INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD IN EARLY IRON AGE GREECE

Cicek Beeby

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Approved by:

Donald C. Haggis

Carla M. Antonaccio

G. Kenneth Sams

ABSTRACT

CICEK BEEBY: Interactions Between the Living and the Dead in Early Iron Age Greece
(Under the direction of Donald C. Haggis)

This paper offers a reevaluation of mortuary variability in Early Iron Age Greece through a theoretical framework that emphasizes formation processes. To that end, a model that highlights the role of interaction between the living and the dead throughout the development of mortuary contexts is presented. Interaction is defined as episodes that connect the world of the living with the world of the dead both physically and symbolically. The model is intended to be an analytical tool that can reassess individual events and actions that shape our mortuary data and delineate different degrees of interaction inherent in each stage. The present study proposes that mortuary variability of Early Iron Age communities can be studied as dynamic systems that reflect diverse responses to societal structure. The Early Iron Age cemetery of Toumba at Lefkandi is selected as a case study.

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I. Introduction

In 1961, Robert Ascher called into question the very fundamentals of archaeological investigation. The basis of his objection was what he termed the "Pompeii premise:" archaeologists, he argued, approached the material at hand as if time had stopped and the remains were suspended in the ground for future inspection.[1] Instead, he saw an archaeological site as a multi-temporal palimpsest of deposits. His arguments paved the way for a lively discourse on formation processes that forms the foundations of our awareness of cultural and natural deposition and interruptions in the archaeological record.[2]

The so-called Pompeii premise is manifest in mortuary contexts.[3] Since we are inclined to see death as an event, we tend to see the subsequent ritual (the funeral and post-funerary activities) as a single episode, and the corresponding archaeological context (the burial) as its static reflection. The burial that the archaeologist uncovers, however, is the frozen tableau of an interrupted process.[4] This process—that is, the sequence of acts that comprise the mortuary behavior of a social group—is a complex layering. The snapshot that we see may very well reflect the last step, but also a single moment out of a mortuary sequence that was never completed. The pitfall here is the focus on the archaeological context rather than visualizing the systemic context: the multi-faceted development and

[1] Ascher 1961, 324, n. 21.

[2] Most notably Schiffer 1972 and Binford 1981; more recently Lucas 2005, Olivier 2011.

[3] Lucas 2005, 38, building on Olivier 1999.

[4] Hutchinson and Aragon 2002, 27.

sequence of human activities that form the burial has been collapsed into a single archaeological deposit.[5] The burial we now scrutinize exists in a social, temporal, and spatial vacuum. But within its own timeline of existence, starting from its deposition until our discovery, it was revisited, reopened, maintained, and refurbished, or alternatively distanced, abandoned, and forgotten. Perhaps it was then rediscovered and reused. Each of these events marks a moment when the living and the dead either connect or diverge. Multiple episodes of contact represent a community's conscious effort to stay connected with their dead, whereas abandonment signals distancing the living from them. On the whole, a maintained connection with the dead is a reflection of how a social group views its own past, and by extension, how the members form their ties with one another in the present. Therefore, we can argue that mortuary behavior is a process laden with social significance, but a nuanced reading of its meaning is impossible if we fail to recognize the individual stages of the process that shape the archaeological context.

In order to restore this social meaning then we must try to reconstruct the process based on the tangible indices of the episodes that comprise the whole. On the other hand, this process is not a single fluid and homogeneous motion or activity, but rather a combination of actions and events that transpire, pause, and resume at a sporadic pace. Furthermore, mortuary rituals do not necessarily follow a linear development and multiple actions may occur simultaneously. One way of approaching this challenge of understanding the process as an accumulation of actions or events would be identifying the triggers, thresholds, or critical moments that collectively result in the mortuary context. In my attempt to outline the mechanisms that created a mortuary record of Early Iron Age Greece, I began to suspect that

[5] Schiffer 1972, 157.

the thresholds of this formation process were marked by pivotal points of interaction between the living and the dead. These moments are potentially diverse: they could take place during or after the burial; they could be intentional and conscious moments of physical interaction, or unintentional and symbolic points of convergence.

Can we then identify these moments in which the realms of the living and the dead crossed paths? How frequently did this interaction take place? Approached individually as well as collectively, what do these moments of contact reveal about the social structure of the community? Furthermore, do different types of burials represent different degrees of interaction? What I propose in this paper is a reevaluation of the Early Iron Age mortuary variability within a conceptual framework that revolves around the assumption that mortuary systems are driven by the living, whose choices result in either a maintenance or dissolution of their relationship with the dead. The categorization of burials within the framework, however, is based on systemic contexts of interaction and cultural production rather than formal features.

II. Defining Interaction: A Framework

The model presented here posits that the moments of interaction that occur between the living and the dead can be inferred from the archaeological record (Fig. 1). There are at least nine episodes in which these moments of contact with the dead can potentially take place and leave archaeological traces. For the sake of convenience, I call these episodes or events "Points of Interaction" (POIs). Interaction may take any of the following forms:

a) *The living spend time and exert energy for the activities related to the funeral and the burial of the deceased.*

Time devoted to funeral activities interrupts everyday life. In a way, the disposal and maintenance of the dead become an obtrusive but obligatory exertion of resources. The system as a whole requires that the living temporarily but periodically step away from their daily activities and make the needs of the dead a priority. This interruption could either physically separate the living from their domestic spaces (e.g. to gather wood for a cremation), bring them closer to the dead (e.g. to clean, prepare, or repair a tomb), or allow funeral activities to encroach upon domestic contexts (e.g to prepare a burial shroud or a funeral feast). Certain burial types or rituals require a larger time investment. In these cases, the community deliberately extends the duration of interaction and suspends the normal course of life.

b) *The living come into contact with the body of the deceased.*

This level of interaction is an inevitable stage in any burial: the living have to handle and manage the corpse in some fashion. The degree and duration of the exposure of the body to the living, however, vary greatly. The visibility of the corpse will depend on how it is transported to the burial site, how exposed it is during transportation, and how public the funeral is, not to mention pre-funerary rituals such as laying out the body for public viewing. Unfortunately these variables—mostly elements of interaction within the funerary stages of the temporal development I propose below—are difficult to trace in the archaeological record. By and large, cremations render the body more visible whereas inhumations permit a more flexible scale of visibility.

c) *The living come into contact with the decomposed remains of the deceased.*

In a primary inhumation that is not later disturbed by human activity, the body of the deceased is deposited and concealed in its final resting place. This system limits the interaction between the living and the physical remains of the dead. The members of the community are only acquainted with the initial stages of death when the body is still familiar, recognizable, and relatively inoffensive. Conversely, mortuary systems that require the buriers to transport the remains after an intermediary waiting period, or to open collective tombs in order to introduce a new body, result in physical contact with human remains at various stages of decomposition. The heightened degrees of interaction in these systems allow for a cognizance of the taphonomic transformation of the human form. Cremations condense this process and render it more public. Most interactions of this type fall into the depositional stages of the mortuary process.

d) The living visually interact with markers or tombs above ground.

The burying group may choose to place the deceased in an above-ground tomb or individuate the site of the grave with a marker. This elaboration of space invites the passerby to recognize the grave site as such, whether it is during a planned visit to the site or through an unintentional visual acknowledgment on a conscious or subconscious level. Large tombs communicate across greater distances and make this type of visual contact a part of daily life. Smaller markers in extramural cemeteries reduce the range of communicability, but grouping the burials together enhances the conspicuousness of the space reserved for the dead as a whole. Enclosures act in a similar way, as they delineate and articulate the realm of the dead.

e) The living come into contact with the grave site.

This type of interaction is distinguished from the previous category through its degree of intentionality. Purely visual contacts discussed above are symbolic and passive. In contrast, deliberate visits to the site (e.g. for repairs, maintenance, or post-funerary rituals) require planning and spatial approximation. Distancing cemeteries from settlements, but paying regular visits to the graves, indicates a desire to separate the two groups spatially while maintaining the relationship conceptually.

All in all, interaction, as defined above, is controlled by the living. Once the mechanisms of mortuary behavior are established, there are instances when the living may step back and assume a passive role. For example, an individual may step outside his house and walk by an intramural burial or see tholoi dotting the landscape in the distance. No additional action is required on his part, and, in a way, he has now become the *object* of a

continuous discourse between the living and the dead. Although this daily communication is unintentional, his role was predetermined by his community in the depositional stages of the mortuary system in place. A monumental construction, for instance, renders a burial visible *because* the tomb builders wanted it to be spotted easily and from a distance. In these key depositional stages the community dictates the levels of contact they will maintain with their past, in their future. On the other hand, markers or tombs may be dismantled or otherwise obscured by later generations. Through such acts of destruction, the new group interrupts the intended connections between the living and the dead, or between the present and the past. When viewed in this light, the temporality of mortuary systems stands out as a fundamental governing principle of our interpretive framework. A break-down of burial types according to the stages of mortuary formation processes will not only elucidate the diachronic changes to the burial itself, but also the social dynamics behind mortuary patterns.

It is this concern with the timeline of events that structured the framework presented here. The POIs are grouped under temporal divisions that roughly mark their place within the mortuary process (funerary, depositional, and post-depositional). Burial types are then distributed across the board depending on their "degree of interaction." Before a demonstration of how the model works, I will go over the categories of interaction by following the suggested temporal divisions. Under each heading, I explain my rationale for assigning burial types a low or high degree of interaction. In addition, I address a few problems in trying to categorize certain sets of data. Later, I examine possible ways to break down burials and reassemble them according to this framework.

Funerary Points of Interaction

For the purposes of this paper, this temporal division is restricted to a relatively short period of time in which the living actively interact with the body during its disposal. In other words, this category deals directly with the active reduction process of the corpse (Fig. 1). Admittedly, funerary acts may take place before the actual internment of the body (such as the preparation or display of the body, procession to the grave site, and so on).[6] Similarly there may be a great number of acts that accompany the funeral (such as singing, dancing, or mourning). The funeral is arguably the most ritualized moment in the mortuary process but unfortunately many of these moments leave little to no residue in the archaeological record.[7] Since the backbone of this framework is finding indicators of interaction in the mortuary record and interpreting their significance, extrapolating based on what *may* have transpired is beyond the scope of this paper.

Burials in Early Iron Age Greece are characterized by two basic techniques of disposal: interring the body (inhumation) or reducing it to ashes before interment (cremation).[8] In our framework, inhumations reflect a lower degree of interaction while cremations signal a higher degree. The reason for this decision rests largely on the mechanisms behind cremations that dictate the duration and the visibility of the event. Consider the stages of cremation: when a body is exposed to fire, the first reaction is the scorching of hair and the skin, followed by the expulsion of water from soft tissues. As the soft tissues burn, the bones will become exposed to fire. The rate at which specific bones will

[6] Sprague 2005, 3.

[7] Lucas 2008, 62.

[8] Sprague (2005, 28) classifies cremations under "compound burials," since the corpse is both burned and interred.

be exposed is a direct result of how close to surface they are in the human body. During the initial phases of the process, contracting and burning muscles may cause the body to move, even raise its limbs or sit up. Once the fire drives off all the water content, it will begin to consume the organic matrix of the bones, leaving the brittle mineral components behind. As the organic components are charred, the color of the bones will change to a deep brown or black. If the fire is sustained, temperatures will rise and this color will gradually change to shades of bluish gray, and eventually to white, signaling the consumption of all the organic components of bone (called calcination). Finally, the bones will go through other morphological changes including fragmentation, warping, and shrinkage. In spite of all the changes in bone structure, certain parts of the human skeleton will still be recognizable after cremation.

As the community members watch the cremation, they will be able to observe these transformations: first a drastic change from a recognizable human body to an unfamiliar object, then a gradual change in the color, shape, and size of the bones themselves. All the while, their senses will be assaulted by the heat from the pyre, sounds, and smells. In this type of ceremony, not only the living interact with the dead for a longer period of time, they also witness the total annihilation of an individual. In a sense, they interact with multiple phases of decomposition though an accelerated and public destruction of the body.

An act of inhumation may be as quick as placing the body into the grave that was already prepared for it. Regrettably, we have no way of estimating the duration of a funeral that involved an inhumation. Neither can we differentiate this sort of variation among different types of inhumations. We can, however, roughly estimate how long a cremation takes. In forensic terms, a cremation is considered complete when the majority of the bones

reach a calcined stage. For this step to initiate, temperatures in excess of 800° C need to be sustained for several hours. The calcination levels of different elements may vary throughout the skeleton, but evidence from Iron Age cremations has shown that ancient pyres were capable of reaching and maintaining these temperatures.[9]

Cremation also stands apart from inhumation in its visibility. An open pyre will be visible across great distances, especially if the pyre site is elevated. The pyres at Vronda at Kavousi on Crete, for instance, would have been seen from the nearby settlements of Azoria and Kastro, as well as from the coast and even from the sea.[10] The pyres in the various cemeteries in Lefkandi would have been detected from Xeropolis and perhaps even across the gulf on a clear day. The observers of such funerals are not only the immediate attendees of the event but also local inhabitants who were excluded from the affair. Therefore, cremation communicates with a considerably larger number of people through a variety of senses and should be considered a more interactive form of disposal.

Depositional Points of Interaction

The deposition stage can be defined as the act of (and the labor necessary for) placing the body into its resting place. As will be discussed below, this necessitates different kinds of acts for different burial types. In a simple inhumation, for instance, the responsible party or parties will dig a grave, deposit the body, and backfill the grave. This framework identifies five basic and archaeologically visible aspects of a burial that dictate how much energy will be spent on the deposition of a body and what degree of interaction will occur between the

[9] For example, Liston and Papadopoulos 2004, 16.

[10] Day 2011, 749-150.

living and the dead (Fig. 1). The first category (pre-depositional and depositional labor) reflects the time and energy investment for preparing the site for the funeral and the interment. The following three categories dictate whether or not the body will be disturbed in the future and the living will come into contact with the remains again. The last category, the location of the burial, reflects the frequency of contact.

Depositional labor can technically start before the funeral. Under this category, we must consider the number of individuals potentially involved in the preparation and the sealing of the grave, as well as the energy exerted individually and collectively. On one end of the spectrum, we will find a simple pit grave, dug by one or two individuals. Some additional time may be spent in the elaboration of the grave trench by lining the walls (with mud brick or stone) or covering it with slabs. This represents a fairly low energy investment. On the other hand, construction of a small tholos, such as the examples we see in Crete in the Early Iron Age, would require locating and designing the tomb, transporting construction materials to the site, and building the structure.[11] Such a project would engage more participants for a longer period. Therefore, the number of individuals in the community involved in funerary activities would increase. Furthermore, if the location of the tomb is within a reasonable distance from the settlement, there is a greater chance that the community members who are not involved in the project will witness the construction or at least the transportation of the materials to the site. This undertaking creates an awareness of the ongoing activities related to the dead within the community. Opening and resealing the tholos for the deposition of multiple individuals also increases labor and time investment for

[11] For a recent overview of small Cretan tholoi, see Eaby 2011.

later burials.[12] Architecturally elaborated tombs will require periodic maintenance and rebuilding; these activities also keep the community engaged with the dead. The assessment of this category remains somewhat subjective. It can only be used meaningfully and with confidence when two burials are being compared. All other categories being equal, whichever burial necessitates more labor for the preparation and the maintenance of the grave site can be considered the more interactive form.

Fuel requirements for cremations add to this type of burial a higher degree of depositional labor. A human body will not combust without the addition of igniters and fuel. In modern crematoria, cremations are carried out in a closed chamber with the aid of gas jets. In this environment, the fire is sustained through a controlled air flow. Early Iron Age cremations, however, took place outdoors in open air and utilized a funeral pyre composed of timbers as fuel. Based on the energy required for the completion of a cremation in modern crematoria, studies have concluded that approximately 120-140 kg of pinewood would have been required for an open air pyre under optimal conditions.[13] Given the unpredictable consequences of wind effects, weather conditions, and the type of wood used to build the pyre, additional fuel would have been necessary. In any case, the minimum requirements necessitate an adult collecting twice his weight in fuel for a single pyre. In reality, the collection of fuel was probably a group involvement rather than an individual effort.

In cases where the grave or the tomb is the intended final resting place of the individual (primary burials), deposition is completed in one phase. Secondary burials, on the

[12] There is evidence, for instance, that the later burials in the small Iron Age tholos at Azoria were lowered from the top (Eaby 2010, 172).

[13] High estimate: 146 kg (Holck 1986), low estimate: 120 (Liston and Papadopoulos 2004).

other hand, add another leg to the transportation and the deposition of the deceased.[14] In inhumations that involve a secondary stage, the remains are removed from the original location and brought to a secondary site after a period of decomposition. In cremations, the process is accelerated due to the faster reduction of the corpse to more manageable remains. Primary cremations, such as those at Vronda or Lefkandi, usually involve building a pyre over a pit into which the remains collapse. In this scenario, there is no need for the family members to touch the cremated remains after the pyre is extinguished. In a secondary cremation, however, the remains are collected, placed in a container, and transported to the grave site. It is also possible that the remains were treated or modified at this stage. A peculiar form of cremation known as the "trench-and-hole" type, popular in Attica, combines the *in situ* location of primary burials with the additional stages of treatment in secondary cremations. In a trench-and-hole cremation, the remains of the deceased are swept into an urn placed in a small hole below the pyre. While the burial is the same primary location as the pyre site, the post-pyre manipulation of the remains into an urn constitutes a secondary rite. The secondary leg of this ritual, however, is relatively short and not as intimate as gathering the burnt bones by hand.

Another difficulty in classifying burials as primary of secondary is the inconsistency in the way burials are reported at different sites. Regrettably, human remains are not excavated, catalogued, and published according to regular standards. Failing to follow proper recovery procedures could result in skewed data sets or incomplete information. For one

[14] The use of the terms "primary" and "secondary" is somewhat controversial. In this paper, I follow a forensic definition that refers to the treatment of the skeletal material. The terms can also be used in reference to ritual activity: primary rites are observed during the deposition of the body, whereas secondary rites take place at a later time. The latter will be addressed under "Post-depositional Points of Interaction" section below. See Sprague 2005, 57-70, for a summary of alternative terms proposed by bioarchaeologists.

simple example, a basic way of determining whether an inhumation is a primary interment is recording the articulation of the skeletal elements. If such observations are not recorded or disseminated properly, important data could be lost. Recovery could be particularly challenging in primary cremations: because of the fragmentary nature of cremated remains and the morphological changes of the human bone, most of the skeletal material could be lost through taphonomic processes. It is therefore imperative that the contents of the pyres and graves containing human remains are sieved, if not also floated. Forensic studies focusing on the ash weight of modern cremations revealed that an average adult would yield approximately 2 kg of remains.[15] While it has been argued that it is not realistic to expect this sort of recovery rate from archaeological contexts, Maria Liston's work at Vronda showed that similar results are indeed possible. The excavation of 97 cremations from this site yielded remains between 1,102 and 2,134 g after water sieving.[16] Furthermore, she was able to identify primary cremations with confidence by plotting the positions of individual fragments within the burial context and demonstrating that the skeleton preserved its basic anatomical orientation after the pyre collapsed into the grave.[17] Unfortunately, such attention to detail does not seem to be the norm elsewhere.

The connection between primary and secondary burials is essentially a problem of the formation process. The reason why this category of the framework is one of the most difficult to interpret is its degree of reversibility.[18] As the survivors disturb old graves and collect the

[15] More specifically, a mean weight of 2,288 g for adult males (range: 1534-3605) and 1,550 g for adult females (range 952-2,278). On the other hand, the remains of an infant 0-6 months may be reduced to 54 g (Mays 2010, 326, figures calculated after Trotter and Hixon, 1974, fig 1).

[16] Liston 2007, 63.

[17] Liston 2007, 60.

[18] Lucas 2008, 62-63.

remains of their deceased family members, they render the original context obsolete. In effect, they insert themselves into the preservation process as agents of cultural disturbance and pluck the original indices of the systemic context from our archaeological contexts. One way to tackle this issue of preservation is to approach the disturbance itself as an "archaeological event" that communicates deliberation and social significance.

Notwithstanding the problems surrounding the recovery of data, it becomes clear that secondary burials heighten the degree of interaction in two fundamental ways: (1) depositional labor increases, and (2) the living come into physical contact with multiple stages of destruction. By way of contrast, in primary burials the ties between the survivors and the remains of the deceased are deliberately severed. Sprague argues that in mortuary systems where "the culturally determined method of disposal for the individual requires only the simple interment … psychologically the remains have been abandoned by the living."[19] Nevertheless, even in primary burials, the living may come into contact with the remains again through other forms of depositional intrusion (Fig. 1). The categorization of the original interment as a primary burial must be maintained in these cases, since the focus of these intrusions is now the deposition of a second individual, not the removal of the first individual's remains.

Intentional depositional intrusions include reopening graves or tombs to introduce a new body. The most common example of this practice is the tholoi and chamber tombs of Iron Age Crete.[20] In more drastic cases, such as the example from the Protogometric tholos at

[19] Sprague 2005, 60.

[20] Eaby 2011, 174-194.

Azoria, the older burials are pushed aside to make room for the newcomer (Fig. 2a and b).[21] This moment may be seen as analogous to collecting remains for secondary burial: the living come into physical contact with deteriorating (or entirely reduced) human remains. However, we do not know exactly how much time passed between intrusions and how exposed the remains actually were. According to Liston, the way the skeletons were articulated in the Azoria tholos suggests that the bodies were wrapped or bound in some fashion.[22] Furthermore, the intruder is interacting with multiple bodies at different stages of decomposition, as opposed to the single individual in transition from a primary to a secondary burial.

Unintentional depositional intrusions take place when the survivors cut into an older grave but their purpose is not interring the two individuals together. This phenomenon is mostly seen in cemeteries with organic growth that reveals no clues as to an overall spatial organization in the spacing or the alignment of the graves (as in Toumba at Lefkandi, for instance). The living come into contact with human remains that may or may not belong to one of their family members.

The location of the graves or tombs is another indicator of how close at hand the living choose to keep the dead. Intramural burials infringe upon the domestic sphere. In communities where the spaces of the living and the dead are not separated clearly, there is a daily unintentional connection between the two groups. Here, the community members do not have to actively interact with the dead. Intended interaction is assumed through a conscious integration of spaces. In this scenario the links between the living and the dead are

[21] Eaby 2010, 172.

[22] Eaby 2010, 172.

technically never severed, although the level of intramural interaction may depend on the visibility of the graves.

The identification of intramural burials, once again, leaves us with issues of preservation and interpretation. On the one hand, some Early Iron Age settlements in Greece are accompanied by burial grounds that are set apart from the spaces of the living. A clear example of such a pattern is found at Lefkandi, discussed below in greater detail. The Early Iron Age settlement group at Kavousi presents another interesting case: the abandoned buildings of Vronda are used as burial grounds by the members of a nearby community although there is no clear spatial link between the new cemetery and the settlement.[23] On the other hand, in urban centers, such as Athens and Argos, where Iron Age settlement data have been obliterated by later levels and modern buildings, it is hard to judge where the boundaries between the living and the dead stood. In many cases archaeologists rely on concentrations of wells and pits to identify settlement locations. In a recent paper, however, Mazarakis Ainian advocates a more selective approach that focuses on burials that are "closely associated with extant architectural remains, either within their limits or at such a close distance to them that one can at least argue in favor of the absence of well defined boundaries within the living and the dead."[24] He also remains wary of isolated structures which could represent buildings "associated with activities in relation to the neighboring burials," not dwellings or settlements.[25] Nevertheless, intramural interment of burials, including adults, is well attested in the archaeological record of Early Iron Age sites such as

[23] According to Day (2011, 749-750), the burying population was from Azoria and sought to stake a claim on the territory of Vronda by establishing a cemetery.

[24] Mazarakis Ainian 2007-2008, 365.

[25] Mazarakis Ainian 2007-2008, 366.

Vitsa, Mitrou, Viglatouri, and Asine.[26]

One such controversy is the elusive location of the Iron Age settlement in Athens. Archaeologists uncovered burials dating from 1400-700 BC in the Agora area where a number of Iron Age wells and the remains of a Geometric building were also discovered (Fig. 3 and 4). [27] This is taken as an indication of intramural graves by scholars like Immerwahr, who argued that after the seventh century BC "the central Agora area had already become too crowded a residential area to permit more burials to be made."[28] On the other hand, Morris suggests that "many (although not all) Dark Age sites were made up of separate clusters of houses, with open spaces between them… The assumption here is that larger, more formal cemeteries represent areas between or beyond the groups of houses, reserved for placing the dead, while smaller, less formal plots are taken as having been on the skirts of or within clusters of houses."[29] He presents this relationship in a series of maps that illustrate Iron Age burials and settlement evidence (Fig.5). More recently, Papadopoulos suggested a more specialized division of space and proposed that the site of the later Agora was the "Kerameikos" in the Iron Age while the settlement associated with it was situated on the Acropolis.[30] Mazarakis Ainian, however, points out that artisan's quarters were generally integrated with settlements in the Iron Age until the end of eighth century BC.[31]

This quick overview of the categories that fall under the depositional phase showed

[26] Mazarakis Ainian 2007-2008, 367-385.

[27] Immewahr 1973, 30

[28] Immewahr 1973, 30

[29] Morris 1989, 62-63.

[30] Papadopoulos 2003, 280-316.

[31] Mazarakis Ainian 2007-2008, 387.

that this division is marked mostly by moments of physical contact with the dead. In this phase, survivors actively make choices to either dispose of the body quickly or to return to the site, perhaps even multiple times, in order to maintain physical ties with the dead. As we will see below, the physical nature of these Points of Interaction differs from the next temporal division in which interaction is more symbolic or visual.

Post-depositional Points of Interaction

The last temporal division of the framework deals specifically with forms of interaction between the realms of the living and the dead after the remains of the deceased have been removed from sight (Fig. 1). Within this division, the first two categories (visibility and architectural space) reflect the visual relationships in which the living take on a passive role. The third category (post-depositional rituals) highlights active visits to the grave site. All three categories serve the construction of memory at some level.

One aspect of interaction that we may consider under the post-depositional stages of mortuary systems is visibility. Built tombs and above ground markers enhance the visibility of the burials and interact with the living as communicators. The continuous discourse initiated by the erection of the marker or the tomb constitutes a dynamic dialogue that can be studied within the theoretical frameworks of social or visual semiotics: the above-ground articulation of the space acts as a sign or a signifier of burials and connects the living with the dead through a culturally codified visual acknowledgement.[32] Tholoi that house multiple burials or cemeteries as a whole communicate limited information as to the identity of the incumbents outside kinship or other large-scale corporeal affinities. Within cemeteries,

[32] See Preucel (2006) for possible archaeological applications of semiotics, especially pp. 28-31 for Saussure's signifier/signified paradigm and pp. 54-60 for Peirce's sign/object/interpretant theory.

markers may act as reminders of the resting places of individuals: this transforms the grave site into an individualized personal space. A notable example of this phenomenon is the pottery markers of the Iron Age burials in Athens (Fig. 6). Yet, by grouping burials together and increasing the visibility of the cemetery in general, the community begins to create a collective space that underlines group identity.

A different notion of visibility may be expressed through the elaboration of architectural space over or around the grave. This class embraces built tombs (such as tholoi) as well as enclosures. There are, of course, other types of elaboration or monumentalization, such as the unique case of the Toumba "hero" burial that was first marked by a monumental building and later covered by a mound.[33] In cases where monumentality is expressed through size, we may conclude that the intent is to enable the marker to interact with individuals across greater distances (Fig. 7).

Unfortunately, markers, and even built tombs, do not always survive in the archaeological record. We should also consider the possibility of markers made out of organic materials. Lack of organization and multiple intrusions into earlier graves may signal the omission of markers at a given cemetery, although I am inclined to think that families still retained a general idea where their kin was buried for at least a generation or two. In some cases, even if the burials were originally marked, these markers may be removed, destroyed, or otherwise made invisible by later generations. The incorporation of the Azoria tholos into the Archaic settlement and the preservation of Iron Age burials under the later Agora are two notable examples. Although originally these burials were fairly visible, their

[33] The stratigraphy of the site does not allow us to conclude whether the building or the burials came first. See below, p. 34-5.

memory was obliterated by a later group that deliberately interrupted the interaction.

The last category to be considered is also the most dynamically interactive one in this group: post-depositional rituals. Once again, we are dealing with a low-resolution archaeological event—the rituals that took place at the burial site after deposition—that left no recoverable residues. Difficulties in recovery make it challenging for archaeologists to assess the frequency or the duration of post-depositional rites. Most of the rituals we can observe involve the deposition of objects or vessels outside or on top of the grave. Sometimes special spaces are constructed or delineated for this very purpose: the excavators of Vronda tholoi, for instance, found stone pavings in the dromoi or the pits in front of the tombs where drinking and pouring vessels were deposited.[34] Designation of ritual spaces in the vicinity of the tombs indicates that the survivors are investing in these ritual areas for repeated use.

The above synopsis aimed to show how memory is constructed at the post-depositional stage of funerary systems. Memory can be perpetuated through visual articulations whose scale is determined at the time of the erection of the marker or ritualized forms of interaction that involve presentation of objects. In general, post-depositional Points of Interaction seek to construct and maintain a collective memory.[35] Regardless of the strength of the depositional Points of Interaction, if the post-depositional points are weak or non-existent, the memory of the deceased will not transcend generational thresholds.

[34] Day 2011, 746.

[35] See Lucas 2005, 77-92, on memory, especially p. 84 on habitual vs. collective memory and Antonaccio 1995b, 264-265, on genealogical memory.

III. Discussion

As archaeologists, we tend to depend on typologies for ordering or interpreting data. This stems from our understandable desire to classify and organize variability. As a result, even though there are many facets to a burial, usually one rises to the surface based on a conspicuous feature it displays or the investigator's research focus. This facet then becomes that burial's label: a cremation, a pithos burial, a tholos, and so on. Such formalist designations are simplifications that condense and conceal mortuary variability that exists *within* these burial types. It may be obvious to some that not all tomb types are the same; but scholarship that chooses to utilize formal designations without clearly outlining how burials were formed or used results in deductive extrapolations based on academically ingrained meanings behind typologies. Therefore, over time, labels given to burials, however descriptive or elaborate they may be, result in a decontextualization of data.

Instead, we should perhaps look at burials as products of a system in which different permutations of actions, activities, or behaviors are emphasized. The framework I have presented above maps out such a system and its variables. So far, I have argued that the variables of mortuary systems are characterized by points of contact between the living and the dead, leaving residues in the archaeological record. My model seeks out residues of such actions and highlights the degrees of interaction they manifest. I propose that we can use the model as a guide to address a number of different lines of inquiry, including perceptions of time, definitions of scale and agency, and construction of identity.

Time and Space

As I have argued above, the formation of the mortuary record is not a linear unfolding of acts and events. In his work on archaeological formation processes, Lucas quite rightly reacts against the linear layering of events and advocates a multi-temporal format.[36] A given snapshot of a settlement, for instance, would contain structures and components originally built at different times, remained in use for different durations of time, and eventually abandoned. In that sense, our archaeological record is not a neat sequence but a messier combination of events.[37] Therefore, I tried to establish my model in a way that supports a multi-temporal development. Even though the vertical conceptualization of the model conveys a framework of rather successive temporal progression (Fig. 1), several thresholds in the depositional and post-depositional sequences trigger repetition or synchronism of actions. In other words, certain Points of Interaction may be initiated or experienced repeatedly or simultaneously, and quite possibly by different actors.

Figure 8 offers a graphic rendition of these temporal links. For instance, repeated interaction with the remains of the deceased may occur through depositional intrusions (intentional or unintentional). This creates a cyclical link between deposition and disposal. Retrospective jumps may be present in the case of secondary burials: the living interrupt the otherwise linear progression of funeral-to-disposal movement with an additional stage of transportation and redeposition. This interference causes them to experience depositional rites twice. Further, the practice of secondary inhumations initiates intentional depositional intrusions. Continuous modes of interaction, such as the construction of monumental spaces

[36] Lucas 2005, 37.

[37] Lucas 2005, 37.

(that require an extended period of depositional labor), intramural location of burials, or the visibility of existing burials through markers also make overlaps in the timeline possible. These categories of synchronic acts or experiences allow more than one event to take place at a given time. For instance, individuals actively interact with the dead through post-depositional rituals while the presence of an architecturally elaborated space maintains passive visual communication. At any given time, there may be more than one group of individuals making contact with the dead. In these aspects, the model allows us to visualize a palimpsest—or accumulation of action and experience—not a simple layering of events.[38]

The links between the temporal divisions of the model allow us to examine the relationships between the funerary, depositional, and post-depositional episodes. For example, if the mortuary system of a community is heavily interactive at the funerary and depositional stages but not so much after deposition, it would suggest that this social structure values the "farewell" stage of the funeral but does not maintain a long-term relationship with its dead. This type of clean break with the dead may indicate that the past is not central to constructing identities in the present or links with the past are expressed through mechanisms other than mortuary behavior. Alternatively, if a community observes a speedy or distant depositional phase followed by an emphasis on post-depositional moments of contact, this may be an indication of a distaste for physical contact with the remains but a penchant for symbolic interactions. In this case, a sustained memory of the dead may be important in reiterating positions of power or highlighting ties with certain kinship groups.

It is also notable that many potentially destructive and intrusive acts are contained

[38] Through this graph, it also becomes clear that burial types with higher levels or sustained durations of interaction (indicated by hash marks in the graph) are more prone to a palimpsest model.

within the depositional stage. These acts, such as collecting skeletal elements from a primary burial, fall within Lucas' category of "highly reversible" contexts with "low residuality."[39] That is, reversing previous actions erases their residues from the archaeological context and in many cases renders them undetectable. Although the concept of reversibility makes our archaeological contexts more problematic, in my opinion it also makes the systemic context more interesting. The disturbance itself represents human contact, and therefore carries substantial meaning. Although it obliterates past residues, it conveys a willingness to seek out and interact with hidden remains of the dead. Similarly, in a few instances repeated interaction within the categories of the model is implied and highly probable but also archaeologically invisible. A tholos, for example, may be reopened, reentered, resealed, even repaired more times than it is probably discernible to us. These low-resolution acts, however, are important in the construction of identity: maintaining the space of the dead is generally regarded as an important mechanism through which communities claim ancestral ties with certain groups or geographical locations.[40]

Agency and Scale

One common thread that runs throughout this framework is detecting the scale of interaction, which is inevitably connected with the scale of the event or the space designated for the dead. Needless to say, at all the stages of the framework, scale is determined by whoever is socially responsible for burying the deceased. The funeral can be a forceful spectacle that compels even the nonparticipants to engage with the event, or a more private

[39] Lucas 2008, 62-63.

[40] Parker Pearson 1999, 132-139. See especially Saxe's Hypothesis 8 (1970), which posits that tombs and cemeteries function as territorial markers that stake a claim on restricted resources. This hypothesis was tested and revised by Goldstein (1976), and applied to Mediterranean contexts by Morris (1991) and Antonaccio (1995b, 258-63).

and reserved affair involving fewer people.

The depositional stage of the process also stands out as an especially significant point when aspects of agency and scale are defined both in the present and the future. The buriers decide whether or not to designate an extramural location for burial, thus deciding how much interaction will take place daily in the future. They may design an architecturally elaborated space for the dead and render the presence of graves within the landscape immediately noticeable. They may choose to cluster graves together, thereby forming an aggregate group. On the other hand, the agents who are arriving at these decisions in the depositional phase are not necessarily the actors of the future. Therefore, many decisions in this stage inform later acts.

By delineating what the later interactions will entail, the agents also establish the role the dead will play in this discourse. I have argued above, for instance, that built tombs become obtrusive and independent communicators in the landscape. The actors in the future may choose to preserve this relationship by maintaining the tombs themselves and therefore keeping to the systems that have been created for them, or they may resolve to break from tradition and resituate themselves in a mortuary system that is more suited to their current social configuration. The depositional phase, then, is a crucial moment for the designation of the relationship between the living and the dead, as well as between the past, the present and the future.

Individualization and Assimilation

The actors in the depositional stage also determine the relationships among the dead themselves. In other words, they decide *how* the deceased will be introduced and

incorporated into the realm of the dead. Death, in a way, is the final leg of an individual's mobility between social groups. Throughout an individual's life, a series of rites of passage, such as coming of age, marriage, and pregnancy, highlight the thresholds of expected and acceptable forms of social transition. Scholars such as Van Gennep and Leach saw these rites as a tripartite progression wherein the individual breaks away from one group, lingers in a liminal stage, and is finally incorporated into a "new world."[41] This causes the individual to subscribe to a new identity—adults, married men, mothers, and so on—while the old group reorganizes itself after the loss of a member. The concept is easily applied to death: the deceased, now separated from the world of the living, remains in a liminal zone while funeral rites are performed to facilitate the transition, and finally joins those who have passed before. In this system, while the dead and the living form two distinct groups that are socially separated from one another, they are also united by a unilateral but constant flow of new members. The observance of this transition by the living members of the community at every passing connects the two "worlds."

The rituals and ritualized activities that surround the transition can be quite diverse. One important mechanism is funerary feasting, which, among other things, serves to reaffirm social bonds and to advertise the strength of the surviving kinship group or community at a time of emotional distress.[42] It is therefore important to emphasize that funerary activities are also vehicles for interaction among the living, whether at a household, community or regional level. The "outsiders" who are invited to participate in such events experience death

[41] Van Gennep 1960, 11-13; Leach 1976, 77-80.

[42] LeCount and Blitz 2009, 263-264.

from an etic view,[43] and while they engage in the activities just like anyone else, their loose personal connection with the deceased transforms the funerary realm into a collective social arena.[44]

The last stage of the tripartite transition of passage—the incorporation of the individual into the realm of the dead—is reflected in the archaeological record as the spatial relationship of human remains to one another. Once again, the remaining members of the community decide how identity will be transferred and reshaped. The body of the deceased will either be separated from others in a single burial or incorporated into a multiple grave. In a multiple grave, the individual assumes anonymity and becomes part of a larger group. In the earlier stages of deposition, the newly introduced body will stand out from the rest of the remains in the tomb until the decomposition process is complete. After that, the disarticulated bones will be indistinguishable and may even be intentionally pushed aside and completely integrated with the remains of the others. This practice does not signal a disregard for the dead, but a social understanding that the dead now form a collective group, and that they are all one and the same. Theoretically, this collective identity can exist either at a small household or a nuclear family level, or on a larger communal scale.

On the other hand, single graves preserve the individuality—and therefore the identity—of the deceased.[45] Graves may be grouped together and interact with one another through proximity or partial intrusion, but the actual remains of the dead remain separated. If the spot is distinguished by a marker, this indicates an attempt to set the individual apart from

[43] Parker Pearson 1999, 33.

[44] Hayden (2009a and b) stresses the political dynamics of extremely lavish funerary feasts and downplays the psychological and emotional factors.

[45] Also see Antonaccio 1995b (250-252) on single graves and their spatial relationship to one another.

the rest. In this layout, it *is* possible to interact with a single grave and perform post-depositional rituals honoring a single person. If there are no markers, family members may still retain a memory of who is buried where for a few generations but eventually distant memories of individuals will be replaced by a shared existence.

The distinction between assimilative and individualizing mortuary behaviors is, in my opinion, a significant one. The former deals with the dead as a collective group, and if we see the discourse between the dead and the living as a form of social interaction reflecting societal values, it follows that this system places more emphasis on corporate identities. It is likely that this ideology will correspond with a social organization around kinship groups. Conversely, the latter system highlights selfhood (at least as far as living memory serves), and in doing so, perhaps places more emphasis on individual identities and attainments. An example of such an organization would be the "big-man" societies where status is not inherited but earned.[46]

[46] Whitley 1991a, 348-352, discussed in greater detail below.

IV. Case Study: Toumba Cemetery

Many discussions on the societal structure of Early Iron Age Greece either revolve around or culminate in an evaluation of the data from the settlement and cemeteries of Lefkandi; it is to this site that I also turn as a case study. On the one hand, it is possible to argue that Lefkandi has become an academic artifact. A justified reaction against the ubiquitous appearance of Lefkandi in publications may emphasize that the structures and archaeological assemblages associated with this settlement are unique and by no means representative of Early Iron Age Greece in general. In fact, our realization that there was possibly more to Early Iron Age Greece than a dismal conceptualization of a "Dark Age" somewhat corresponds with the recovery of rich finds from this site.[47] Be that as it may, the very reasons that attracted scholars to Lefkandi—the search for a Homeric society, heroic burials, monumental architecture, and spectacular grave goods, to mention a few—also distracted our attention away from some simple but fundamental questions: how did the mortuary system work here and what do the burials represent in terms of social structure?

The settlement at Lefkandi is situated on a coastal promontory known as Xeropolis (Fig. 9). Approximately 500 m to the west of the settlement, a cluster of six cemeteries house the Iron Age burials (Toumba, Skoubris, Palia Perivolia, the East Cemetery, the South Cemetery, and the Field of Khaliotis). Of these, Toumba is no doubt the most extensively excavated and published one because of the rich contents of the graves and the discovery of

[47] Antonaccio 1995a, 5.

the so-called hero buried in a demolished building under a mound (Fig. 10). The cemetery was in fact discovered in 1969 before anyone suspected the presence of a monumental building only a few meters to the west. The material was first published in 1980 in the *Lefkandi I* volume that covered both the Xeropolis settlement and the nearby cemeteries. That same year, a construction project in the area led to the discovery of walls and mudbrick. Unfortunately, the owner of the plot hired a bulldozer and leveled a substantial portion of the land before the archaeologists could intervene. Despite this significant loss of data, the building was excavated between 1981-1983 and the results were presented in a second volume of the *Lefkandi* series.

Toumba certainly offers an attractive collection for the study of mortuary systems and it would certainly benefit from an updated discussion of formation processes and mortuary behavior. I will first consider the mound and its burials; I will then turn to the adjacent cemetery and finally propose a reading of the burials at Toumba based on the stages of the interpretive framework outlined above.

The Apsidal Building and the Mound

As it turned out, the unhappy incident with the bulldozer had indeed destroyed one-third of one of the largest buildings of Early Iron Age Greece. The structure, apsidal in plan, was approximately 50 m in length and somewhere between 8.70-9.07 m in internal width (Fig. 11).[48] The internal span was supported by a central row of posts. On the exterior, a series of wooden posts surrounded the building and created a veranda except on the eastern façade of the building. The walls were made of mud brick resting on a stone socle. The

[48] The length cannot be established with certainty because of the destruction of the apse. The width, although more securely measured, varies throughout the building.

interior space was divided into three main sections: the eastern room, a long central chamber, and lastly the apse.

The eastern room, entered through a shallow porch, was probably sectioned off with a screen wall. In addition to a rectangular mud-brick compartment in its northwest corner, an oval platform and a pebble circle were built into the corners of the southern wall. The central chamber was approached though the porch and the eastern room, but also had a narrow opening on its southern wall. A clay box containing ash and burnt bone was built into the southeast corner. The bones could not be securely identified but two fragments are said to be from caprines. The main chamber was separated from the apse by two small rooms on either side of a narrow passageway. The apse was damaged badly by the bulldozer, but the archaeologists nevertheless found a number of pits, presumably for storage.

The famous and controversial burials of the Toumba mound were found in two large shafts cut into bedrock towards the middle of the central room (Fig. 12a and b). The northern shaft housed the burial of four horses. The southern shaft contained the remains of an inhumed female and a cremated male. The north and south walls were also lined with mudbrick and covered with a thick layer of brown clay. Excavators noted that the shaft may have received a timber cover and a floor.[49] The southern half of the shaft was occupied by a bronze amphora, which was probably an exotic heirloom from the 12th century. It was lined with cloth, filled with the cremated remains of a male, and sealed with another bronze vessel. Remnants of wood around the amphora were taken as an indication that it was placed in a wooden box before deposition. Objects associated with the cremation included a razor, a sword, a spearhead, and a whetstone. The northern half of the shaft contained the poorly

[49] Popham 1993a, 18.

preserved skeleton of a 25-30 year old female. She was laid in an extended position with her hands crossed at the pelvis. The feet also crossed at the ankles, which led to the suggestion that she was bound and sacrificed following the death of her husband. The presence of an iron knife next to her was taken as further proof. She was buried with a very wealthy array of grave goods, including multiple items of gold jewelry and two large gold discs over her breasts. Again, remains of wood around the skeleton suggested that she was placed in a wooden coffin. A large krater recovered in pieces from the area immediately to the south of the shafts was interpreted as a possible grave marker.

It is important to note that the sequence of these two burials remains uncertain. The excavators commented that the fill above the burials did not show signs of subsequent disturbance. Even so, if there was indeed a wooden cover over the burials and the shaft was not filled until the introduction of the second body, there would be minimal disturbance in the archaeological record. Another possibility is that the cremated remains of the male were stored elsewhere until the death of the consort. In any case, there is no evidence that the female was sacrificed, especially since the position of the arms is actually attested elsewhere at Toumba.[50]

This elaborate and monumental building surprisingly showed little evidence of use. The pits in the apse were found empty and unused. The floors were barely trodden. The eastern room was plastered, but the rest of the rooms were not. Coupled with the discovery of a pile of unused plaster, the inconsistency in decoration was taken as an indication that the building was unfinished. In fact, the structure seems to have stood only for a brief period

[50] An osteological study of the skeleton was never released; therefore it is not known whether the bones show any signs of trauma.

before it was deliberately destroyed and buried under a mound. The pottery from the fill of the mound dates to the early to mid-tenth century (MPG/early LPG).[51]

Controversy still surrounds the function of the building, partly because the sequence of events—that is, the chronological relationship between the shafts and architectural space—cannot be established with confidence.[52] The destruction of the bulldozer unfortunately wiped off the floor above the shafts and made the stratigraphy impossible to read. Excavators of Toumba nevertheless posited that the burials came before the building, based largely on the discovery of the remains of a burned patch under the floor of the central room. This burned area was interpreted as the remains of a pyre, but the only bone fragments that were associated with it were those of a dog. The clay box that was found in the corner of the central room was thought to contain the debris from this pyre, although the contents of the box did not allow further elaboration of this theory. Moreover, the burnt area covered the surface of leveled bedrock, which suggests that even if the building was not completed, the area had been prepared for its construction. All in all, the original report agreed that there is no conclusive evidence either way and the sequence of events remains open to interpretation.[53]

Whether the building was constructed with some other purpose in mind or was intended to house the burials from the beginning, it was nevertheless transformed into a funerary space with the introduction of the burials. For the purposes of the present

[51] Popham 1993b, 101.

[52] For the excavators' sequence of events, see "Section 7: The Sequence of Events, Interpretation and Date" by Popham (1993b), in Popham et al. 1993, 97-101; also see Antonaccio 2002, 20-23, for a helpful summary of the sequence and a consideration of other possibilities.

[53] Popham 1993b, 99.

discussion, it is safe to assume that from the deposition of the burials until its demolition the building virtually served as a monumental marker. During its life span it was used sparingly, although the platforms in the eastern room and the storage in the apse imply intended feasting activities.[54] Following the construction of the tumulus, a trail seems to have been formed around the mound. Shortly after, more shaft graves started to appear to the east of what used to be the entrance of the building. In fact, over time this area developed into a fully-fledged cemetery and joined the other five burial grounds in the vicinity (Fig. 13).

The Cemetery

The earliest graves at the Toumba cemetery date to the Middle Protogeometric Period (MPG) and clearly cut into the eastern skirts of the mound.[55] Although poor preservation levels made anthropological observations very difficult, the identifiable remains suggest that adults of both sexes as well as children were represented. Toumba ceased to function as a burial ground sometime in the Sub-Protogeometric III period (SPG).[56]

37 tombs and ten pyres were located by archaeologists before the publication of the *Lefkandi I* volume. As the excavations continued, two brief reports announced the discovery of additional tombs and pyres.[57] In 1996, a volume containing the plates for another Lefkandi monograph heralded the arrival of a detailed publication of these new tombs, but the text

[54] Antonaccio 1995a, 13-14.

[55] Popham 1993a, 9; Lemos and Mitchell 2011, 635.

[56] Lemos and Mitchell 2011, 635.

[57] Popham et al. 1982 and 1988-1989.

unfortunately never materialized.[58] The volume nevertheless contains detailed plans and drawings, as well as tables that list the contents of the new burials.

Toumba burials are divided into two broad categories: tombs and pyres.[59] As of 1996, a total of 83 tombs and 34 pyres were excavated.[60] The majority of the tombs are shaft graves cut into the soft conglomerate bedrock and backfilled with the same material.[61] In many cases, the tomb consists of a rectangular burial compartment sealed with a cover of stone slabs that rest on a narrow ledge two-thirds of the way down into the cutting. There are also a few examples of mud-brick lining along the interior walls to support the heavy stone slabs. In cases where the ledge is discernible but no slabs were found, the excavators suspect that wooden boards or logs may have served a similar function.[62] The floor of the grave was usually covered with pebbles. These tombs yielded copious amounts of grave goods, ranging from pottery to precious metals, exotic objects, and heirlooms. In some cases, grave goods were also deposited on top of the slab covers before the grave was backfilled. The offerings must have been placed on the slabs immediately after the funeral and deposition, since they are completely buried under the backfill of the grave. The limited timeframe available for the presentation of these offerings excludes the possibility of their accumulation over time as a

[58] Popham and Lemos 1996, covering the excavations of 1981, 1984, 1986, and 1992-4, contains plates, plans, and drawings, as well as tables outlining the objects recovered from the graves.

[59] In the excavation reports, Toumba cemetery burials are labeled with the letter T, followed by the burial's number. Tombs and Pyres are numbered separately. Objects recovered from the graves are numbered consecutively for each burial. For the system of reference and cataloging, see Popham and Sackett 1980, 102.

[60] According to the current excavator Irene Lemos (2002: 161), the 83 tombs and 34 pyres that were excavated represent close to the full extent of the cemetery. It should be noted, however, that the excavation report of the 1984-1986 seasons also posited that "it may safely be concluded that nearly all the tombs (69) and pyres (23) in the cemetery have been located and excavated, a rare achievement for a burial ground of any date in Greece" (Popham et al. 1988-1989, 120).

[61] The descriptions of the burial types are primarily based on Sackett 1980, 197-201.

[62] Sackett 1980, 198.

result of frequent post-depositional rituals.

The pyres at Toumba were also rectangular rock cuttings large enough to accommodate a human body.[63] The deposits were distinguished by a thick layer of black ash in which some, but not many bone fragments were found. The bottom of some of the pyres yielded blackened and calcined boulders which may have aided air circulation or heat retention. In a few cases, the earth or rock at the edge of the openings was altered because of the heat of the fire. Some pyres were completely bereft of grave goods while others contained offerings, albeit not as rich and varied as the contemporary shaft graves. Burned objects suggest that some of the offerings were placed on the pyres, whereas unburned vessels on top of the ash layer indicate that deposits were also made after the pyre died down. In addition to the pyres, four tombs out of 83 contained "urn cremations" that are comparable to the "trench-and-hole" type.[64]The prevalence of this kind of cremation in Athens in the Iron Age led the excavators to speculate that these exceptional graves belonged to immigrants.[65] Lastly, there are rare cases of urn cremations that do not fit in with the above category and seem to fall under the heading of secondary cremations.[66]

The variety of burial types at the Toumba cemetery presents a fascinating case. What is more puzzling, however, is the absence of skeletal remains in burial deposits. According to the excavators, human bone fragments were indeed recovered from almost all pyres although "most were small scraps of about 5 cm and less in length, in a highly brittle and calcined

[63] According to *Lefkandi I*, the dimensions varied from 100-180 to 50-100 cm. Sackett 1980, 200.

[64] Lemos 2002, 163. These are T14, T18, T50, and T58. T14 contains two urns.

[65] Sackett 1980, 200; Themelis 1980, 210; Lemos 2002, 219.

[66] T55 and T79, discussed in greater detail below.

condition."[67] In fact, it is argued that the small size of cremated remains is an evidence of pounding.[68] Most of the shaft graves, on the other hand, contained very little bone, if any. Of the 36 Toumba tombs published in the 1980 volume, only two yielded articulated skeletal elements.[69] The bones in these two tombs were extremely fragile and fell apart as the archaeologists attempted to lift them. Isolated and mostly unidentifiable bones, often tinted green because of their proximity to a bronze object, comprised the rest of the skeletal collection. Excavators remarked that "these fragments are in some cases considered to be unburnt; in others no certainty was possible."[70]

In an attempt to explain the riddle of the "boneless" tombs, the excavators put forth three scenarios in the *Lefkandi I* volume: the shaft graves could either be inhumations that completely deteriorated because of environmental factors; token burials that contained a handful of bones from pyres; or cenotaphs that were not meant to hold any bones at all. Of these three arguments, the report presented the second one as the most plausible. The last suggestion was quickly dismissed because of the fact that this would make almost the entire cemetery (as well as the other neighboring cemeteries of Lefkandi) all cenotaphs. The first suggestion, the excavators argued, was equally unlikely: since some tombs contained articulated remains while others did not, the formation process that would enable such a configuration would be "a random or very complex pattern" that is "perhaps possible, but

[67] Sackett 1980, 201.

[68] Musgrave 1980, 429. Alternatively, Liston argues that such results may be caused by environmental factors: "…even one episode of freezing is a significant factor in reducing fragment size in cremated bone. It appears that freezing may cause considerable fragmentation of bone, a condition sometimes interpreted as the result of deliberate pounding or grinding" (Liston 2007, p. 60, n.10).

[69] T12B and T26.

[70] Themelis 1980, 211.

hard to evaluate."[71] Moreover, phosphate tests conducted on soil samples taken from two tombs at Toumba, as well as three tombs from Skoubris and a pyre from Palia Perivolia did not yield levels "sufficient enough to suggest the presence of decayed bone."[72] While fragments of unburnt human bone recovered from the tombs seemed to contradict the "token burial" theory, it was nevertheless maintained that "cremation was the order of the day at Lefkandi and that *all* the unburnt material came from rather badly organized cremations."[73] The two tombs with extensive skeletal remains were considered exceptions to the rule.

In brief, the mortuary system the excavators have proposed for Toumba in *Lefkandi I* is as follows: (1) the pyres are the actual places of cremation as well as graves (i.e. primary cremations); (2) majority of the shaft graves are token burials in which a symbolic amount of cremated human remains are deposited; (3) there are a few rare cases of inhumations in shaft graves; (4) there are a few rare cases of urn cremations, probably for immigrants. As the excavations continued and new graves were discovered, however, archaeologists were forced to reevaluate their position on how the tombs functioned. The new burials were yielding more human remains than expected. One of the tombs (T68) even contained the skeletons of two horses. In their last report, Popham and his co-authors indeed remarked that the team may have "previously underestimated the corrosive effects of the soil, for which earlier scientific analyses provided no indication."[74] The report acknowledged the possibility that "many more interments may have been made than was thought and that they left no skeletal

[71] Themelis 1980, 211.

[72] Themelis 1980, n. 4, 382.

[73] Musgrave 1980, 441. Original emphasis.

[74] Popham et al. 1988-1989, 118.

remains at all."[75] The subsequent excavator of the site, Irene Lemos, also voiced skepticism regarding the original assessment of the soil conditions and the association of the unburnt bones with cremations, but nevertheless maintained that "a great number of tombs still remain with no evidence of bones, so the possibility of a complicated secondary rite remains open."[76]

Although some of the arguments presented in *Lefkandi I* have since been retracted, the nature of the different types of burials at the Toumba cemetery has not been clarified. If a full understanding of the burial customs at Toumba is to be reached, it is important to elucidate what the shaft graves contained, how they related to the cremations, and how the mortuary system functioned as a whole. Therefore, it seems necessary to revisit the arguments that established the dismissal of, or skepticism towards, an extensive skeletal deterioration process at Toumba. In support of an argument, I will first outline the taphonomic factors that can contribute to the destruction pattern observed at Toumba and address the excavators' phosphate results. Secondly, I would like to draw attention to the arrangement of the grave goods recovered from some of the tombs and point out some of the inconsistencies in the proposed mortuary system of "token cremation burials."

The taphonomic processes through which we inherit our skeletal data are now better understood than a few decades ago. There are a number of environmental variables that have an impact on the survival of buried human remains. In fact, bioarchaeologists now have reason to believe that the persistence of bone in soil must be "less usual than their

[75] Popham et al. 1988-1989, 118.

[76] Lemos 2002, 162.

destruction".[77] Soil acidity, which was originally singled out at Toumba as a key factor in the potential deterioration of skeletons, is only part of the equation. According to the excavation reports, samples taken from five tombs and a pyre at Toumba and its neighboring cemeteries indicated a unanimous pH reading of 6.5, which is considered only slightly acidic.[78] Based on these results, it was concluded that the acidity was not high enough to "account for the total disappearance of the skeletons."[79] We now know that, while highly acidic soils are disastrous conditions in terms of bone survival, stable pH conditions do not guarantee optimal preservation. Case studies have shown that even at a pH level around 6.6-6.8, which is less acidic than Toumba, bones can completely dissolve and give the appearance of "empty" burials.[80] We must, therefore, consider soil acidity in tandem with other environmental factors.

Conditions more damaging than acidity can be created through unfavorable soil texture and high water circulation. Bone, a porous substance in nature, is easily permeated by water. Exposure to water triggers a process of chemical dissolution and results in the degradation of bone's mineral content. This is augmented by the quality of the groundwater and the inclusion of exogenous ions.[81] Admittedly, acidic soils can accelerate this reaction, but a more important factor in mineral loss is groundwater activity and the permeability of the surrounding soil to water. In highly permeable soils such as sand and gravel, water moves

[77] Mays 2010, 23.

[78] pH scale of soils is measured on a scale from 1 to 14. Values over 7 indicate alkaline, values below 7 point to acidic conditions (Mays 2010, 24). Soil samples were taken from T22 fill, T22 floor, and T27 fill. Soil samples from the nearby cemeteries came from Skoubris tombs 6, 10, and 15B, and Palia Perivolia Pyre 2 (Themelis 1980, n.3, 381).

[79] Themelis 1980, n.3, 381.

[80] Mays 2010, 25.

[81] Nielsen-Marsh et al. 2000, 442-446.

freely around the bone and constantly flushes the minerals as they dissolve. On the other hand, fine particle soils such as clay form a barrier that locks in minerals.[82] Dissolution in permeable and aquifers soils grows exponentially as the bones become more porous and vulnerable due to mineral loss. Meanwhile, the presence of moisture will make the remains more susceptible to freeze cycles and lead to further mechanical fragmentation. In addition, collagen in bone is susceptible to decomposition by water as well as microbial attacks.[83] By and large, groundwater movement is now regarded the most influential environmental agent in the destruction of bone. [84]

As a buried body decomposes, it releases byproducts into the surrounding soil. Soil analyses can target these elements and aim to detect where grave sites may have been. One of these byproducts is phosphorus (P), which can be detected as the phosphate ion in soils. In fact, any number of past human activities, including discarding organic refuse, cooking, or burning, can result in the deposition of anthropogenic phosphorus in soils.[85] The 1970s witnessed a rise in the use of phosphorus analysis as a method of detecting archaeological sites and interpreting contexts, but the variables that were involved in the release and survival of anthropogenic phosphorus as well as the intricacies of soil sampling were poorly understood. There is still a lack of consensus regarding the preservation of phosphorus in the archaeological record, but it is generally agreed that the retention capacity of the soil is highly dependent on acidity, particle size, and hydrology. For instance, soils with a pH of 6.5—precisely the levels of acidity at Toumba—are considered especially conducive to

[82] Forbes 2008, 215.

[83] Nielsen-Marsh et al. 2000, 441.

[84] Nielsen-Marsh et al. 2000, 444; Mays 2010, 23-25.

[85] Holliday and Gartner 2007, 302.

phosphate loss.[86] These variables can result in dramatic fluctuations of phosphate retention within sites.[87] In order to understand and interpret intra-site variations, phosphate analysis must be bolstered by extensive geoarchaeological surveys and a clearly defined soil sampling strategy.[88]

While there have been major developments towards a better grasp of burial taphonomy in recent years, there is much we still do not understand. For instance, in a case of experimental archaeology in England, when the excavators returned to the site of 200 burials after 33 years most of the graves appeared empty and contained no skeletal remains.[89] Moreover, soil analyses could detect no significant phosphate from these burial deposits.[90] Since we know that the burials did indeed contain human remains that were not disturbed after interment, the absence of the skeletal remains and phosphorus in the soil can only be explained through taphonomic factors. Furthermore, the survival of an isolated bone fragment in one of the graves highlights the importance of micro-environments within a site.[91] It is clear, therefore, that spatial variations in percolation and leaching can result in a misleading preservation pattern. Nielsen-Marsh and colleagues remark that "bone can survive differentially, even across one archaeological site, and a bewildering array of

[86] Crowther 1997, 101.

[87] Crowther 1997, 93; Holliday and Gartner 2007, 325-327.

[88] For the provenance of the Lefkandi soil samples, see n. 78 above. Two control samples were taken from the subsurface soil at Skoubris and Toumba. It is worth mentioning that the Palia Perivolia pyre also yielded negative results, even though in optimal conditions a pyre deposit should be rich in phosphate. This should be taken as an indication that the phosphate tests at Lefkandi were inconclusive.

[89] Crowther 2002, 405.

[90] Crowther 2002, 409-410.

[91] Crowther 2002, 409.

different factors have been suggested to be involved in this apparently random survival."[92] If we scrutinize the Toumba soil conditions with an eye towards the agents of skeletal preservation and destruction, the presence of micro-environments within the site will support this theory. For example, the burial shaft that contained the female skeleton under the mound was cut into the conglomerate bedrock like all the other shafts at Toumba, but the floor was further sealed with "a natural clay stratum" and another "layer of extremely hard rock."[93] With the addition of moisture, this stratigraphy beneath the floor of the shaft resulted in the "damp conditions" of the tomb.[94] In theory, such sealants below burials prevent the constant leaching of the mineral content of the bone and, although chemical dissolution may still exist, skeletal remains would survive. If the geomorphology of Toumba indeed consists of a combination of similar micro-environments, an idiosyncratic pattern of preservation would be expected. A geomorphological study of the site would contribute to the discussion, but for a conclusive affirmation or repudiation of the theory floor deposits of the shaft graves in question must be sampled with consistency.

In addition to taphonomic factors, the peculiar arrangement of the grave goods in some of the shaft graves leaves room for alternative interpretations. H. W. Catling, one of the authors of the chapter on metal finds in *Lefkandi I*,[95] observed that in a few instances the layout of the jewelry echoed the basic outlines of human anatomy; the editors, however,

[92] Nielsen-Marsh et al. 2000, 439.

[93] Popham 1993a, 17.

[94] Popham 1993a, 19.

[95] Catling, H.W. and E.A. Catling 1980, 231-264.

excised his observations from the final publication.[96] A few years later Catling chose to publish a brief summary independently, but while he drew attention to the arrangement of the metal finds, he still avoided contradicting the original assertions that the graves were token burials.[97] Instead, he tried to reach a compromise by suggesting that "the presence of a human body had been assumed by those who disposed of the offerings."[98] If we reexamine the distribution of the grave goods and jewelry published in *Lefkandi I*, and extend Catling's observations to the graves that were uncovered after his study, the deposition of the personal items indeed reveals patterns that are too compelling to ignore. An examination of T22, for instance, suggests the presence of an extended skeleton with hands on the pelvic area and the head tilted to the left (Fig. 14a and b). Catling particularly draws attention to the group of four fibulae (20-22, 27) in the area of the right shoulder and three others (19, 25-26) down the right side of the dress or the shroud.[99] To his comments on the nearly symmetrical positioning of the bracelets (14-15), we must add the location of the rings (7-13) below the bracelets as well as the arrangement of the pottery around the head. Furthermore, Catling's suggestion that the bronze bowl (18) was placed in the left hand of the deceased[100] is strengthened by the location of three rings (11-13) right beneath the vessel. Lastly, the concentration of faiance beads (29: n= ~550, 30: n= ~1800) towards the west end of the

[96] "…we prepared a brief summary, tomb by tomb, of the arrangements of the 'small finds' that was incorporated in our chapter ('Objects in Bronze, Iron and Lead'). In the sequel the editors of *Lefkandi i* decided not to publish this part of our work" (Catling 1985, 19).

[97] Catling 1985, 19-23.

[98] Catling 1985, 19.

[99] Catling 1985, 21-22.

[100] Catling 1985, 22.

grave could be the remains of the embellishment of the skirt.[101] In light of the implications of the distribution of these personal items, the fact that one of the negative phosphate tests came from this very tomb casts further doubt on the reliability of the soil tests. Furthermore, small fragments forming a part of a child's long bone were found among the finds. It is unclear whether these fragments are burnt or unburnt, but the anthropologist's report does mention a green tint from a copper alloy.[102]

As I have discussed above, there are a number of challenges in addressing the question of primary and secondary burials in the archaeological record. The relationship between primary and secondary deposits becomes convoluted especially if the primary burial we encounter in a given archaeological context is simply the initial step of an interrupted system. In other words, the interment may not be the final resting place of the deceased but simply a temporary burial. In such cases burial data from the site should be considered collectively.[103] On the whole, because of the complicated pattern in differential preservation at Toumba, the excavators were right to suspect secondary rituals. A closer examination of the burial contexts of Toumba, however, points to environmental factors rather than secondary intrusions. To sum up the evidence from the cemetery so far, it is my belief that the shaft graves and pyres represent primary inhumations and cremations respectively. In addition, trench-and-hole cremations, secondary urn cremations, and a unique case of a double inhumation (T49) make up the rich and varied fabric of the Toumba mortuary system. This updated reconstruction of the mortuary variability at Toumba allows us to look at the

[101] These beads were strung together for the photographs of the *Lefkandi I* volume, but there is no evidence that they were in fact necklaces (Popham et al. 1980, Plate 219a).

[102] Musgrave 1980, 437.

[103] Hutchinson and Aragon 2002, 28-30.

social context of the burials under a new light and reevaluate our inferences concerning societal structure.

Interpretations

Toumba burials constitute a suitable case study for a number of reasons. Although the cemetery has been the focus of many discussions, the attraction of formalist typologies and qualitative evaluation of grave goods hastened the discourse toward an interpretation of hero cult and ranked social structure at the expense of a full analysis of its mortuary record. Due to its focus on value- or status-ladened terminology—hero, chief, sacrifice, warrior, monumental, rich, poor—previous scholarship failed to address critical aspects of mortuary variability at the site. A female inhumation under a mound, which is analogous to other inhumations from the cemetery in every way except its association with a cremated male, is purported to be a human sacrifice. On the contrary, a reevaluation of the cultural and environmental processes involved in the formation of this cemetery reminds us that these burials, including the ones under the mound, are in fact products of a single but dynamic mortuary system. A comparison of the Toumba burials based on the framework presented here will demonstrate that mortuary differentiation at Toumba is much more nuanced and variegated than unequivocal distinctions of social rank.

It does not come as a surprise that the model distinguishes the "hero" as a highly interactive burial (Fig. 15). We are unfortunately unsure if the mound was the focus of post-depositional rituals. The building may have been intended for rituals or ritualized feasting, the trail around the mound could have been used for processions, and a tripod set up to the east of the mound may be associated with funerary rites, but all in all, there is no conclusive

evidence.[104] There is also no unintentional disturbance, and the location of the grave is extramural. Nevertheless, the burial receives high marks in interaction for all other stages of its formation. According to the model, then, the funeral was a prominent event that was followed by intimate depositional acts and post-depositional construction of memory.

The female consort found next to the hero paints a slightly different picture. The Points of Interaction that mark her burial are more unevenly distributed across the board (Fig. 16). This difference stems from the fact that her burial is a primary inhumation, as opposed to the secondary cremation of her companion. Since both burials share the building and the mound as post-depositional markers, she benefits from a shared memory that was probably constructed for the deceased male.

An examination of the tombs and pyres from the cemetery highlights some striking differences (Fig. 17 and 18). The shaft graves containing inhumations are formed through a series of events that are relatively low in their degree of interaction. The only high level of interaction in the formation process of these burials is apparent instances of unintentional intrusion when later burials partially cut into existing graves. In contrast, the pyres of the cemetery are more interactive in the earlier stages of the process (Fig. 18). Later on, the progression of the two types converges and presents identical patterns. Despite divergent levels of interaction displayed in the formation processes of the pyres and the inhumations, the cemetery as a whole remains highly interactive. As I have pointed out above, grouping the burials together delineates the space of the dead. The association of the burials with a conspicuous mound also increases its visibility. Occasional pyres at the site would also

[104] Antonaccio 1995a, 13-14. In the absence of conclusive evidence, I chose to fill the "Post-depositional Rituals" section of the table with hashmarks rather than solid color (Fig. 15). Same is true for the inhumed female under the mound (Fig. 16) and the burials from the cemetery (Fig. 17-18).

attract attention and announce funeral activities.

If we compare all four burials types—the "hero", the female consort, shaft grave inhumations, and pyres—an interesting pattern emerges (Fig. 19). The shaft graves and the urn cremation under the mound mark two ends of the spectrum—a result that is hardly surprising. The female consort and the pyres, however, fall somewhere in between and bridge the gap between the two trends. What does this diversity mean? Elucidating the mechanics of the pyres and shaft graves at the cemetery, as well as the different degrees of interaction inherent in the burials of the two individuals under the mound, is key to our interpretation of the mortuary context at Toumba. Varying degrees of interaction throughout the composition of the mortuary record suggest a more idiosyncratic and flexible structure. Once the approach that views the cemetery as the product of a single and uniform mode of mortuary behavior is adjusted, the heterogeneous configuration of the system is revealed and the assertions that the cemetery stands as the antithesis of the mound require a reevaluation. A traditional approach that sees essentially two types of burials at Toumba—those that lie under the mound and those that do not—would lead to the conclusion that the cemetery and the mound reflect tensions within a stratified society. Irene Lemos, for instance, argues that the tumulus is the final resting place of the last *basileus*, whose death marks the collapse of the political system under the pressure of the local elite.[105] She believes that the sacrifice of the woman "symbolically brought the end of the institution of hereditary rule."[106] She concludes that Lefkandi "might fit the model of the big-man system until the end of MPG, when the local

[105] Lemos 2002, 218.

[106] Lemos 2002, 218.

aristocracy took over the control of a wealthy site."[107] Based on the wealth of the graves (compared to the assemblages from other cemeteries in the area), Lemos sees the cemetery of Toumba as the new private burial ground of the elite. This interpretation raises a number of new questions: if the Toumba "hero" is the last of a line of *basileis*, where are the others? If the local elite, powerful enough to launch a revolution, took over Toumba after the construction of the mound, where was the elite cemetery before this event?

Lemos' interpretation of the big-man system is clearly influenced by the Homeric institution of *basileus*. James Whitley, however, starts his seminal article on the big-man analogy with a plea for caution in treating Homer as a guide to Early Iron Age society.[108] The big-man model he describes depends on an individual's ability to establish and maintain alliances through display of wealth and worth. In this aspect, big-man systems are different from chiefdoms in which the position of power is hereditary. This difference is in fact one of the most important distinctions between the two social configurations. The confusion, I believe, is caused by our ability to grasp the mechanisms that lie beneath totally egalitarian or strictly hierarchical societies but our failure to understand any sort of configuration that may fall somewhere in between. I would argue that the Toumba cemetery is in fact a reflection of a big-man society in which individualism is celebrated. As Lemos, Whitley sees big-man systems as unstable, but he emphasizes that this instability is a result of the focus on individuals. His application of these principles to the Iron Age society highlights that "since authority in these systems was so highly personal, on a big man's death, his authority and his

[107] Lemos 2002, 219.

[108] Whitley 1991a, 343.

prestige collapsed with him."[109] It is more likely, therefore, that the mound at Lefkandi marks the end of a big-man, not, as Lemos posits, the end of an entire social system. This interpretation also offers a more plausible explanation of why the mound is one of a kind: a project or display of wealth that is unique to a particular big man would not be repeated by another.

This emphasis on personal resources and accomplishments results in a social system that seeks to separate individuals from each other even after death. This is reflected in the spatial organization of the Toumba cemetery. With the exception of three instances (T14, T49, and T55) the individuality of the deceased is preserved in single graves. There is considerable unintentional intrusion, presumably because the graves were not marked, but when an earlier burial was disturbed, a partition wall was constructed to separate the two spaces.[110] On the other hand, because of the absence of markers the individual ultimately blends into a collective group. As the authority is transient, so is the individual. When he underlines the instability of the big-man model, Whitley remarks that settlement foci in such systems last no more than a generation or two.[111] This could be the phenomenon observed at Toumba. Eventually, the dead form an aggregate and the individual assumes its anonymous place within it. Yet, the collective at Toumba forms at the level not of nuclear families but rather of larger corporate groups. The scale of the aggregate group that individuals subscribe to is not conducive to the formation of "dynasties" with hereditary power.

I would argue that the political and social configuration at Lefkandi survived the

[109] Whitley 1991a, 350.

[110] Lemos 2002, 163.

[111] Whitley 1991a, 349.

death of the big-man under the mound. Based on the degrees of interaction I have proposed here, it is possible to identify other burials in the cemetery that stand out from the rest. I would draw particular attention to T55, an LPG/SPG I shaft grave somewhat modest in its contents but remarkable in terms of its place within the mortuary system at Toumba.[112] An extensive publication of this burial has not been made available, but suffice it to say that this grave is not only a double burial, but also a secondary cremation similar to that of the big-man under the mound. If we return to the comparison of the four main burial types I have focused on so far (Fig.19), the big-man of Lefkandi is the only burial where secondary rites were observed (labeled "burial stage" in the chart). In fact, secondary rites are the only aspect that is completely exclusive to him: all other points of high interaction are shared by other burial types at Toumba. Since the urn of the T55 cremation is quietly tucked away into a corner, it is easy to pass by such nuances and focus on valuables and monumentality. The interaction framework, however, presents this burial as an important event in its funerary and depositional stages. Another notable case is the LPG double urn cremation in T14 which was marked as a trench-and-hole type by the original excavators,[113] but Lemos argues against this interpretation since there is no evidence of ash from a pyre above the urns.[114] If she is correct in her argument, the two urns, one a belly-handled and the other a neck-handled amphora, contain remains from secondary cremations. The two shapes of the amphorae are traditionally associated with female and male burials respectively.[115] A "killed" iron sword and an iron spearhead with bronze ring recovered next to the neck-handled amphora also

[112] Dating based on Popham and Lemos 1996, table 2.

[113] Sackett 1980, 200.

[114] Lemos 2002, 163.

[115] Coldstream 2007, 138. Poor preservation levels of the skeletal remains make it difficult to assess the sex of the individuals but one is thought to be a male and the other a female (Musgrave 1980, 434-35).

signal a male, although the correlation of weapons with "warriors" has been revised in recent scholarship.[116] Even though the evidence in the identification of T14 is circumstantial, it is possible that this grave is another highly interactive double burial containing a female and a male, both cremated. Finally, the cremated remains of a male in a bronze cauldron from T79, deposited in a grave with a rich SPG II assemblage including a "killed" sword and a 19th century North Syrian cylinder seal, have been interpreted as another important burial, perhaps even that of another big-man.[117]

In sum, the application of the interaction model to the Toumba cemetery demonstrates that there are clearly more nuanced degrees of differentiation within the cemetery than had previously been thought. These nuances transcend the traditional and rigid elite/non-elite divisions. Once we move away from a focus on grave contents, a study of the burials themselves points to interesting conclusions. The configuration of the cemetery as well as the mound accommodates a big-man model quite comfortably. If we take away the post-depositional expression of monumentality, the female consort emerges as a burial that is in fact quite similar to the others in the cemetery, whereas the big-man is differentiated through secondary rites. Degrees of differentiation within the cemetery undermine strictly hierarchical reconstructions and suggest an idiosyncratic heterogeneity. That is not to say that status distinctions did not exist at all at Toumba, but we must come to terms with the fact that these distinctions are not always as rigid as we think, and there is considerable room for horizontal differentiation among social groups. The differentiation that is expressed through

[116] D'Onofrio 2011, 645-646. Also see Antonaccio 2002 for a reassessment of warrior identity and a discussion of other possibilities such as trader identity at Lefkandi.

[117] Antonaccio 2002, 28-33. Antonaccio (2002, 32-33) also puts forth the suggestion that an adjacent female burial (T80) could be the companion of the cremated male in T79.

pyres, shaft graves, urn cremations, mound burials, as well as qualitative distinctions within grave goods, is not an articulation of social rank but a spectrum of different responses to a mortuary system that valued individuality yet undermined its permanence. While the deceased ultimately blend into an aggregate, the initial emphasis on individuality—as opposed to an immediate and relatively seamless integration into a collective group in tholos tombs—results in an attempt to transcend the ephemerality of the individual beyond the circumscribed modes of mortuary behavior. The responses that seek to distinguish the individual may register as highly interactive events and deposits or unique assemblages of grave goods. Nonetheless, the temporal brevity of the funerary events and the rapid concealment of the offerings do not preserve a long-term memory of the individual. On the whole, the system is a result of self-perception and self-representation, not a reflection of a top-down enforcement of ascribed social status.

V. Conclusions

Mortuary systems of societies have fascinated anthropologists and archaeologists alike. The finality of death compels societies to formulate a coordinated response, which captivates the anthropologist. On the other hand, this response is accompanied by material culture, which is treasured by the archaeologist. Approaches that seek to unite these two angles are sometimes labeled "anthropological archaeology," but the redundancy of this phrase should strike us: archaeology seeks to understand past societies and is therefore anthropological by nature. Human behavior is the very center of this equation and cannot be removed. Nevertheless, now and again archaeologists focus too much on typologies or classifications—in a sense, their own ideas on how data should be organized and studied—and not enough on how ancient societies experienced their own surroundings.

If archaeologists' penchant for typologies leaves the field vulnerable to reductionism, the same is true for the anthropologist who seeks to reduce human behavior to predictable patterns. Ucko rightly cautions against generalizations in the study of mortuary behavior and advocates a context-specific approach.[118] A reasonable confluence of the two fields is observing human behavior based on archeological indices within a well-defined temporal and geographical context.

To this end, my model combines the methodological foundations of behavioral

[118] Ucko 1969, 273-277.

archaeology that views cultural deposits as products of human *behavior*[119] with the interpretive framework of cognitive archaeology that emphasizes human *experience*.[120] I remain conservative in my scope and application of a cognitive approach as it is not my intention to reconstruct belief systems or group psychology. Instead of adopting a broad definition of cognitive archaeology as the study of human mind or past ways of thought[121] I use it as an analytical tool that addresses human perception.[122] The walls, features, graves, monuments, and artifacts we excavate are the archaeological residues of the environment in which humans lived. In this regard, it is possible to assess what these environments looked like. If we can reconstruct the environment that forms the source of sensory stimuli through archaeology, we can begin to visualize the cultural contexts in which the perceived information was processed. From this point of view, mortuary systems should be seen as residues of human experience. Throughout this experience, individuals interact with their surroundings, with each other, and with the dead. The degrees of interaction that mark the thresholds of this process are indications of how intimate a given group is willing to get with its dead. The intimacy of a mortuary system as a whole is indicative of the social structure of that community. At Toumba, this is manifested as a tendency to individualize in the short term but assimilate in the long term. On the other hand, at the scale of single burials, the framework elucidates nuances of social differentiation. In this respect, the model has proved valuable in its potential to move away from grave goods and approach burial contexts in more flexible terms. While the model is useful in sorting out mortuary variability into a more

[119] LaMotta and Schiffer 2001, 15.

[120] Abramiuk 2012, 121-123.

[121] Renfrew 1994, 3.

[122] Abramiuk 2012, 95.

comprehensible but still nuanced pattern that reflects levels of social differentiation, it is important to note that there is no universal conclusion we can arrive at as to what this differentiation means. As Ucko remarks, studies that adopt this approach will have to be context-specific investigations that account for the social complexity of the society in all its aspects.

temporal divisions | Points of Interaction | degrees of interaction → burial types

		lower degree of interaction	higher degree of interaction
Funerary POI	Disposal technique (the "funeral")	inhumation	cremation
Depositional POI	Pre-depositional and depositional labor	low	high
	Burial stage	primary	secondary
	Intentional depositional intrusion	no (single burial)	yes (multiple burial)
	Unintentional depositional intrusion	no	yes
	Location of the grave	extramural	intramural
Post-depositional POI	Visibility	unmarked	marked
	Architectural space	none	elaborated
	Post-depositional rituals	no	yes

Fig. 1. A framework of points of interaction between the living and the dead in Iron Age Greece.

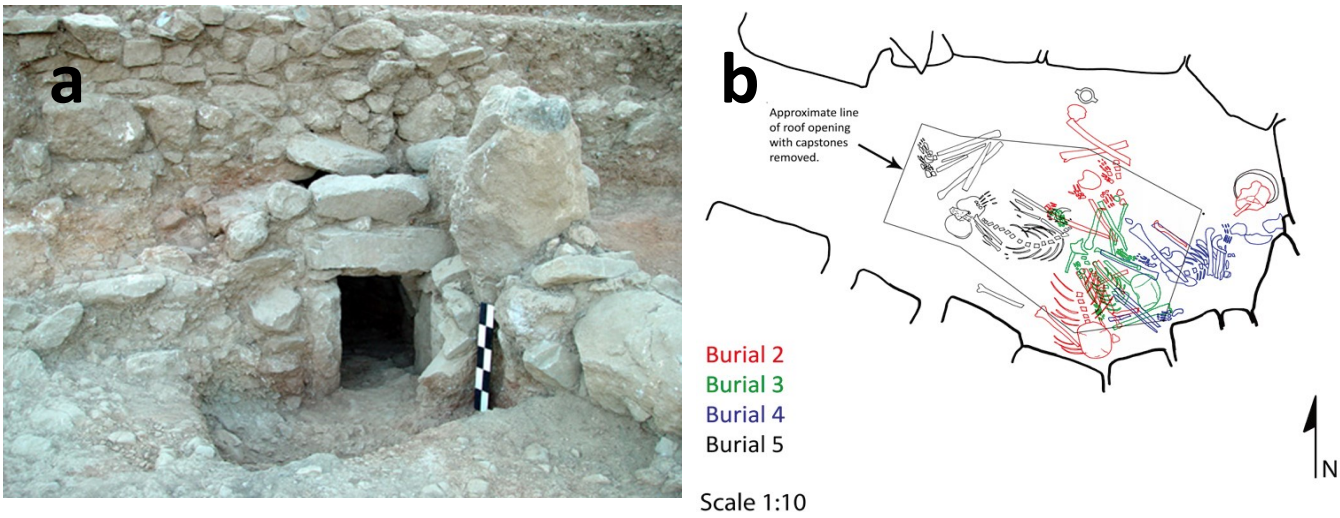


Fig. 2. Tholos at Azoria. a) photo (photo by M.S. Mook. Eaby 2010, Figure 1), b) plan view (drawing by M. Liston & D. Faulmann. Eaby 2010, Plan 2).

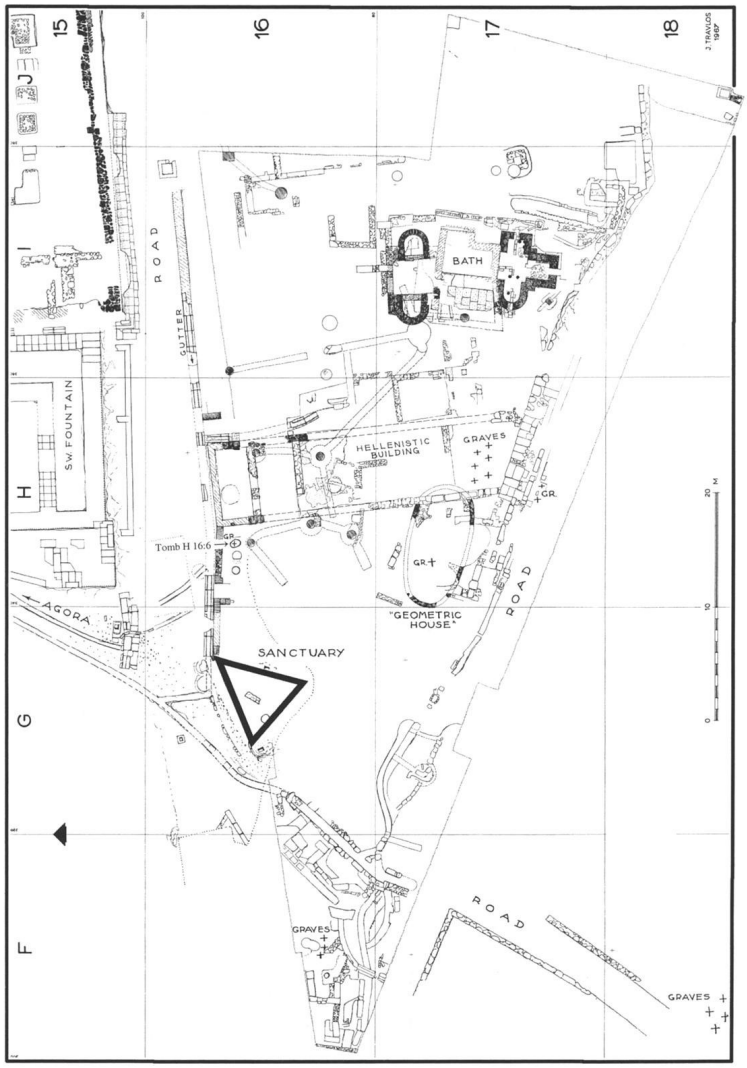


Fig. 3. Geometric house and adjacent grave (Tomb H16:6) to the southwest of the Athenian Agora (by Travlos, with additions by Papadopoulos. Liston and Papadopoulos 2004, Figure 2)

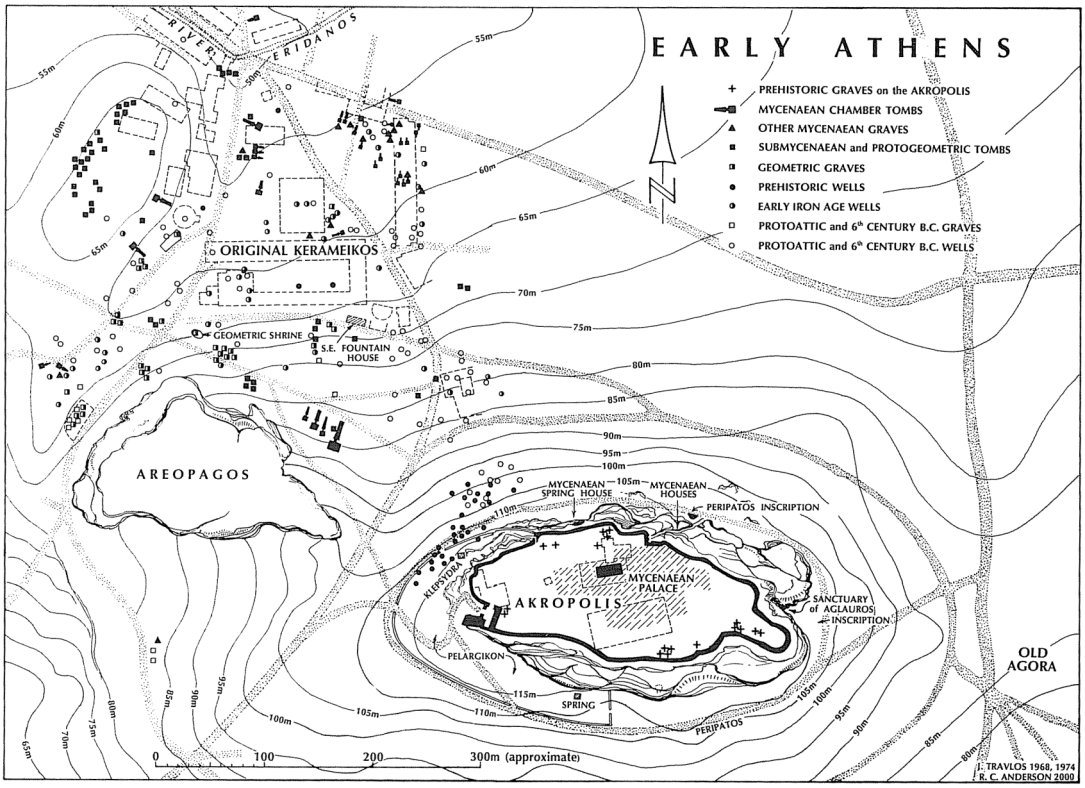


Fig. 4. Athens, showing Iron age wells and graves (by Travlos and Anderson. Papadopoulos 2003, Figure 1.2)

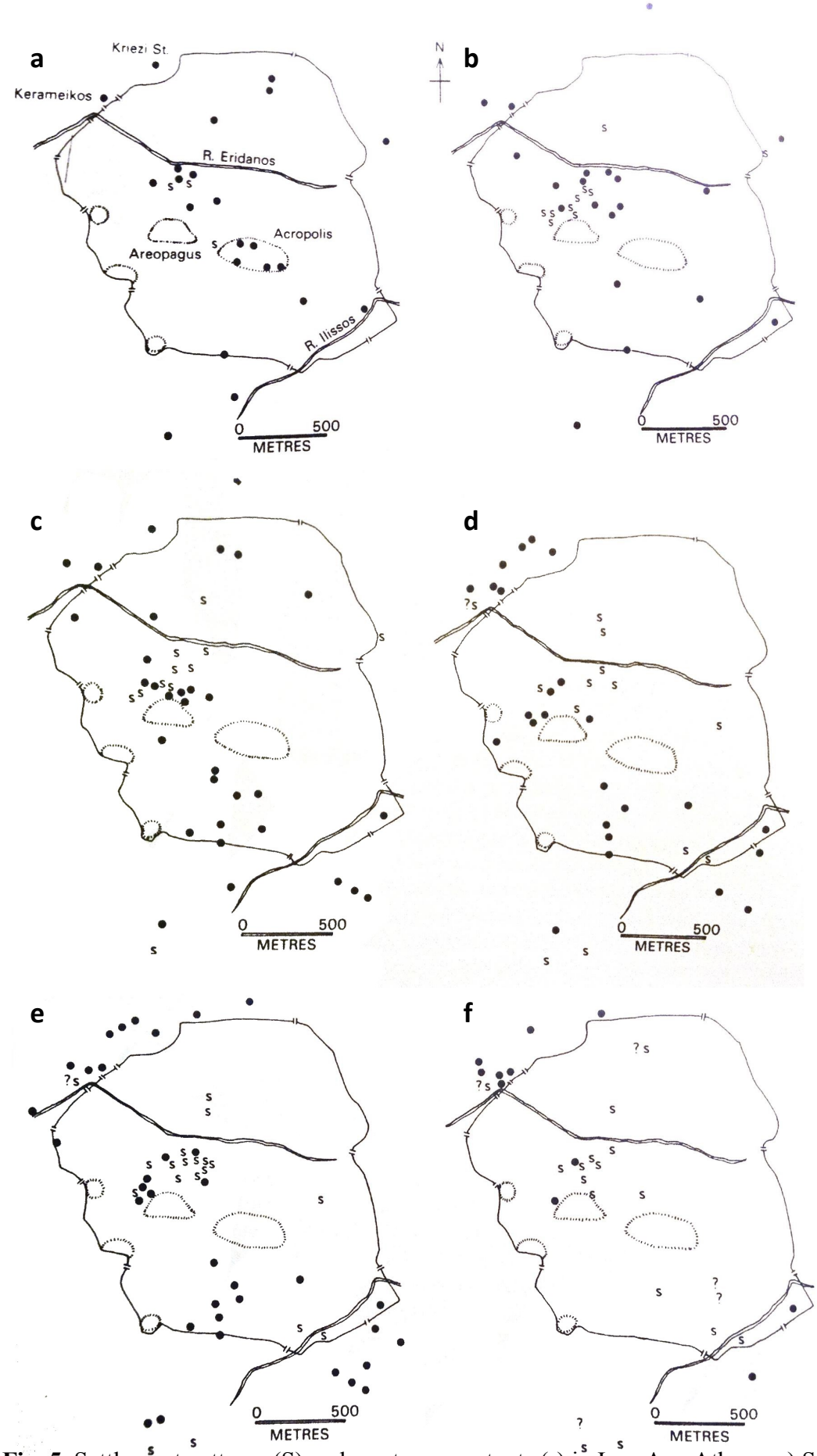


Fig. 5. Settlement patterns (S) and mortuary contexts (•) in Iron Age Athens. a) Submycenaean, b) Protogeometric, c) Early and Middle Geometric, d) Late Geometric I, e) Late Geometric II, f) Protoattic and Transitional (after Morris 1987, Figure 17 a-d, Figure 18 a-b).

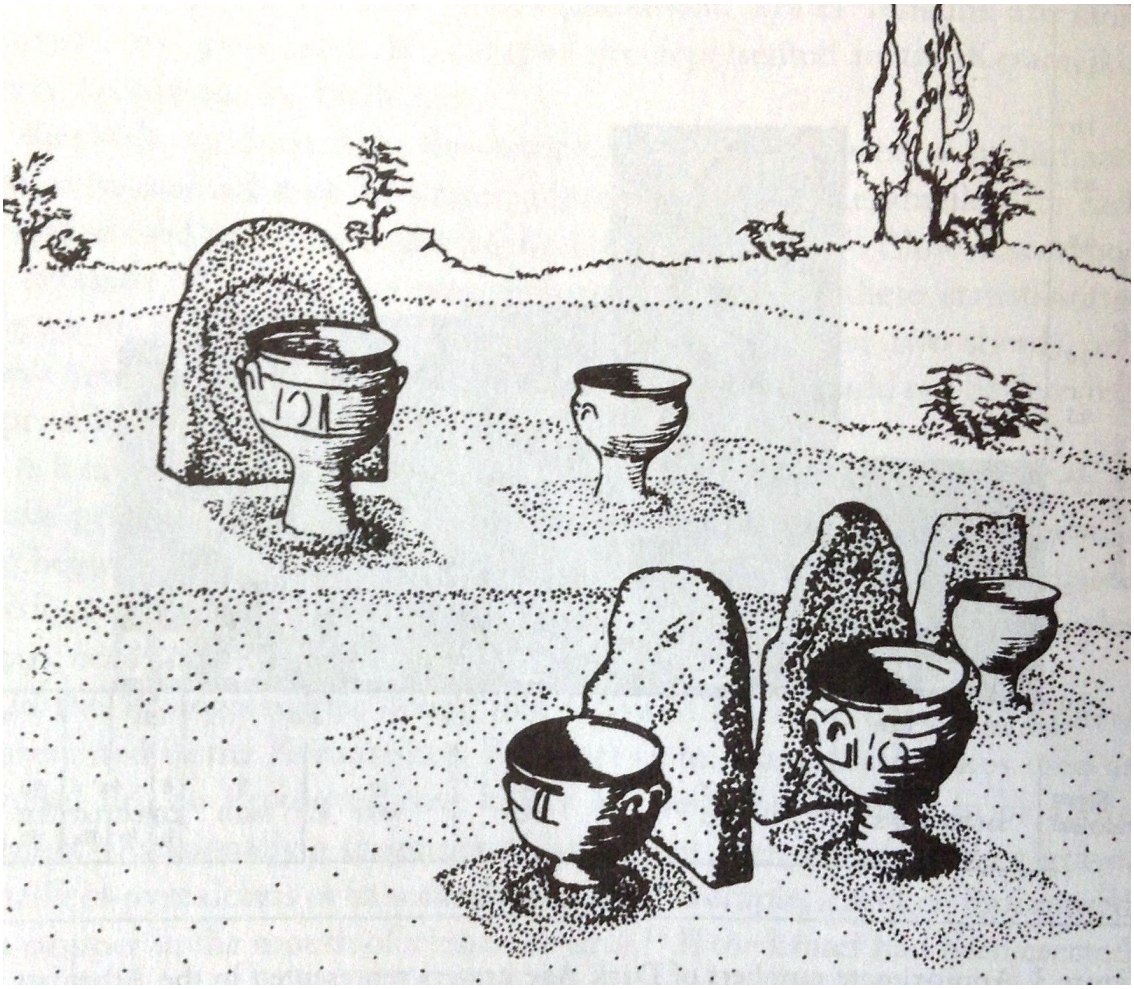


Fig. 6. Kraters and stone slabs marking the location of graves at Kerameikos (drawing by B. Bohen and R. Freyman. Bohen 1997, Figure 4).

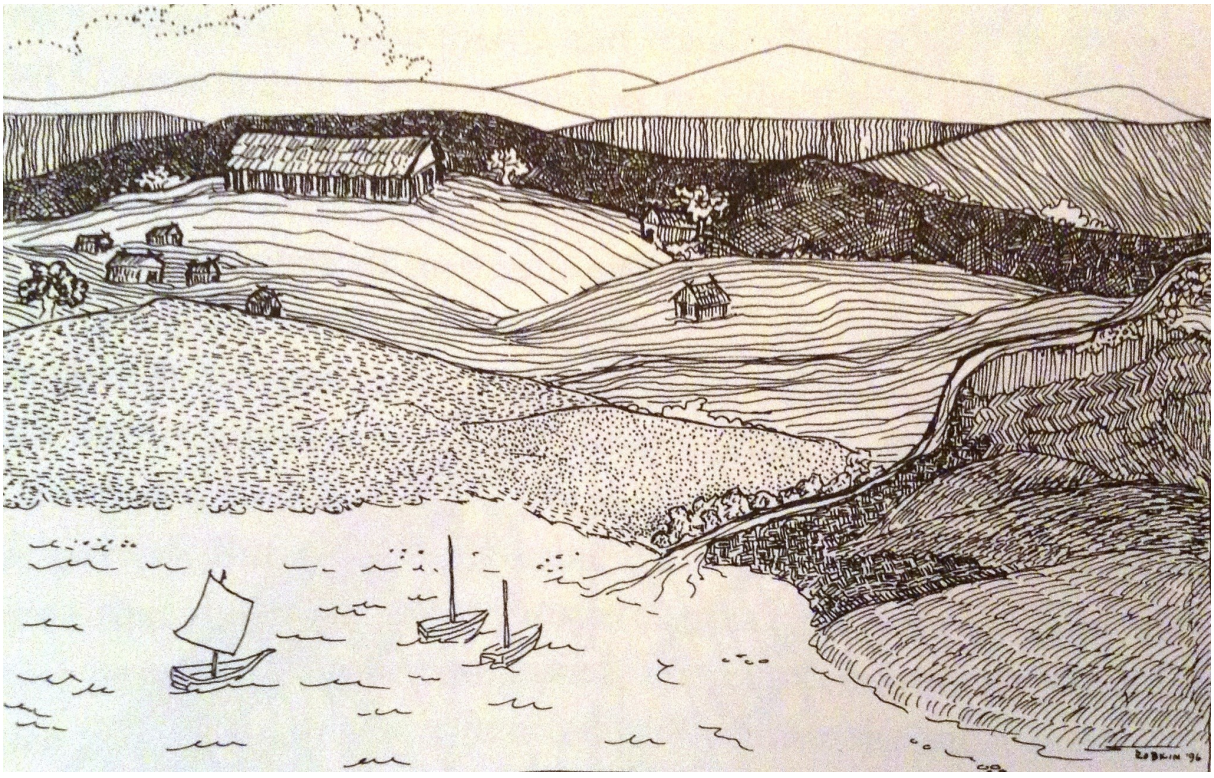


Fig. 7. Artist's rendition of the large building at Toumba, before its demolition and the construction of the mound (drawing by A.L. Robkin. Thomas and Conant 1999, Figure 17).

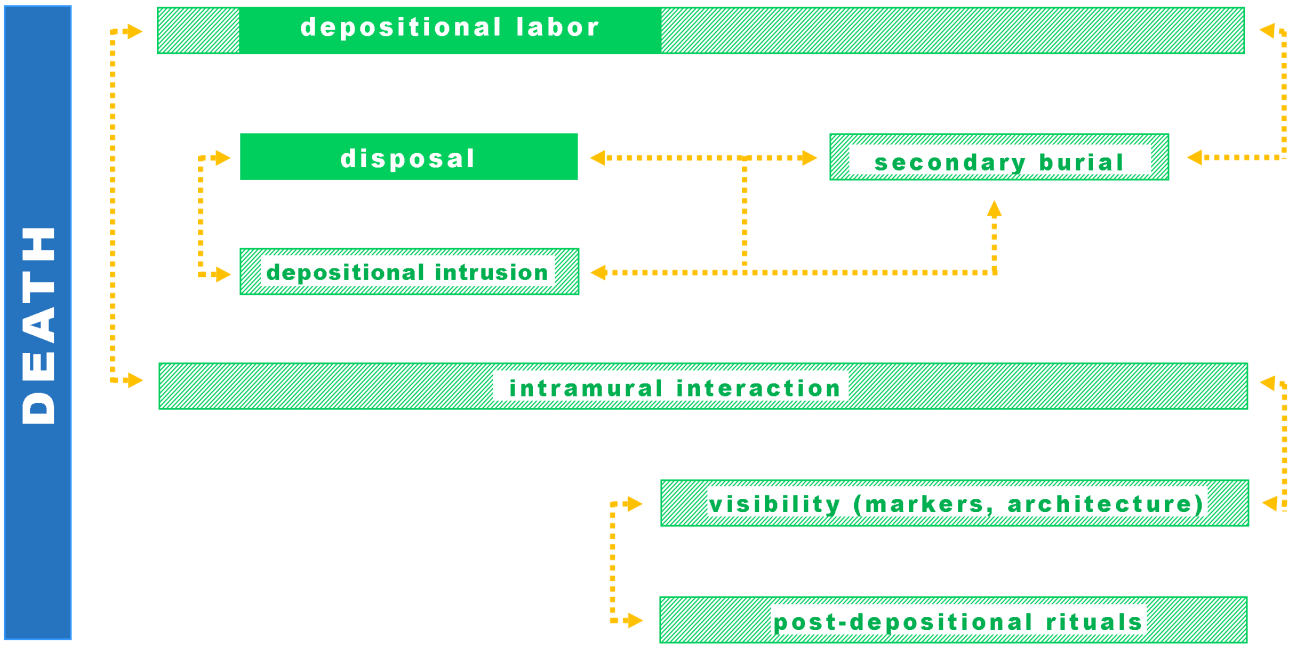


Fig. 8. Mortuary formation process as a multi-temporal palimpsest. The X-axis represents movement in time, while the Y-axis reveals possible contemporaneous actions. Hash marks represent possible, but not required, events or extensions.

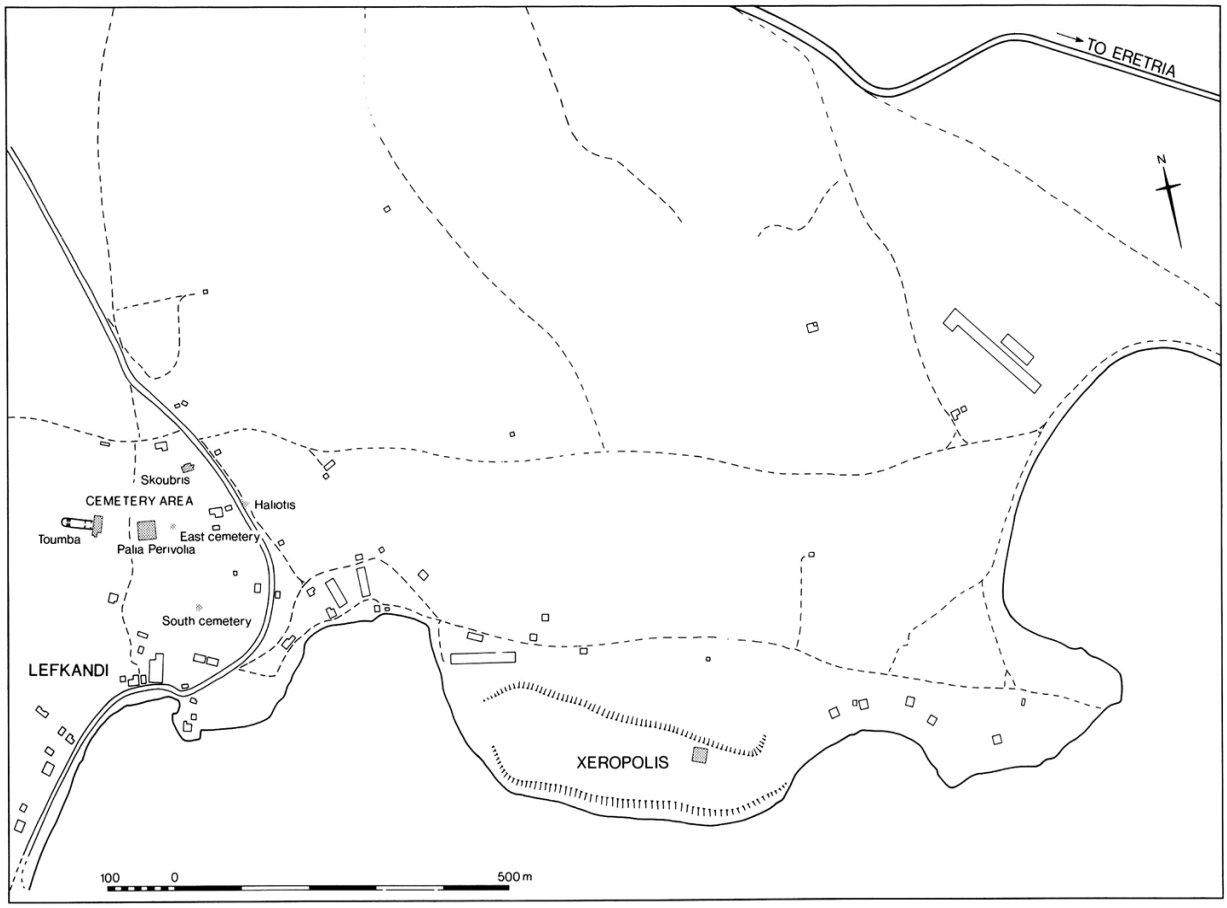


Fig. 9. Map of Lefkandi (Popham and Lemos 1996, Plate 1).

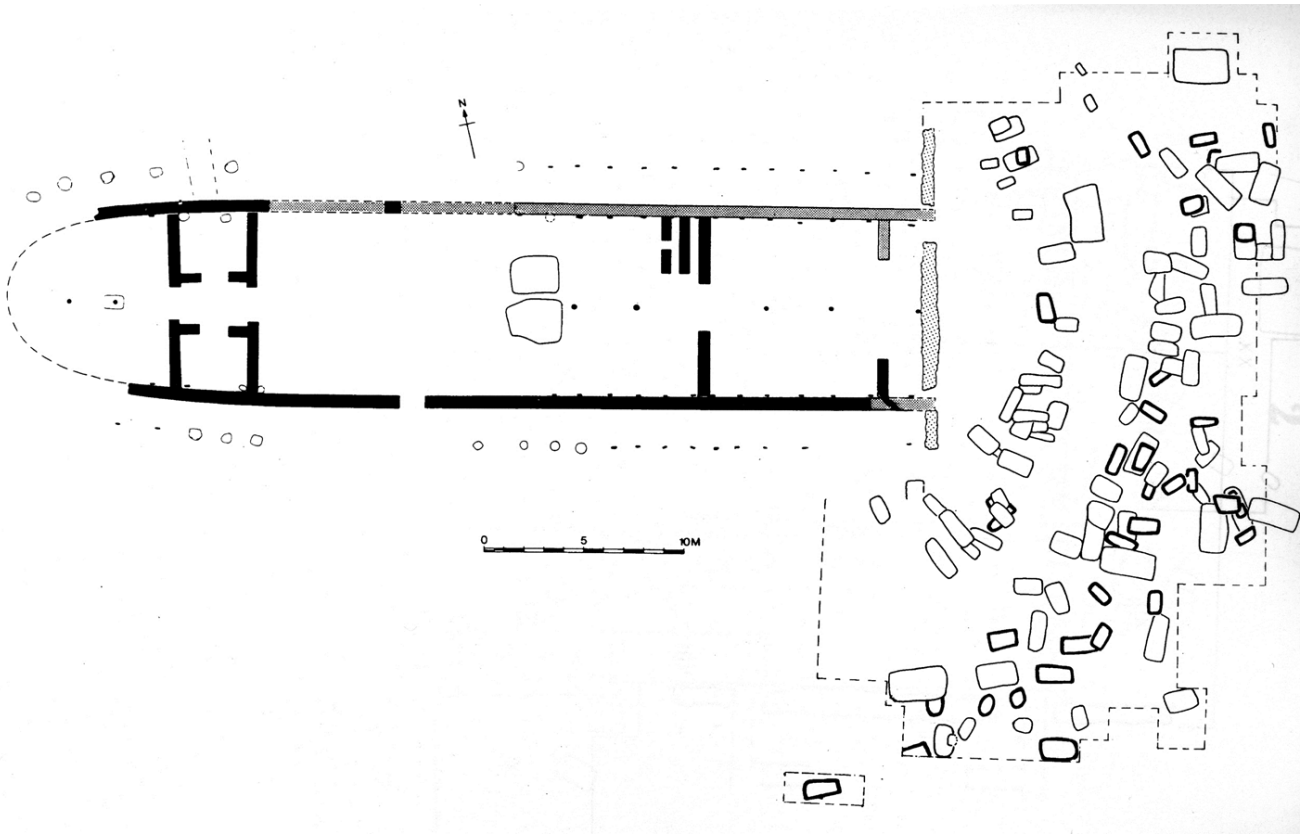


Fig. 10. Toumba: The apsidal building and the cemetery (Popham and Lemos 1996, Plate 4).

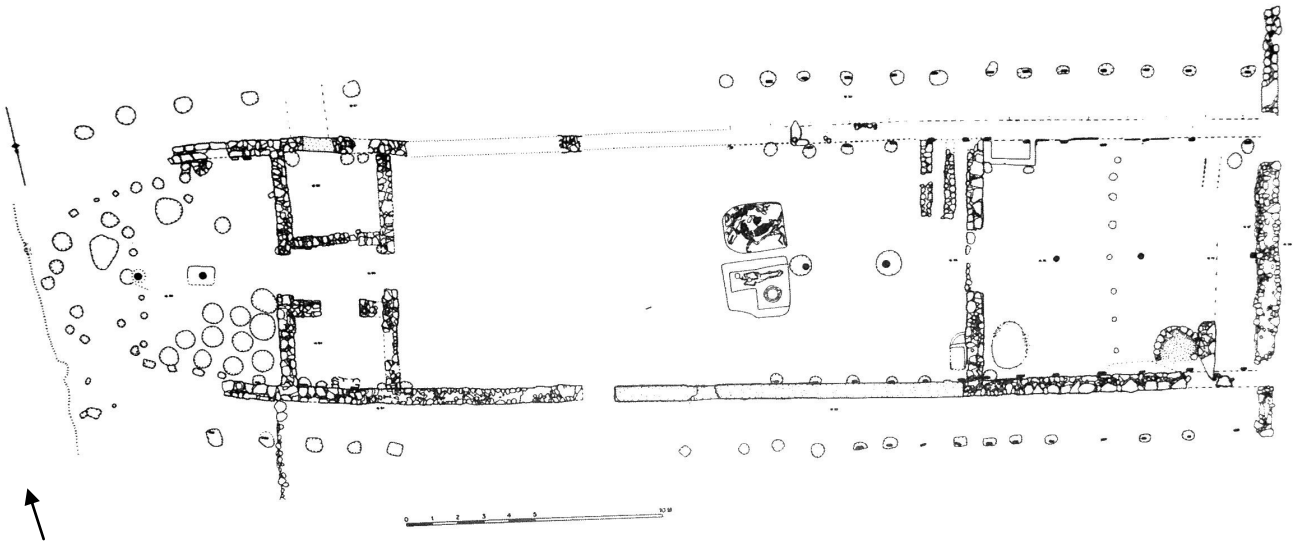
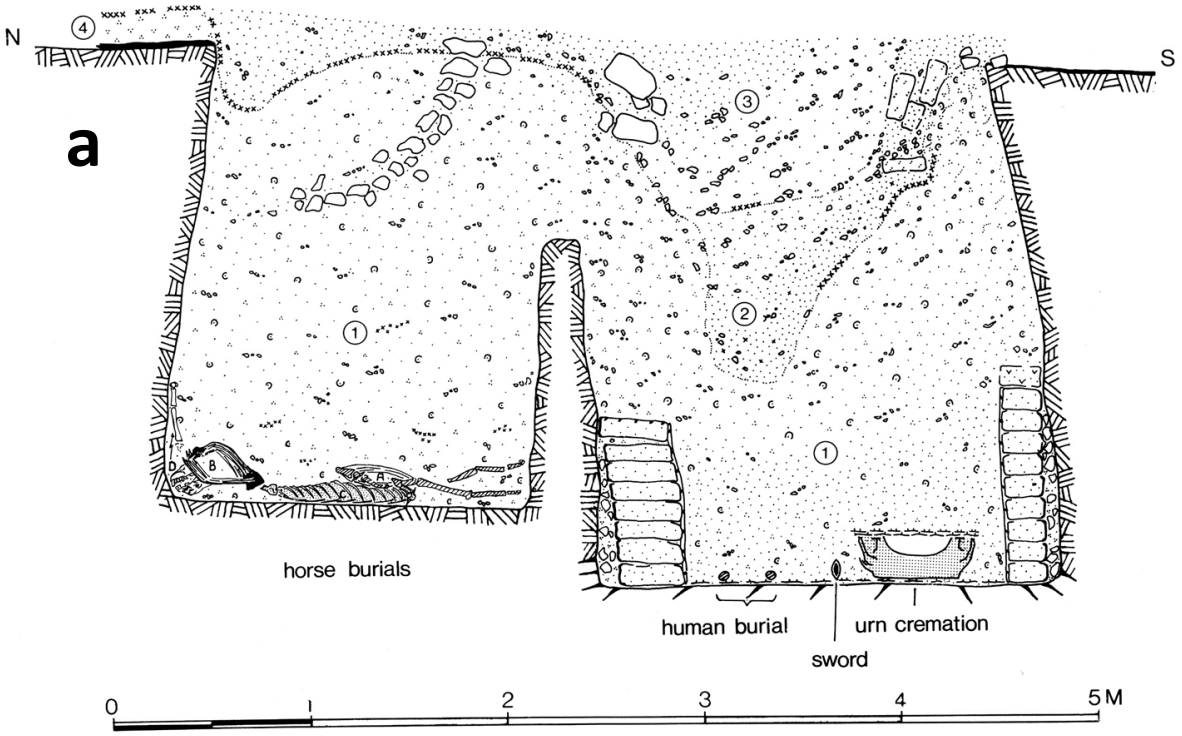


Fig. 11. Toumba: The apsidal building (after Lemos 2002, Figure 13 B).



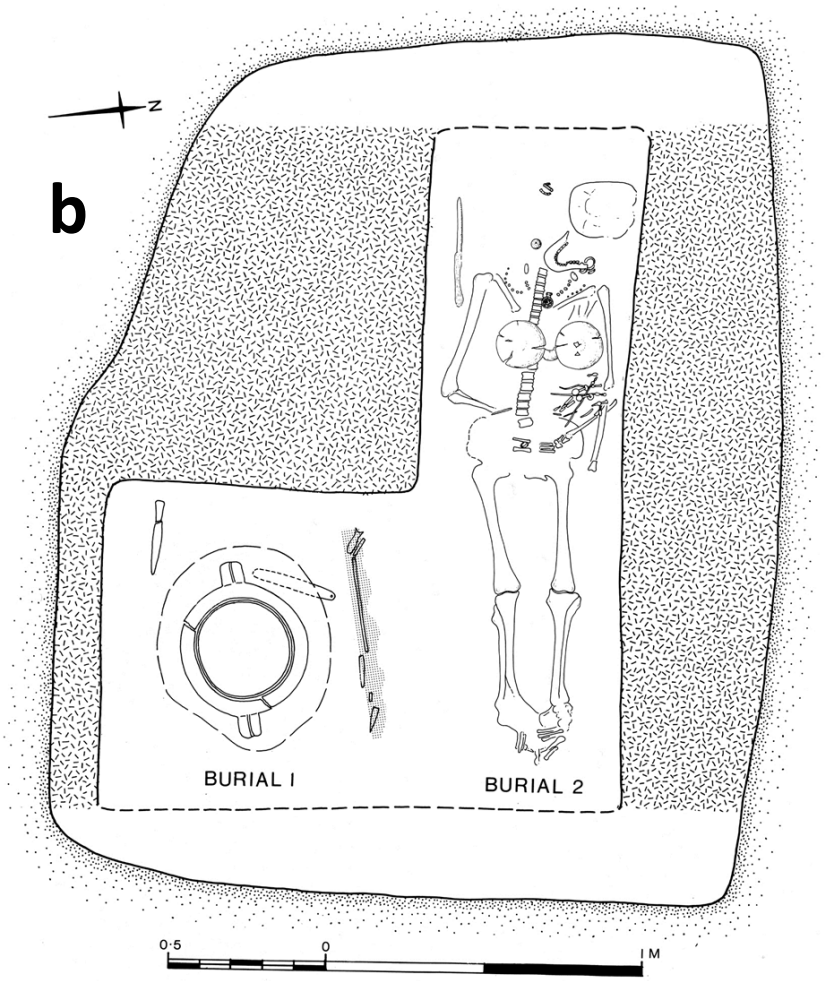


Fig. 12. Burials under the Toumba mound at Lefkandi. **a)** section drawing, **b)** plan view (Popham et al. 1993. Plates 12&13).

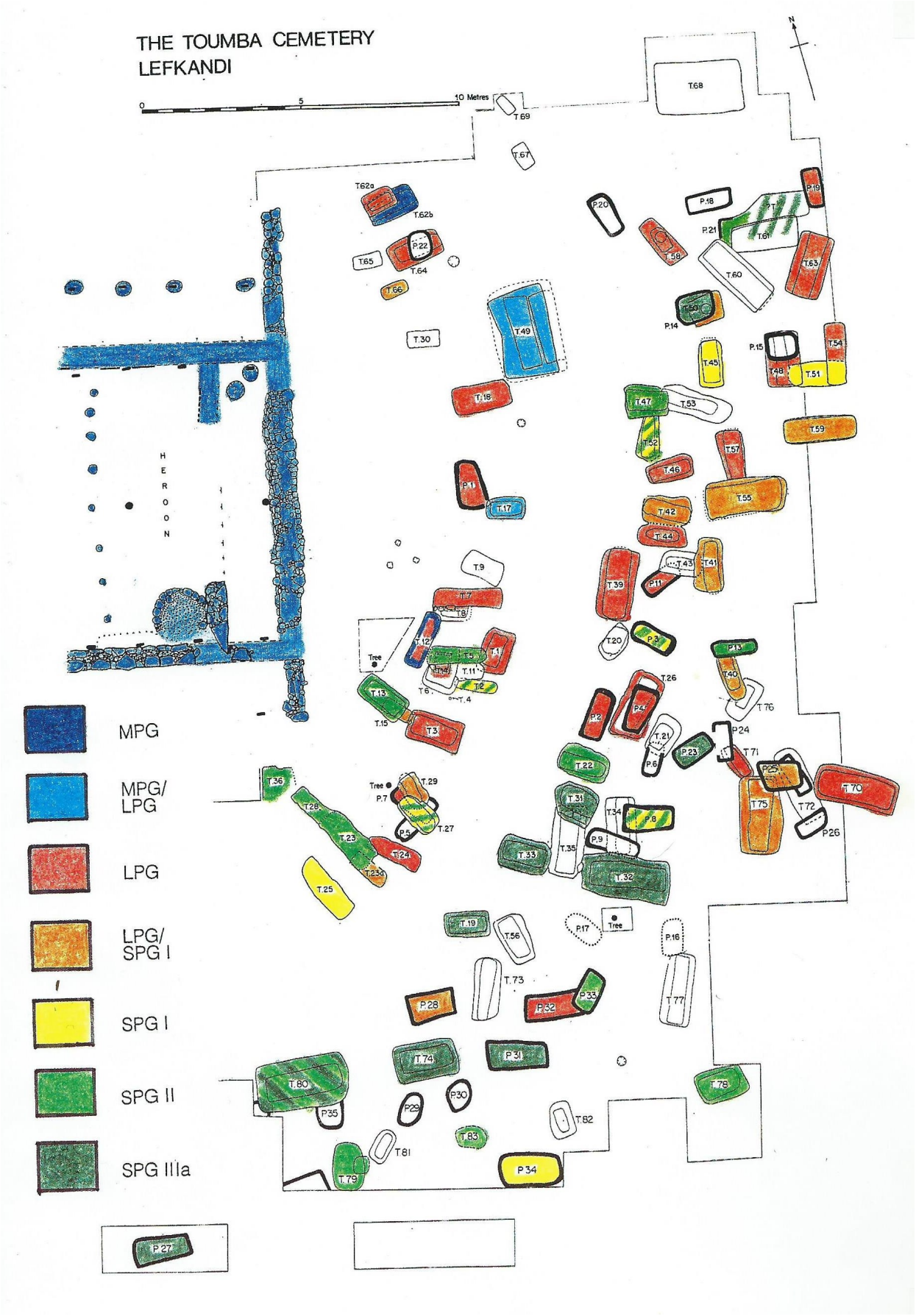


Fig. 13. The shaft graves and pyres at the Toumba cemetery (Popham and Lemos 1996).

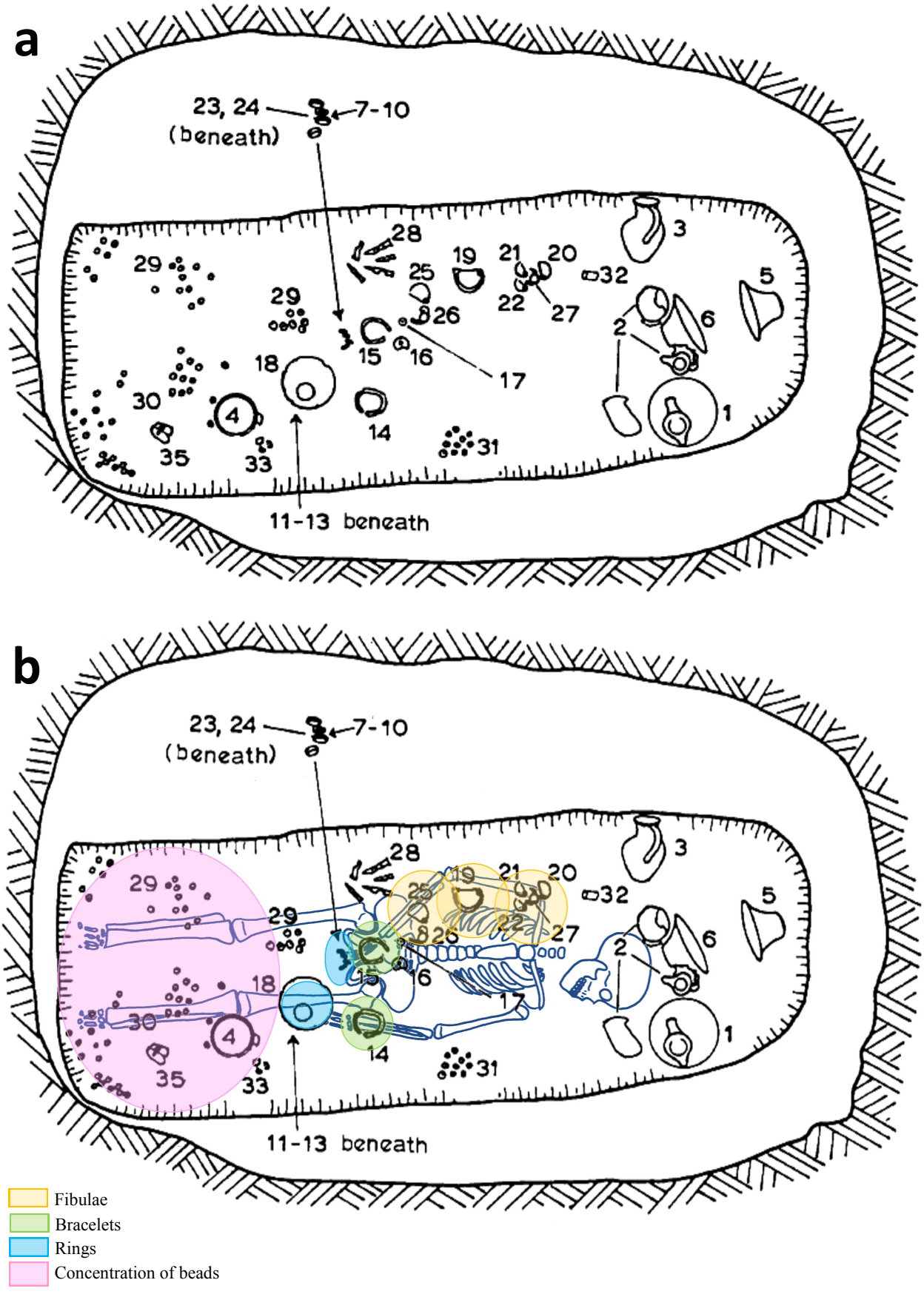


Fig. 14. Contents of T22. a) the arrangement of grave goods (Popham et al. 1980, Plate 160). b) possible position of the skeleton (drawing of the skeletal elements by Cicek Beeby).

		lower degree of interaction	higher degree of interaction
Funerary POI	Disposal technique (the "funeral")	inhumation	cremation
Depositional POI	Pre-depositional and depositional labor	low	high
	Burial stage	primary	secondary
	Intentional depositional intrusion	no (single burial)	yes (multiple burial)
	Unintentional depositional intrusion	no	yes
	Location of the grave	extramural	intramural
Post-depositional POI	Visibility	unmarked	marked
	Architectural space	none	elaborated
	Post-depositional rituals	no	yes

Fig. 15. The application of the model to the "hero" of Lefkandi.

		lower degree of interaction	higher degree of interaction
Funerary POI	Disposal technique (the "funeral")	inhumation	cremation
Depositional POI	Pre-depositional and depositional labor	low	high
	Burial stage	primary	secondary
	Intentional depositional intrusion	no (single burial)	yes (multiple burial)
	Unintentional depositional intrusion	no	yes
	Location of the grave	extramural	intramural
Post-depositional POI	Visibility	unmarked	marked
	Architectural space	none	elaborated
	Post-depositional rituals	no	yes

Fig. 16. The application of the model to the inhumed female under the Toumba mound.

		lower degree of interaction	higher degree of interaction
Funerary POI	Disposal technique (the "funeral")	inhumation	cremation
Depositional POI	Pre-depositional and depositional labor	low	high
	Burial stage	primary	secondary
	Intentional depositional intrusion	no (single burial)	yes (multiple burial)
	Unintentional depositional intrusion	no	yes
	Location of the grave	extramural	intramural
Post-depositional POI	Visibility	unmarked	marked
	Architectural space	none	elaborated
	Post-depositional rituals	no	yes

Fig. 17. The application of the model to the shaft graves at the Toumba cemetery.

		lower degree of interaction	higher degree of interaction
Funerary POI	Disposal technique (the "funeral")	inhumation	cremation
Depositional POI	Pre-depositional and depositional labor	low	high
	Burial stage	primary	secondary
	Intentional depositional intrusion	no (single burial)	yes (multiple burial)
	Unintentional depositional intrusion	no	yes
	Location of the grave	extramural	intramural
Post-depositional POI	Visibility	unmarked	marked
	Architectural space	none	elaborated
	Post-depositional rituals	no	yes

Fig. 18. The application of the model to the pyres at the Toumba cemetery.

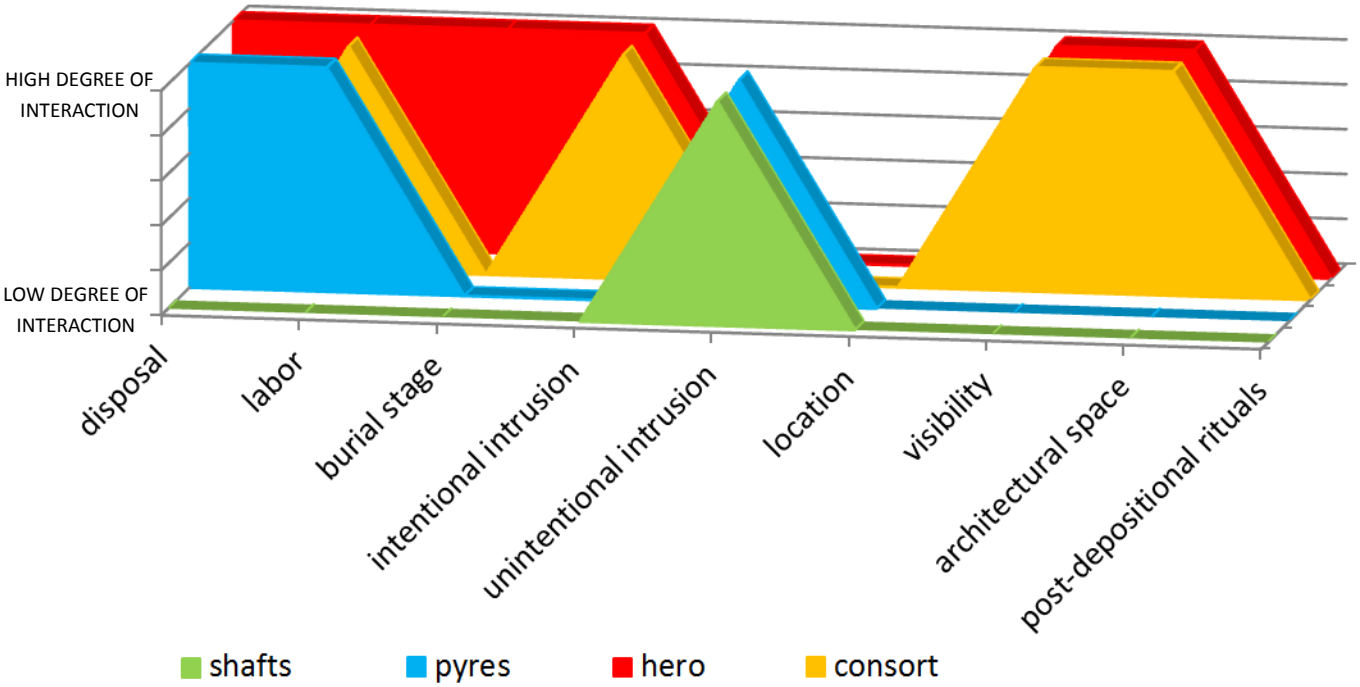


Fig. 19. A comparison of the Toumba "hero," "consort," shaft graves, and pyres.

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