use of already broken vessels or even the deliberate breakage of the *pithoi* and the use of their sherds. In any case, it demonstrates the attention the MH people were paying to the creation of a protected environment for the child's body even if this would mean its incomplete encasement within the *pithos*, an act which is probably directly associated with their eschatological beliefs (Goodison 1989:22; Vavouranakis 2014:217). A common feature of these burials, with the exception of those from Olympia, was their unfurnished state. Lack of evidence for ritualistic behaviour during the funerary event does not necessarily mean lack of desire on behalf of the grieving family and the wider community to ritually provide the dead child with a social identity and a place in collective memory. It is possible, of course, that infant burials would be subjected to a different form of ritual process, one that would not necessitate the deposition of grave goods. On the other hand, it is equally possible that burials were indeed furnished, but with grave goods made of perishable materials like wood, tree bark or leather that left no archaeological traces (Hielte-Stavropoulou 2004:20). The absence of grave goods, however, seems total with no inclusion of objects made of non-perishable material, such as obsidian or clay and it could mean that the child's *post-mortem* social identity may have been established in more subtle ways (Voutsaki 1998:44; Milka 2023:293) as it will be argued in this chapter.

3.4. THE AGENCY OF THE CHILD BURIAL

In this section I will explore the possibility that the burial customs observed by the EH II-MH I communities had ensured the continuation of the dead child's socialisation process, and

also the nature of the child's new social identity as well as the different ways the household and the wider community used it to their benefit.

The event of death of any household member would have been a traumatic experience for their relatives and would have had a detrimental effect at different levels. The breaking of the link with a family member as a result of the physical separation would affect the living relatives both on a personal level and also as a household living under the same roof as it would disturb the order of everyday life, break their unity and compromise their future survival as a social unit. It would also affect kinship relations with other households and the kin group's social status, while on a broader level it would compromise the cohesion of society (Norquist 1987:103-4). In the case of a child's death the premature loss of life would have also interrupted the socialising process that in life would have led to the child's integration to community, a process that would now need to take place in the afterlife. For that to happen, the connection between the dead child and its relatives would need to be restored. The dead children would have still been considered to be members of the household. The realm of the dead was likely seen as a continuation of the world of the living and the "social movement" of the child in the afterlife demonstrated that the dynamics that interconnected the social relationships of the living would continue in the world beyond (Nilsson-Sturtz 2003:68; Laneri 2007:3, 5; Weiberg 2007:367, 386). Death was conceived as a transitional experience in the human life cycle, and the burial as just another "rite of passage" event (Ilan 1995:136).

The consumption of food and drink as experiences of the human body, was seen as the way by which humans constructed themselves as biological and social entities which were deconstructed or "consumed" by death, just like food and drink was consumed during the ritual process. Thus, their communal consumption during the ritual would have been seen as a metaphor for death. During this process the dead were released from the restrictions of their previous social identity, revived and transitioned to different social personas in the afterlife by which they would be identified after their incorporation to the community of the dead. Order and normality were restored in the same manner the collective consciousness was settled through the ritual (Bloch and Perry 1982:4, 6; Norquist 1987:103; Hamilakis 1998:115-6; Weiberg 2007:367). Such performative ceremonies generated sensory and emotional experiences that both reflected and shaped the social relationships between the living and the dead and were instrumental to the manifestation of common beliefs regarding the nature of the afterlife and the construction/negotiation of cultural identities. The use of material culture in the ritual process "culturalised" the traumatic reality of death and

transformed it from a negative event into a positive one, strengthening the communal memory of the dead as an essential part of the social relations of the living (La Fontaine 1985:11; Norquist 1987:103; Hamilakis 1998:116-7,128; Voutsaki 1998:44-6; Laneri 2007:5).

The intra-mural inclusion of the child burials and their intentional association with residential units by locating the graves in the house courtyard, abutting the room's walls or under the floors, would mystically restore the link between the child and the household/community (Barrett 1988:32; Norquist 1987:104; Nilsson-Sturtz 2003:69; Kanz *et al.* 2010:481). One may ask why those burial practices involved only the very young children, mainly neonates and infants and not juveniles and/or adults. The answer likely lies in the series of economic and social changes that took place during the EH II-MH I periods. New social roles regarding the age in which the child should acquire a social role within the community were developed in accordance with similar changes in burial practices that reflect a shift in cosmological beliefs.

We could theorise that the household was conceptualised as a composition of “material” (i.e. physical presence of the residence, of the goods stored within, and of the child graves associated with the house) and “non-material” elements (e.g. spirits of the buried dead within or close to the property) (Gillespie 2002:73). The possible third grave from Asine is the only surviving example of an EH II child burial closely associated with a specific domestic structure (see p. 33 in Chapter 2). During the MH I period however, four contemporary infant pit burials (Burials 4, 9, 10 and 11) were deposited below the house floor within Structure Eta I at Ayios Stephanos, of which three were grouped closely together along the inner face of the south-west wall of the house (see Figure 20). All four interments were found below the destruction layer of the building, meaning that they were deposited while the house was still in use (Taylour and Janko 2008a:38; 2008b:124). Though reconnection with their deceased relative, the household would have strived to lay claim and strongly identify with both of the house's elements by evoking the agency of the dead child. The claim for the ancestral burial ground would be the ultimate claim to property rights (Gillespie 2002:70). The buried child would have joined the community of the ancestors and its presence in close proximity to the household's living space would have generated and maintained indisputable claims for property rights over the land through ancestry by the surviving relatives, demarcated the property, and safeguarded the valuable resources stored within the structures, the “material” element of the household's property (Bloch and Perry 1982:32-35; Gillespie 2002:70-3; Weiberg 2007:274; Wiersma 2020:147).

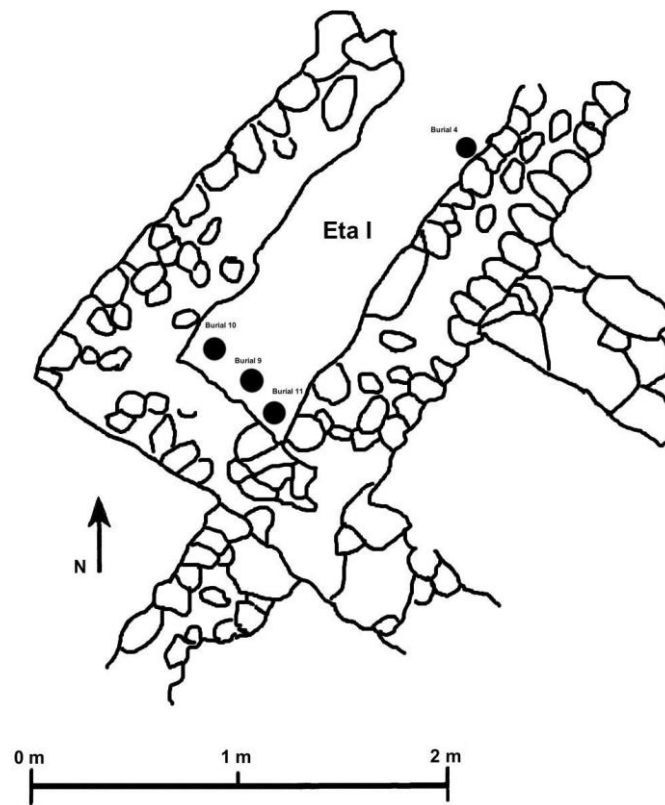


Figure 20: Plan of the MH I Structure Eta I showing the location of child pit burials. Area Eta, Ayios Stephanos (redrawn after Taylour and Janko 2008b, Fig. 2.2).

In the EH III House R at Lower Town in Asine, twenty neonate and infant pit burials, all of likely MH I date, were grouped closely together and were divided into four clusters associated with a particular room of the house. The first group of burials (MH76, MH77, MH78, MH79, MH80, MH81, MH83, MH92) was deposited within Rooms I and II, the second group (MH57, MH94, MH95) within Room I, the third group (MH63, MH66, MH68, MH69) within Room III and the fourth group (MH82, MH84, MH85, MH86, MH87) in an open area south of the structure (see Figure 21; Milka 2023:147).

Such grouping of graves in clusters around the property would be a manifestation of the kinship relations between individual households and/or household groups (Voutsaki 2012:107; Wiersma 2020:147; Milka 2023:292). The legitimisation of property claim through this spatial distribution of the child burials would solidify the household's unity, bestowing it

with social status within the community (Bloch and Perry 1982:34-35; Norquist 1987:104; Gillespie 2002:73; Voutsaki 2012:107).

The burials' physical association with the house and its property would also form a deep spiritual connection between the children's souls and the household members. This connection would be likely used not only to strengthen the links of the living with the ancestral past but also to ensure the continuity of their existence as a social unit perhaps through the interment of the child's body in a specific type of burial.

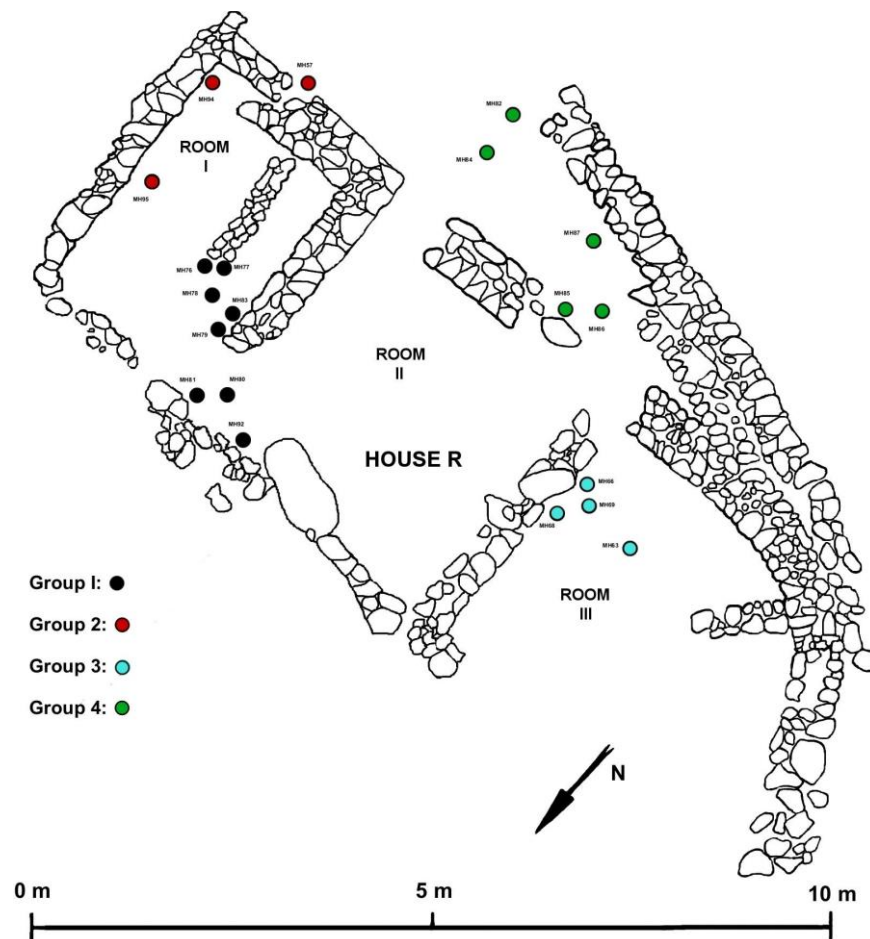


Figure 21: Plan of the EH III House R showing the location of child burials. Lower Town, Asine (redrawn after Frödin and Persson 1938, Fig. 68).

As part of the household's property, jars and *pithoi* were storage vessels that contained valuable resources for the sustenance of their owners. In the case of the *pithos*, such a large, bulky vessel would require an investment of time, energy and a certain amount of raw material (clay) for its production, as well as a certain skill level from the potter to make it sturdy enough to hold heavy contents such as grain and liquids. This would make the vessel an indispensable item, probably costly to replace (Vavouranakis 2014:213, 220; Herrero 2016:186). So, what would incentivise the household members to sacrifice such a vessel for burial use, instead of digging a simple pit?

A *pithos*, among other materials, may also contain grain seeds. For a prehistoric community with a primarily agrarian economy, a seed would appear to be dead when planted in the ground but after a while it would germinate coming back to life in the form of a seedling (Goodison 1989:22). In the same way, a child's body would return to the ground after death but if it was buried, "planted", inside a *pithos*, the vessel perhaps would act as the medium that granted the powers of a germinating seed to the buried body and through which the process of the symbolic "re-birth" would have taken place (Goodison 1989:40; Bacvarov 2006:102; McGeorge 2013:12; Vavouranakis 2014:217; Kostanti 2017:119). The association of the vegetational cycle with the human cycle of life and death would have been reflected in the *pithos* change of use from a storage vessel to a burial receptacle and subsequently to a rebirth-facilitating vessel with the power to re-connect the dead child with its relatives not only on a symbolic but also on a physical level (Goodison 1989:22; Vavouranakis 2014:216-7; Kopaka 2019:102).

It is possible that the *pithos* role as a medium would be to attract the powers of fertility by simulating birth through the application of benevolent sympathetic magic. We could envisage the *pithos* and its globular shape to form a protective shell that envelops the dead body as a metaphor for the female womb and the vessel's opening as a symbolic representation of the birth canal (Ilan 1995:135; Orrelle 2008:73; Kopaka 2019:102). The expectation might have been that the child's soul or spirit would enter the body of a subsequently born infant, thus returning to the household, hopefully in a healthier state that would allow for better odds of survival (Norquist 1987:104; Goodison 1989:43; Ilan 1995:135; Gillespie 2002:71; McGeorge 2013:12; Konstanti 2017:118). The returning of the soul in a new physical form would mean that the newborn occupant could take the place of the deceased in the household lineage as its reincarnation (Norquist 1987:105; Gillespie 2002:72). The creation of such a deep connection with the dead would grant the household members the role of the "curators" or "guardians" of the children's' spirits, the "non-material" household property (Gillespie

2002:73). By enabling the “movement” of the souls from one body to another with the use of the *pithos* burial’s reincarnating power, the household would ensure their unity and through constant regeneration of their deceased members, the continuity of their existence (Norquist 1987:104; Vavouranakis 2014:216). The mystical link that tied the buried body and the soul to the productive power of the ancestral land owned by the household would have a constant reference to the past and would lead to the construction and reproduction of collective social memory among the members of the social group (Kuijt 2008:184; Philippa-Touchais 2019:227). This new, *post-mortem* socialisation process based on the “coexistence” with the living through the child burials’ proximity to the household’s living spaces would likely no longer require the performance of ritual events such as eating and drinking ceremonies, nor the succeeding deposition of associated material culture in the burials (Voutsaki 2012:107; Wiersma 2020:147; Milka 2023:290). The child’s new existence would be socially recognised though its valuable agency and influence on the benefit of the household, social group and overall community (Nilsson-Sturtz 2003:68; Kostanti 2017:119).

The connection of the living to the child burials would also confirm the nature of the house as a physical presence. Through a series of internal modifications or ritual “killing” (fire/demolition), “burial” (ritual deposits/*bothroi*) and subsequence “rebirth” (re-building) episodes, the house’s “life cycle” would perhaps mirror the child’s death-burial-rebirth cycle (Worsham 2015:132-147), emphasising further its living nature and the continuity of its existence. Through everyday use, its living space and by extension the whole settlement area, would facilitate the constant interaction of the realm of the dead with the world of the living (Gillespie 2002:73; Kuijt 2008:184; Wiersma 2020:149).

From the end of the MH I and forward to the MH II period the practice of in-house burials were extended to adults. In contrast, however, to the previous period, burials were now deposited in abandoned houses, after the structures were destroyed by fire or left in ruinous condition (Milka 2010:438-9). We see it for example, in the abandoned Houses 98A and AR at Lerna (Milka 2010:438; Worsham 2015:105; Milka 2023:6, 10), in the House S series at Asine (Worsham 2015:87) and at Ayios Stephanos mainly in Area Zeta (Worsham 2015:192). This resulted in an alternating pattern of space use between habitation and burial for whole settlement areas. The practice lasted until the end of the Middle Helladic although with decreased intensity, inconsistency and variability across the areas within sites. The settlement at Lerna which provides the most numerous examples, gradually transformed into an intramural cemetery in advance of its virtual abandonment after the LH I–II period (Wiencke 1998:207). In the Lower Town at Asine and at Ayios Stephanos, the houses were not

overbuilt immediately but were left open and available for burial use for some time (Milka 2023:143) until the gradual transition to funerary use of both settlements became permanent (Worsham 2015:195).

We could argue that the cyclic pattern of habitation - burial ground - habitation was adopted to reflect on a grander scale, concepts of the cyclic nature of life and death previously associated with separate house units within a certain area. Such cosmological beliefs would keep the past alive and relevant to the present. Memory would permeate the habitation area, and the living space would become a place where memory was preserved and constantly negotiated (Philippa-Touchais 2019:227). For the inhabitants of the various parts of a settlement this development would facilitate the presence and influence of the world of the dead in the world of the living, allowing for a connection with the ancestors as an important source of prestige in the social competition arena.

3.5. CONCLUSION

The evidence suggests that during the EH and early MH periods the process of the social integration of children, especially of newborns and infants, continued beyond death, most likely involving the entire community through the performance of formalized ritual activities, particularly observed in the EH II and EH III burial record. At the end of the EH and the beginning of the MH period, child burials in jars and *pithoi* were deliberately associated with house rooms used as kitchen areas and/or for the storage of household goods. This type of burial with its strong symbolic connotations possibly bore metaphysical powers which enabled the re-incarnation process of the dead child's spirit into the body of a newborn, reinsuring the continuity of the family/clan lineage.

Built as an autonomous unit, the house of the EH II-MH I period embodied the need of its occupants for an independent social role within the community. Its recurring, ritualised destruction and subsequent rebuilding in a manner which likely demonstrated both change and continuity, was a manifestation of both its temporary and permanent nature. The placement of the child burial in close proximity or within the house structure suggests that the burial and the house were conceived as an interconnected unit. The dead child was perhaps seen as an intermediary between the physical world and the world beyond. The close association of the burial with the house provided social status and property rights to the

household through the management of both the burial and the house structure along with its living space. The house and the settlement by extent were likely conceptualised as the meeting point of the world of the living with that of the dead. Through the direct connection with the ancestors, the merging of the community's past and present was achieved, resulting in the creation of strong social bonds between its members and ensuring the community's future cohesion and presence in the area.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to identify the ways with which the connection and interaction between a deceased child and the surviving family/community members was preserved and renewed after the child's death during the EH I - MH I periods in the Peloponnese. Focus was placed on how the social identity of the child was conceptualised in the afterlife, and on the ways the value of this new social persona was acknowledged through its power of influence in the world of the living. I looked at how the burial customs and associated ritual practices acted as social mechanisms aimed to facilitate the initiation/continuation of the child's social integration. I also formed a theory aimed to interpret the burials' physical association with the communities' living spaces as a ritual practice based on cosmological concepts, aimed to the preservation of the child's social value and agency over the community members.

What the research has shown was that the ways local communities conceptualised the child and its social value has shifted over the course of time. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the limited data provided by the burial record of the EH I period in the Peloponnese does not offer a particularly clear picture regarding the children's social place within the communities of this time period. The presence of buried children of a very young age in the extramural collective tombs at Elis: Kalyvia (see p. 30), may indicate that they were considered merely members of the family but not yet complete social entities with rights to individual burials. A strong emphasis to community's cohesion and unity is perhaps also indicated by the generic deposition of the grave goods in the chamber tombs. In contrast, the individual character of the single burials of older children outside the chamber tombs reflect their social identity and elevated social status which is however, still depend on their family/kin associations. The clustering of the burials around the family tombs symbolises the social ties that bind the child to its family and/or its social group in the afterlife, something likely also expressed in the contemporary intramural single child pit burials from Aigina: Kolonna (see Table 3).

Conversely, the examination of the burial record evidence in Chapter 2 has showed that during the EH II period, although children continued to be buried alongside adults in multiple burials evidenced in Zygouries (chamber Tombs VII, XXII and XX) and Cheliotomylos (see Figure 1, Table 4 and p. 21), the separate group of smaller rock-cut chamber tombs at Pavlopetri (see Table 4 and p. 21) and the unique structure of the Elis chamber tomb (see pp. 31-2), if they indeed belonged to children, likely demonstrate a more elevated social status for their occupants.

Constant cultural changes that transformed communities like the growing importance of the household as an independent social unit, had perhaps resulted in changes in attitudes towards the child's social importance during the late EH II – EH III periods, expressed by the introduction of child burials into settlement spaces. The adoption of new burial customs may reflect a community's goal to transform the buried child from a mere biological entity to a social one, with a role to play from beyond the grave and symbolically and/or metaphysically reconnect it with the surviving members of its family and social group. The intramural child burials of Lerna (see pp. 43-4), Olympia (see pp. 45-8) and Sparti (see Table 4 and pp. 21-2) reveal that this was a cultural phenomenon with a geographical extent beyond the limits of a local tradition, since it appears in different areas of the Peloponnese.

The burial record indicates that the premature death of children up to one year old had played a major role in their selection for intramural burial, and was also an important factor for the presence of specific type of *kterismata* in such burials. Death occurring at up to the first year of age would not have given the child sufficient time to reach the age threshold needed to acquire a social identity that would allow for a meaningful social role within the community. Older children on the other hand would have already acquired a social identity associated with funerary customs in a different form, such as secondary burial rites, likely practiced in a different location. For the very young children, the socialisation process would need to start/continue after death with the adoption of burial practices involving the performance of ritual activities such as drinking ceremonies, evidenced in the presence of associated grave goods in child burials.

As it was further demonstrated in Chapter 2, the presence of standardised shapes of drinking vessels, namely in the child burials from Asine (saucers in Graves I and II) (see Figure 9, Table 9 and p. 34) and Olympia (*kantharoi* in Burials I and Burial in Unit 14, *askoi* in Burials I, III, Burials in Units 14 and 16 and Burial abutting Tumulus) (see pp. 45-8), alongside miniaturised versions of such vessels like the saucers from Burials A3, A5 and A16 in Ayios Stephanos (see Table 10 and Figure 12), attest to their ritual use in funerary ceremonies.

The inverted position of some of the grave goods such as the saucers in burial A3 from Ayios Stephanos (see Table 10), the saucer covering the miniaturised vessel in the adult-child double burial from Sparti (see Table 4) and the basin covering the child burial from Tiryns (see Figure.2, Table 4 and p. 22) are probably the result of ritual action. Such is also the case of the miniaturised saucer placed at the child's nape in Burial A5 from Ayios Stephanos (see Table 10). The deliberate damage inflicted in some of the *kterismata*, like the obsidian blades

in Grave II from Asine (see Table 9) and the *kantharos* from the *pithos* Burial in Unit 16 from Olympia (see Table 13 and Fig.15), provide further evidence of ritual action aiming to aid the child's transition to the afterlife.

We may view these rituals as a continuation of similar practices that had taken place during the child's lifetime marking the reaching of an age threshold, a form of *post-mortem* "rite of passage" ceremonies. Through the performance of the funerary ritual, the child is "deconstructed" as an entity and its spirit/soul is released from its former identity, free to transition into a different social role, invested with a new identity and elevated status. In this way the personal and social repercussions of the child's loss are absorbed by the family/community members and normality is restored.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, during the late EH II-MH I periods the belief that the house is a living entity which may "die" and "be reborn" was likely expressed by the frequent destruction and re-erection of the buildings during communal rituals taking place in-between rebuilding phases, emphasising both their temporary and permanent nature through the preservation of memory of their previous physical form as we saw in Houses W-1 and W-9 from Lerna, House R from Asine, House Nu I in Ayios Stephanos, and also the *bothroi* from Lerna's Houses W-86 and W-52 or the pits filled with house debris from the Olympia Tumulus area (see p. 55-6). Data from the EH III but mainly the MH I burial record clearly demonstrate the strengthening of the link between infant burials and domestic structures, especially with the deposition of child burials in-between rebuilding phases. This is evidenced in Olympia, where Apsidal House I was associated with *pithos* Graves II and III, and Apsidal House V with *pithos* Grave I, Graves in Units 14 and 16 and Grave abutting the Tumulus (see Figure 17 and p. 58). It is also demonstrated in Asine, where House R contained four groups of child burials (see Figure 21 and p. 64) and Ayios Stephanos, where Structure Eta I included Burials 4, 9, 10 and 11 (see Figure 20 and p. 63). In my view, the evidence seems to support the theory that, since the house was conceived as a constantly re-born entity, its selection as a burial place for a child was based on the expectation that the deceased would be invested with the "re-animating" capabilities of the house. *Pithos* and jar burials, although not the most popular of burial types, might have been instrumental to that end, holding strong metaphysical associations with the powers of fertility and rebirth. Their deposition in an area of the house reserved for cooking and storage of goods like the Argos' jar burial (T 268) in the "House of the *Pithoi*" or the *pithos* burials DE 68 and DE 50 in Lerna's House AR (see pp. 58-60) would have enhanced those powers through association with that specific part of the house, enabling the re-incarnation process of the buried child

into the body of a newborn to the household. This transfer of the child's "essence" from one body to the next constituted in itself a "rite of passage" event, similar to the "transitional" stage of previous EH II-III ritual ceremonies. This metaphysical transition as a form of *post mortem* socialising process would have resulted in a new identity and social role for the child as an intermediary between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. It would also have made unnecessary the need for further ritual action that might have involved the deposition of grave goods as indicated by the absence of *kterismata* at least in a surviving form (see p. 61), as we have seen in Chapter 2 in the case of the MH I child burials from Asine (see p. 36), Lerna (see p. 45) and Argos (see Table 5).

The benefits for the living would have been the symbolic re-unification of the family and the continuation of its lineage. The household's social status would emanate from the "guardianship" of the memory of the deceased, the linking with the ancestral past and the assertion of the family/clan's rights over the land where its members – now ancestors – were buried. The grouping of the burials in clusters around and within domestic structures likely testifies to the social bonds between the occupants of the burials and the household members and by extension the social group they all belonged to. Perhaps it is also reminiscent of the earlier EH I burial practices as an indication that elements of the old cultural behaviours - and their expressed symbolisms - have been incorporated into the new practices. For the community, as we have seen in Chapter 3, the physical presence and memory of the ancestors would forge social cohesion, signify stability and tie its living members to their land (see pp. 64-7).

The subject of the bidirectional relationship between the living community and the deceased child may benefit from further analysis. Perhaps a future research direction may focus on the role of the father in the child's social life. In a society where the father would have likely taken important decisions concerning the household, the wellbeing of its members and its relations with the rest of the community, the involvement of a strong parental figure in ritual activities would be instrumental in guiding the child towards full integration to community in both life and death. At the same time, his active role in the funerary ritual that would have required the participation of other families within the same social group, would confirm his personal and familial connections with the ancestral world, elevating their social status. Thus, the performance of the funerary ritual would provide the stage for social competition that would re-arrange and (re)confirm the family's position within the clan's social hierarchy. Such a research topic, especially within the field of the Aegean prehistoric studies, is bound to encounter difficulties caused mainly by scarcity of available evidence. Ethnographic

studies however, may provide modern cross-cultural parallels regarding the father's role in a child's care and development and offer useful insights on the subject. Although in the Western world a more nurturing and involved parental figure is promoted for fathers (Kraemer 1991), research has shown a dramatic variability in the importance of direct fathers' parental investment in children within non-industrial (pastoral/farming) communities worldwide. For example, while in most sub-Saharan African communities fathers provide almost no direct care to infants and young children, within the communities of the Aka people of Central Africa the expression of fatherhood is pervasive and sensitive. Likewise, in the Navajo indigenous communities of North America, fathers demonstrate great involvement in the social development of their offspring (Lamb 2010). Future research on the developed concepts of fatherhood within the communities of the prehistoric Aegean, aided by parallel ethnographic studies, is very likely to offer a more inclusive understanding of the internal family structure and hierarchy as well as of the ways the various social groups interacted with each other during the period pertaining to this thesis.

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