

Chapter 8

‘Missing infants’: Giving Life to Aspects of Childhood in Mycenaean Greece via Intramural Burials

*Katerina Kostanti*¹

Abstract: This paper aims to examine the absence of infants aged under 24 months in Late Helladic communal burial grounds, and provide evidence to demonstrate that they are treated in a different way in comparison with older children and adults. An insight into the age data of the deceased reveals that missing infants are present in domestic contexts, although not in adequate numbers. The latter practice seems to reflect a conscious mixing of the residential and funerary space juxtaposing or, moreover, conciliating life and death. All of the above enable the investigation of various aspects of the social landscape, such as the formation of life stages and different identities, mechanisms of memory and the expression of status and power.

Keywords: intramural burial, childhood, infant, Mycenaean

Introduction

Burial practices have always been considered crucial to the understanding of the structure of the past especially for prehistoric societies in which the symbolic and social worlds of the living play an important, yet elusive, role in the selection of a burial's placement. Since age is among the major factors that structure human societies, the study of burial practices focusing on the age of the deceased opens a new perspective and may bring to light important information about their social identities and relevant social entity. As Triantaphyllou (2016) has noted, at specific sites, age appears to be a fundamental criterion in the selection of an area for the disposal of the deceased. In addition, the fluidity and changeable nature of the boundaries between the social aspects of age, gender, ethnicity and status during life, make it important to consider all of these factors in order to gain clear and solid results.

Age categories are neither clearly defined nor unanimously accepted as such. Childhood comprises several stages of growth including neonates, infants and toddlers, as well as younger and older children (Scott 1999, 4; Triantaphyllou 2001, 36), and we must bear in mind that the *osteological child* and *cultural child* do not always coincide (Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008, 19–23). This is also the case for chronological, biological and social age (Halcrow and Tayles 2008, 192), three factors which define age categories, symbolically expressed through material culture (Triantaphyllou 2016). For our convenience, we will use simplistically the terms *infant* for individuals younger than 24 months and *child* for those aged between two and twelve years of age (Hallager and McGeorge 1992, 39; Schepartz *et al.* 2009, 166, tab. 10.3; for different opinions see Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1987, 9; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008, 25, tab. 2; for an overview of the problem of subadult age categories see Halcrow and Tayles 2008).

The term *intramural*, as a norm, is applied in cases of deliberate co-occurrence of residential architecture and human burials in relation to both space and time, but its content is not always defined with accuracy. In addition, the poor examination of stratigraphic evidence and excavation data may lead to the erroneous attribution of the term to a burial that was incidentally connected to architectural remains. Therefore, specific relevant terminology needs to be developed, which considers aspects, such as the precise relationship of the grave to the architecture, its low or high visibility within the house and its exact function in the process of commemoration (Laneri 2011, 44). An analysis of the corpus of excavation data has identified a range of specific patterns in relation to the spatial arrangement of burials for Mycenaean Greece. These include burials under floors or doors, in corners or beneath hearths, as well as interments in between houses, within ruined domestic units and in deserted settlement sectors. It should be noted, however, that the deposition of the deceased in deserted settlements may confuse the proper use of the term *intramural burial* (Maran 1995, 71). The latter practice requires further study, however, which would enable it to be better understood and properly placed either within or outside the spectrum of intramural burials.

The under-representation of infants and children in the mortuary archaeological record has been repeatedly pointed out (e.g. Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 111; McHugh 1999, 19; Parker Pearson 1999, 103; Scott 1999, 4, 90, 125–6; Triantaphyllou 2001, 37) and explained as a result of age biases in relation to burial customs which necessitate a differential treatment of deceased subadults. In the present paper, I will explore this phenomenon particularly in relation to infants so that this age category can be embedded within the broader Mycenaean perception of childhood. The nature of intramural and extramural burials will be compared in conjunction with the associated skeletal evidence and an attempt will be made to identify aspects of the social personae acquired by infants in Mycenaean society. Furthermore, I will advance some propositions to explain why they were not buried within extramural contexts, but rather were included within the domestic sphere. The presence of human skeletal remains within residential areas has the potential to provide insights concerning the role of the dead in social and communal life.

Infant Burials in Mycenaean Greece

The currently available data is suggestive that the occurrence of intramural burial practices in the Aegean Early Bronze Age (see Table 8.1 for a summary of Aegean Bronze Age chronology) was of an occasional character, whereas it is marked by widespread distribution in the Middle Bronze Age (although the presence of the practice has been recently challenged by Sarri 2016) and it declined over the course of the Late Bronze Age (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 129; Lanaras 2003; McGeorge 2012, 296). In the Middle Helladic period, adults and juveniles were both buried intramurally (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 129), with a preponderance of infant and child burials in actual domestic units (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 24; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008, 102–3) without any strong evidence for the differential treatment of infants and older children.

In the Late Helladic period, the burials that occurred within settlements were mainly those of neonates and infants, and sometimes older children, and the practice exclusively involved inhumation (Kostanti 2009, 110–2; Pomadère 2013) (see Table 8.2 for a summary of infant and child burials mentioned in the text). A few examples of intramural adult burials are known from Lefkandi in Euboea (Musgrave and Popham 1991), Ayios Stephanos in Laconia (Taylour 1972; Taylour and Janko 2008) and Tiryns in the Argolid (Kilian *et al.* 1981, 173, fig. 25), however, and their frequency of occurrence might increase further since research is still ongoing (Fig. 8.1). A comparative analysis of the studied skeletal material from both intramural burials and burials in cemeteries in Mycenaean Greece reveals that infants under 24 months of age are usually absent from organised cemeteries, yet present in domestic contexts, albeit in small numbers (Kostanti 2009, 118–9). In addition, only a small percentage of subadult skeletal remains – those of individuals less than 18 years of age (i.e. 10.6% at Pylos, Schepartz *et al.* 2011, 365; 23.1% at East Lokris, Iezzi 2009, 178, tab. 11.1) – have been uncovered in Late Bronze Age burials. This is in contrast to the expected high child mortality rate for prehistoric times, which might have risen to as much as 15–30% of the total number of the deceased, in analogy to the norm for pre-industrial societies (Scott 1999, 90).

Intramural Infant Burials

During the transitional transformative period from Middle Helladic to Late Helladic I, that led to the birth of the Mycenaean civilisation, neonates (Pomadère 2010, 537)

Table 8.1. Aegean Bronze Age Traditional Chronology. Late Helladic subperiods (after Cline 2008, fig. 145).

Relative chronology	Absolute chronology (BC)
Early Bronze Age	3200–2000
Middle Bronze Age	2000–1625
Middle Helladic	2000–1625
Late Bronze Age	1625–1125
Late Helladic I	1625–1525
Late Helladic II	1525–1425
Late Helladic IIIA1	1425–1375
Late Helladic IIIA2	1375–1325
Late Helladic IIIB1	1325–1200
Late Helladic IIIC	1200–1125

Table 8.2. Summary of infant and child burials mentioned in the text.

<i>Intramural/ Extramural Burial</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Chronology</i>	<i>Individuals and Age</i>
Intramural	Midea	LHI–II	1 child of unspecified age
Intramural	Lerna	LHII	1 infant ≤ 12 months 1 child of unspecified age
Intramural	Lefkandi	LHII	2 fetuses or premature neonates 2 infants of 6 months 1 child of 2–4 years
Intramural	Lefkandi	LHIIIC	1 foetus or neonate 2 children of 2–3 years 1 child ≥ 3 years 1 child of 5 years 1 child of 8–9 years 2 infants or children of unspecified age
Intramural	Ayios Konstantinos	LHIIIA2–IIIB	1 infant 3–6 months 1 infant 6–12 months 1 foetus of 8–8.5 months gestation
Intramural	Modi Troizinias	LHIIIC	1 foetus or neonate
Intramural	Ayios Stephanos	LH period	48 fetuses, neonates, infants and children
Intramural	Asine	LH period	8–9 children of unspecified age
Extramural	Argos	LHI–II	Children ≥ 6 years
Extramural	Argos	LHIIIB–IIIA1	1 child of 2.5–3.5 years
Extramural	Ancient Agora of Athens	LHIIIB–IIIB/C	20 children ≥ 18 months
Extramural	Clauss	LHIIIC	9 children ≥ 24 months 1 infant of 12 months
Extramural	Deiras	LHIIIA–B	1 child of 3 years
Extramural	Pylos	LH period	Children ≥ 4 years
Extramural	Asine	LH period	3 neonates
Extramural	Tragana	LHIIIB–C	neonates
Extramural	Modi Lokridos	LHIIIB–C	neonates
Extramural	Ayia Sotira	LHIIIA–B	neonates
Extramural	Kazarma	LHII	neonates
Extramural	Grave III, Grave Circle A Mycenae	LHI	1 infant ≤ 3 months
Extramural	Grave Circle A Mycenae	?	1 infant ≤ 2 years
Extramural	Grave Circle B Mycenae	MH–LHI	1 child of 2 years 2 children of 5 years



Figure 8.1. Schematic map of mainland Greece showing the sites mentioned in the text (prepared by Katerina Kostanti).

and infants of less than one year of age (the upper age limit is not specifiable with certainty) (Lebegyev 2009, 22), tend to be differentiated by their exclusion from organised extramural cemeteries. Instead they were buried in intramural contexts, a practice that continued into the next period for infants under 24 months. During the Late Helladic III (LHIII) period this trend appears to have diminished, however, only to become more common again in the latter stages of the Late Bronze Age when a rise in the number of intramural burials is observed (Kostanti 2009, 118–9). Intramural infant/child burials are more common in the Peloponnese (at least 89 individuals), while in eastern Central Greece and Euboea (at least 25 individuals) their number

increases during LHIIC (Kostanti 2009, 111, tab. 1). In general, intramural burials of infants and children tend to remain unfurnished (53% in the Peloponnese and 75% in eastern central Greece and Euboea) unless furnished with perishable goods (Fig. 8.2) (Kostanti 2009, 112, tab. 2). In rare cases, wealthy child burials have been discovered *intra muros* as at LHI-II Midea in the Argolid where, it has been suggested, that the infant/child – provided with a vase, a carnelian bead, a container of perishable material with ivory handles and raw material possibly for the production of dye – was the offspring of local elite (Demakopoulou *et al.* 2002, 36–7). The graves were placed under floors, near the hearth, in corners of walls, under staircases, in backyards, and between houses. Sometimes the floor of the grave was paved with pebbles or with a layer of sand. Infants were placed in simple pits, in cist graves, in clay jars or covered with large ceramic sherds, in clay larnakes, or in wooden boxes (Kostanti 2009, 110–2).

At Lerna in the Argolid, two possible, though not convincingly, intramural LHII burials were those of an infant less than one-year-old and a child of unspecified

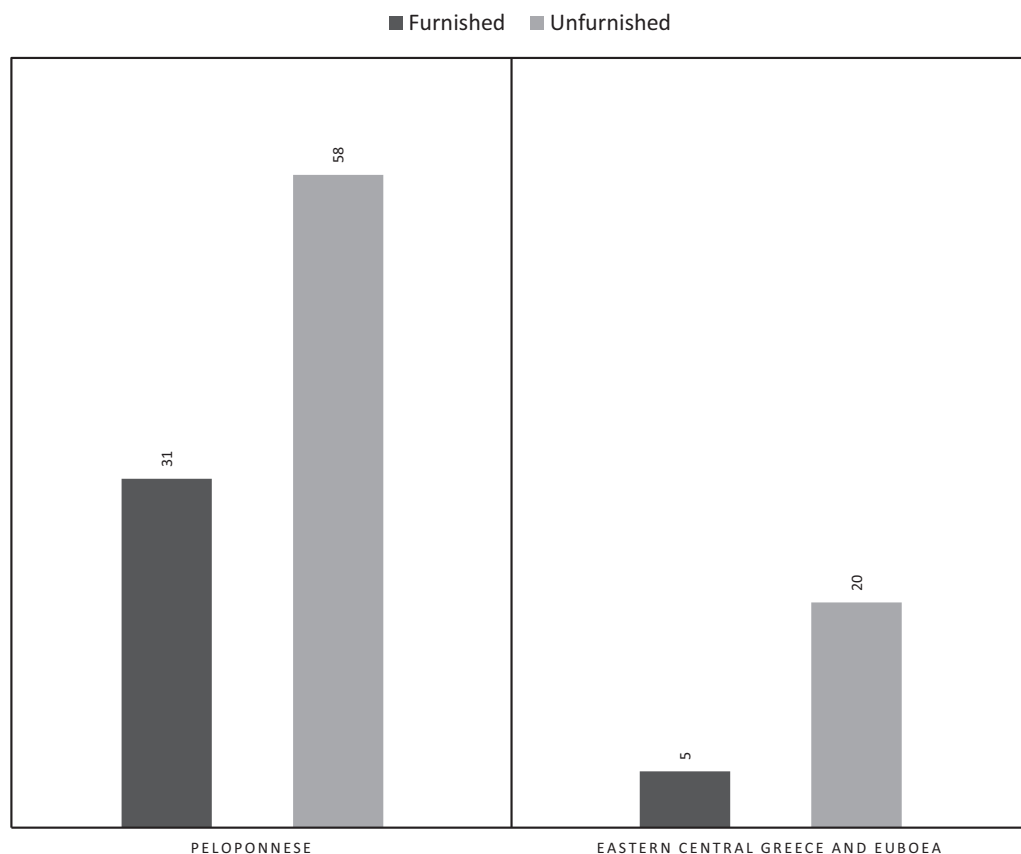


Figure 8.2. Bar chart comparison of furnished and unfurnished intramural child/infant burials in Peloponnese and eastern Central Greece and Euboea.

age (Lebegyev 2009, 20). Infants under 24 months are present in the intramural burials at Ayios Stephanos in Laconia and at Lefkandi in Euboea, although in these two cases adults were also buried *intra muros*. At Ayios Stephanos the number of intramural burials of children and adults decreases after the LHI period, from 47% (74 burials) of the total 157 burials in the site in the previous Middle Helladic period and the transitional MH/LHI, to 39% (62 burials) during the Late Helladic period; the percentage of neonate and infant burials increases during the LHIIIA1 and decreases once more in later LH phases until the final abandonment of the site in the early stages of LHIIIC (Taylour and Janko 2008, 141–4). At this settlement, the Late Helladic intramural burials of fetuses, neonates, infants and children amount to at least 48 individuals (Kostanti 2009, 39–44; Taylour and Janko 2008, 144). For the LHII period at Lefkandi, the intramural burials of two infants of six months of age, two fetuses or premature neonates, and a child between two and four years were present; for the LHIIIC period of the 15 buried individuals only one was a fetus or neonate, while two were aged between two and three years, one was over three years, one was five years old, one was eight or nine years old and the remains of two infants or children of unknown age were also present (Musgrave and Popham 1991). The LHIIIA2–IIIB burials recovered from the Mycenaean sanctuary at Ayios Konstantinos Methana, dedicated to a deity connected with the watery element, fecundity and the underworld (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2002; Tzonou-Herbst 2002, 172), can be considered to be a unique set (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2003a, 269–70). The excavation of Room C unearthed a large cist, which contained the remains of two infants aged three to six months and six to twelve months respectively as well as a fetus of eight to eight-and-a-half months' gestation, and was cut into the pavement of a room adjacent to Room A, the main room of the sanctuary (Fig. 8.3). One of the infants was articulated and comprised the last burial to have been made. The burials were richly furnished with vases, figurines, two bronze rings (one of these being too large for an infant, but nevertheless worn symbolically on a finger), necklaces, a seal stone, an amulet and seashells. According to the excavator the grave was used, throughout the active period of the sanctuary, for the burials of fetuses and infants. It was proposed that these individuals may have been from families that belonged to the local elite in an attempt to prevent future infant death and to facilitate the rebirth of the dead infants (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2003a, 270–1). On the islet of Modi in Troizinia, under the floor of a LHIIIC storeroom, excavation unearthed four narrow and one T-shaped bone plaques belonging to the casing of a wooden box used as a burial container (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2003b, 420–1, fig. 15). Preliminary anthropological study (conducted by Dr Yasar Isçan, Institute of Forensic Sciences, Istanbul University) of the skeletal material, discovered among the remains of the box, indicated that it belonged to a fetus or neonate (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou pers. comm.). Unfortunately, none of the contemporary infant or child skeletal remains derived from extramural burials at the same sites have been subject to anthropological analysis which makes it impossible to conduct a thorough comparative analysis of the data.

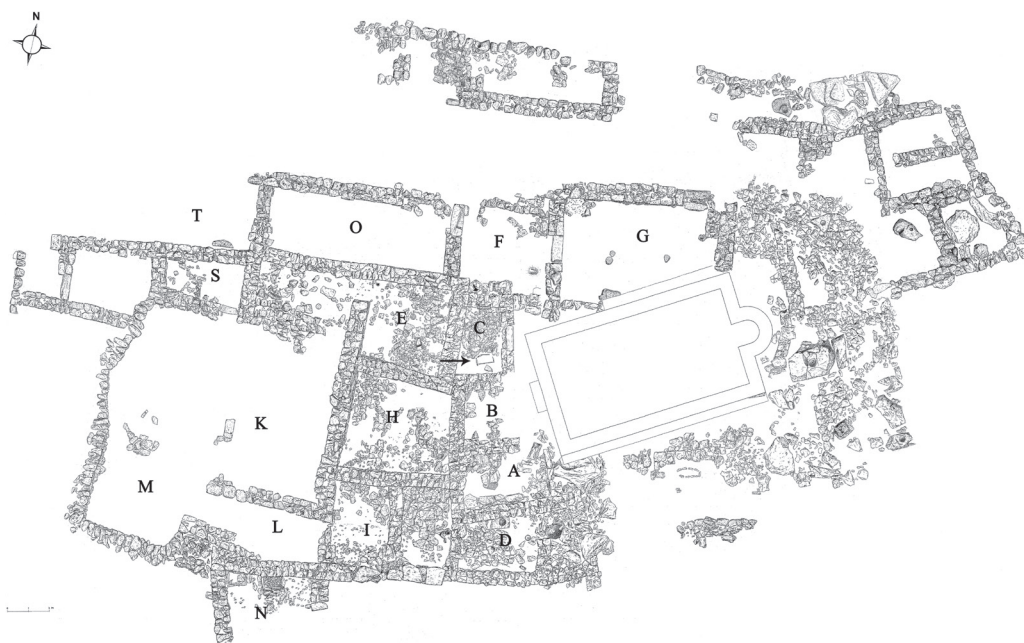


Figure 8.3. Plan of the Mycenaean sanctuary at Ayios Konstantinos, Methana. The cist grave in Room C, which contained the remains of two infants aged 3–6 months and 6–12 months respectively as well as a foetus of 8–8.5 months' gestation, is indicated by the arrow (courtesy of Eleni Konsolaki-Yannopoulou).

Extramural Infant Burials

Extramural burials usually do not include the remains of infants under 24 months. At Argos, in the LHI–II period, the anthropologically studied skeletons of extramural burials all derived from individuals older than six years (Lebegyev 2009, 23). The child in one of the richest extramural tombs at LHIIB–IIIA1, Argos, died at the age of two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half years, which might be considered as a liminal age – between infancy and childhood (Kaza-Papageorgiou 1985, ft. 11). In the LHIIB–LHIIIB/C extramural cemetery of the Ancient Agora at Athens skeletal remains from 20 children, all of whom were older than 18 months, have been unearthed (Immerwahr 1971, 110, 158–246; Kostanti 2009, 82–9). In this assemblage, the anthropologist Lawrence Angel identified the skeleton of a wealthy LHII burial to be that of an 18-month-old infant furnished with exceptionally rich gifts – an ivory comb and hairpin, a glass-paste and amethyst necklace with a gold pendant, a conch shell and 10 vases, one of which was a unique shape which imitated metal prototypes (Immerwahr 1971, 205, ft.1). Among the 10 children buried in the LHIIIC chamber tombs of Clauss in Achaia, the preliminary anthropological study has shown that nine were older than 24 months of age and one was around twelve months of age (Paschalidis 2016). At the cemetery of Deiras the youngest skeleton to be examined was that of a three-year-old child who had been buried in a LHIIIA–B context (Lebegyev 2009, 21). Finally, infants or children

under four years of age are absent from the LHI–IIIC Pylian tombs (Schepartz *et al.* 2011, 365) and it is considered that young children in Pylos were rarely buried in a similar manner to adults (Schepartz *et al.* 2009, 165–6).

Children, older than two to three years at death, began to be buried with adults in chamber tombs from the LHIIIA onwards (Lebegyev 2009, 24). The recently identified traces of wooden chests associated with some skeletal material inside chamber tombs in the large cemetery of Asine in the Argolid provide rare evidence for the burial of neonates in community cemeteries (Mårtensson 2002; Nordquist and Ingvarsson-Sundström 2005, 157). In the immediate vicinity of buildings of the same settlement, however, the remains of approximately eight or nine children have also been unearthed (Frödin and Persson 1938, 128–9 and 146). Newborn babies were recently recognised in a disarticulated state in LHIIIB–C chamber tombs at Tragana and Modi in eastern Lokris; in the LHIIIA–B cemetery of chamber tombs at Ayia Sotira in Nemea and in the LHII tholos tomb at Kazarma (Triantaphyllou 2016).

Another exception to the rule can be found in the burial of an infant in the extramural Grave III of Grave Circle A at Mycenae whose body appears to have been entirely covered with gold foil (Fig. 8.4) (Karo 1930–3, 62, taf. LIII; Papazoglou-Manioudaki *et al.* 2010, 161 with different opinions about the number of infants). On the basis of the preserved height of the gold suit, which would have covered a body measuring approximately 50 cm, it has been suggested that the infant was less than three months old (Konstantinidi-Syvridi forthcoming) and may have been holding a gold model of a scale, presumably for symbolic purposes, while a magnificent gold diadem may have adorned its forehead. Further study is needed to help determine why an individual of such a young age had been chosen to be buried in this magnificent grave along with two adult males and a female (Papazoglou *et al.* 2010, 172–9), the latter of whom has recently been identified as a priestess (Konstantinidi-Syvridi forthcoming). The above question is even more interesting when one considers the rarity of non-adult burials in both Grave Circles (Voutsaki 2012, 178) – in Grave Circle B 21 adults were buried along with three children, one of whom was aged two years while the others were both five years of age (Angel 1973, 379, 383 and 392; Mylonas 1973, 145–6 and 186). In Grave Circle A 15 adults and one subadult were buried; two fragments possibly belonging to the same infant, less than two years of age, have also been identified among the skeletal material, although the possibility that they derive from later burials above Grave Circle A cannot be excluded (Papazoglou-Manioudaki *et al.* 2010, 213–4, fig. 31). The unique burial of the infant wrapped in gold, when correctly understood, could shed new light on the lives of infants of nobility, with hereditary rights, in this case related to the priestly office (Konstantinidi-Syvridi forthcoming). Even in this instance, however, the foil covering the infant is undecorated and the piece covering the face does not bear facial features. This situation differs from the five gold death masks and luxuriously decorated funeral attire discovered in association with adults in Grave Circle A, thereby confirming that age biases applied to burial customs (Voutsaki 2012, 178).

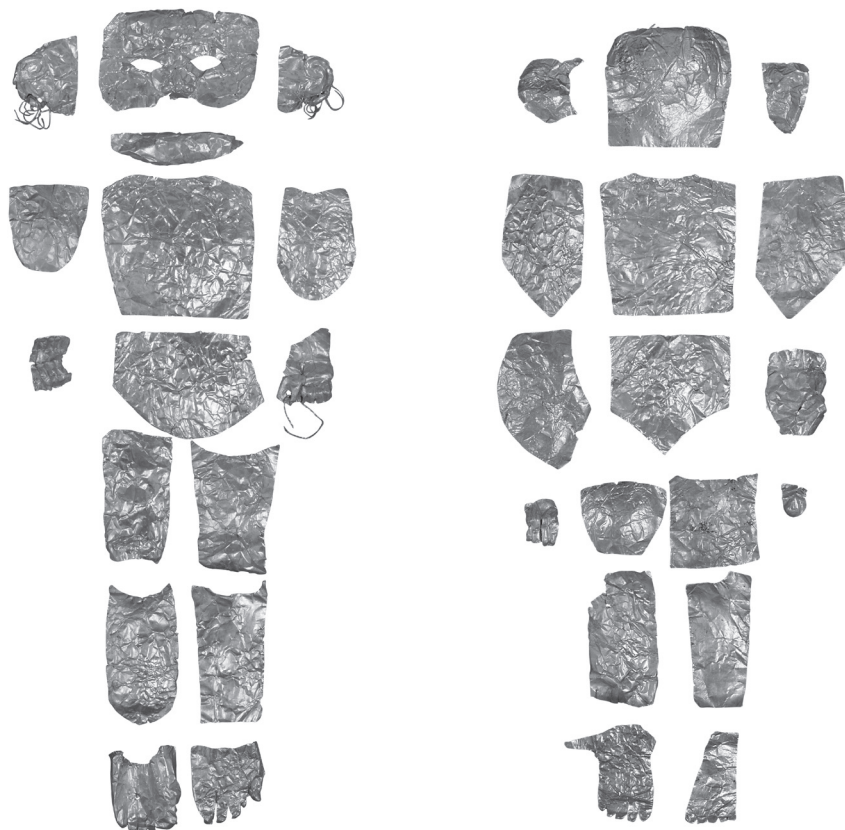


Figure 8.4. The gold suit of the infant in Grave III, Grave Circle A at Mycenae (National Archaeological Museum, Athens © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Archaeological Receipts Fund).

Discussion

On the basis of the aforementioned evidence it appears to be the case that infants less than 24 months of age tend to be absent from Late Helladic organised communal cemeteries and – at least some of them – were buried instead in a domestic context (unfortunately precise figures are currently not available). This age mark is not random – the end of the second year of an infant's life is characterised by an increasing tendency towards independence. The infant/child is capable of walking alone and talking, combining words to form simple sentences (Bloom 1993, 4, 149, 264, pl. 7.7); it is not a coincidence that the Latin term *infantia* means inability to speak (Scott 1999, 1). The set of deciduous teeth is almost complete, with the first deciduous molars emerging at 18 months ($\pm$ six months) and the second at 24 months ($\pm$ eight months) (Ubelaker 1989, 51, fig. 24). The age at which deciduous teeth have emerged seems to coincide with the age mark between infants and children proposed in the present paper, that is the age of 24 months. As such, the development of

teeth must be considered as a milestone in infant growth and age categorisation (for ethnographic examples see Ucko 1969, 270–1), the latter operating as one of the many factors affecting burial customs. It is very interesting that the limit of two years of age maintains its importance in Greece during the following centuries. On inscribed ancient Greek funerary stelae, the adjective *ahoros* (premature) is never, or almost never, attributed to children under the age of two years, as if the death of those individuals was not seen as unnatural and premature (Golden 1990, 83). The importance of this age limit is also discernible in a huge cemetery of jar burials exclusively of infants aged less than 24 months on the island of Astypalaea, dating from the Late Geometric until the Roman period (Hillson 2009, 139).

Children older than 24 months were probably formally entering the Mycenaean community through rites of integration and passage, and they were therefore permitted burial within communal cemeteries. In some settlements, however, a limited number of children older than 24 months continued to be buried intramurally as at Ayios Stephanos and Lefkandi. Since the practice of intramural burials was rather common in the Middle Helladic, a period with simpler social structure than in Mycenaean times (Voutsaki 2012, 164–6), the continuation of the custom for these older children could be explained as an archaic mortuary ritual practised by traditional and conservative groups within the population or at peripheral sites or by less stratified societies. Based on ethnography, it can also be suggested that other factors related to the individuals – such as their having suffered from particular diseases, their physical appearance or a specific cause of death, such as smallpox, lightning or drowning – may have been involved in the continuation of the practice (Ucko 1969, 271; for a short discussion of the possible effects of unusual appearance and pathology see Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008, 105, ft. 457), although there are no such indications in the relevant skeletal material. Similar criteria, which connect some deformities or causes of death with the supernatural realm, may also be applied to the above-mentioned cases of the extramural burial of infants, which was also contrary to common funerary practices.

Taboos and exclusion rules along with rites of separation and reintegration may have existed for stillborns, neonates and infants at different age stages, and possibly for their mothers, at birth and at death, two circumstances often considered to be highly polluting events in preindustrial societies (Van Gennep 1909, 71–92, 218–9; Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008, 106–7, 120–1; McGeorge 2011, 11). The age at which children acquire social status varies among societies and between periods. As other scholars have observed, infants are excluded from community cemeteries throughout prehistory up until modern times (Scott 1999, 126), when infants are still occasionally buried within the house (Ariès 1962, 39).

The change in burial practices at liminal age stages suggests changes in relation to the perceived social status and social persona of the deceased. Through the study of the former it is possible to obtain a more complete image of the multiple social personae of children and, in this case, infants in Mycenaean Greece.

Among infants less than 24 months of age different subcategories emerge which are based on social biases; behaviours which battle between conservatism and innovation, along with religious and cosmological beliefs. Since the biological sex of infants cannot be accurately defined (Ingvarsson-Sundström 2008, 32) this parameter, along with a lack of gender specific burial gifts for children and infants could not be used to further articulate the social identity of infants through burial practices (although *askoi* have been considered indicative of female adult and subadult burials; Mylonas 1973, I, 288).

The striking difference between the generally poorly furnished or completely unfurnished burials and those that were wealthy enables further aspects of childhood to be reconstructed. Rich infant burials may be interpreted through various approaches, usually considered to reflect the prominent social status of their family and the effort to attribute the latter to the deceased infant (Pader 1982, 62; McHugh 1999, 24–5; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 129, where it is argued that girls receive often rich burial gifts that would have been included in their dowries). The wealthy burials of the two individuals at Athens and Argos probably fall into the above category and the liminal age of the deceased may indicate that they had already entered the next age stage through the appropriate rites of passage and were therefore permitted burial in communal ground. On the other hand, the totally unfurnished burials may not demonstrate just a lower social class, but may additionally stress the marginal spiritual and social state of the infant, which does not need burial gifts for entering the world of beyond, due to its closer connection with the afterlife.

If we accept the noted differences between the part of the population that used simple graves (intramural ones included) and those that used chamber tombs (Lewartowski 1995, 110–1), which has been explained as a reflection of differences in social status and wealth and beliefs about death and the afterlife, the rare presence of infants in chamber tombs may be explained as an attempt of groups of the population to emphasise existing social differences within Mycenaean social structure. The unique burial of infants and a foetus in a Mycenaean sanctuary highlights unexplored relations between juveniles and religious (magical?) rituals and strengthens the idea that the dead belonged within the sphere of the sacred (Cavanagh and Mee 1998, 114).

The occurrence of organised burial grounds versus interments in current or former domestic sectors, and exceptionally in a sanctuary, is an indication that the living did not always seek to separate their world from the realm of beyond. Various interpretative propositions have been put forward concerning the exclusion of infants from communal cemeteries and their inclusion (or a percentage of them) within the domestic sphere. These include the need for the segregation of non-adult persons from the remainder of the dead, as the former did not qualify as active and equal members of society (Wells 1990, 139); making their death an event that impacted upon the household and not the whole community (Lebegyev 2009, 28); or the performance of sympathetic witchcraft in an effort to attract the power of fertility into the house where a child had been buried (Golden 1990, 85), hoping for the

rebirth of a healthy offspring in order to preserve the family line (Morris 1987, 63–5; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2003a, 268, ft. 89). The latter view is supported in the case of jar burials which, albeit rare, are found only intramurally in Mycenaean Greece. Burials of infants in jars could have nurtured the hope that the dead infant would come back to life through a womb, bearing in mind that the ceramic vessel was perceived as a schematic human/female body (Goodison 1989, 40) and has been associated with beliefs about regeneration (Maniki 2006, 53–4). The vase/womb could provide the infant with the necessary vehicle to enable their rebirth (McGeorge 2011, 12).

The deliberate mixing of the domestic life and the mortuary sphere is associated, among others, with mechanisms for the commemoration of the deceased (Adams and King 2010; for a connection between memory and burials in abandoned and ruined settlement sectors see Sarri 2016), although it is not yet clear if this practice reinforces memory or oblivion. The absence of grave marks may be counterpoised by the everyday presence of the physical remains of the deceased near the household. The performance, or not, of rituals during the interment and the mourning period is a matter to be investigated through careful contextualisation of an intramural burial and its surrounding environment. The coexistence of the living and the dead is open to a twofold explanation – on the one hand, the expression of absolute oblivion, if the grave can no longer be reached as it is hidden and covered up by everyday activities, sounds, odours and worries, and, on the other hand, the attainment of the most profound commemoration by allowing the deceased to continue to 'coexist' spatially and in a sense 'participate' in family and communal life. The exclusion of infants from cemeteries, and the missing percentage of infants in the Mycenaean mortuary archaeological record, should not be explained as an indication that they held lesser social importance during life (Triantaphyllou 2016). As burials are highly symbolic actions, the choice of the location of the grave is not a random act by the living and the individuals buried inside settlements were considered eligible for this particular treatment for specific reasons that may vary in space and time. A new age group emerges from the archaeological data, that of the infants aged less than 24 months of age, which includes several different social identities, related to the status of their families, cosmological beliefs and conservative or innovative behaviours, all of which are important aspects of the ongoing process of gaining an understanding of the social structure of Mycenaean society.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank E. Murphy and M. Le Roy for inviting me to contribute to this volume; K. Manteli and E. Murphy for improving the English text; G. Fakarou, M. Kontaki, K. Paschalidis, E. Konstantinidi-Syvridi and E. Konsolaki-Yannopoulou for their assistance in many ways; and the anonymous reviewers for constructive observations. This paper forms part of my ongoing doctoral research on the practice of intramural burials in the Aegean Bronze Age which is being undertaken in the Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte, University of Heidelberg.

Note

1. Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, Athens National Archaeological Museum. Tositsa 1, 106 82 Athens, Greece. Email: katkostanti@hotmail.com.

References

- Adams, R. L. and King, S. M. 2010. Residential burial in global perspective. *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 20, 1–16.
- Angel, J. L. 1973. Appendix – Human skeletons from Grave Circles at Mycenae, in Mylonas, G. E., *O Tafikos Kyklos B ton Mykinon* (Library of the Archaeological Society at Athens nr. 73), 379–397. Athens: The Archaeological Society at Athens.
- Ariès, P. 1962. *Centuries of Childhood. A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Bloom, L. 1993. *The Transition from Infancy to Language. Acquiring the Power of Expression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cavanagh, W. G. and Mee, C. B. 1998. *A Private Place. Death in Prehistoric Greece* (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology Vol. 125). Göteborg: Paul Åströms Förlag.
- Cline, E. H. 2008. Problems of chronology: Egypt and the Aegean, in Aruz, J., Benzel, K. and Evans, J. M., *Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C.*, 453–454. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Demakopoulou, K., Divari-Valakou, N. and Schallin, A.-L. 2002. Excavations in Midea 2000 and 2001. *Opuscula Atheniensia* 27, 27–58.
- Frödin, O. and Persson, A. W. (eds.) 1938. *Asine. Results of the Swedish Excavations 1922–30*. Stockholm: Generalstabens Litografiska Anstalts Förlag i Distribution.
- Golden, M. 1990. *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Goodison, L. 1989. *Death, Women and the Sun: Symbolism of Regeneration in Early Aegean Religion* (Bulletin Supplement 53) London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies.
- Halcrow, S. E and Tayles, N. 2008. The bioarchaeological investigation of childhood and social age: problems and prospects. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 15, 190–215.
- Hallager, B. and Mc George, P. J. P. 1992. *Late Minoan III Burials at Khania. The Tombs, Finds and Deceased in Odos Palama* (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology 93). Göteborg: Paul Åströms Förlag.
- Hillson, S. 2009. The world's largest infants' cemetery and its potential for studying growth and development, in Schepartz, L. A., Fox, S. C. and Bourbou C. (eds.), *New Directions in the Skeletal Biology of Greece* (Hesperia Supplement 43), 137–154. Princeton, CA: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
- Iezzi, C. 2009. Regional differences in the health status of the Mycenaean women of East Lokris, in Schepartz, L. A., Fox, S. C. and Bourbou C. (eds.), *New Directions in the Skeletal Biology of Greece* (Hesperia Supplement 43), 175–192. Princeton, CA: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
- Immerwahr, S. A. 1971. *The Athenian Agora, XIII: The Neolithic and Bronze Ages*. Princeton, CA: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
- Karo, G. 1930–3. *Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai*. Munich: Verlag F. Bruckmann A-G.
- Kaza-Papageorgiou, D. 1985. An Early Mycenaean cist grave from Argos. *Athenische Mitteilungen* 100, 1–21.
- Kilian, K., Podzuweit, C. and Weisshaar, H.-J. 1981. Ausgrabungen in Tiryns 1978, 1979. *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, 149–256.
- Konsolaki-Yannopoulou, E. 2002. A Mycenaean sanctuary on Methana, in Hägg, R. (ed.), *Peloponnesian Sanctuaries and Cults. Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 11–13 June 1994* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, 4^e; 48), 25–36. Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen. Paul Åströms Förlag.

- Konsolaki-Yannopoulou, E. 2003a. Taphes nipion sto mykinaiko iero tou Ag. Konstantinou sta Methana, in Konsolaki-Yannopoulou, E. (ed.), *Argosaronikos. Praktika 1ou Diethnous Synedriou Istorias kai Archaialogias tou Argosaronikou*, Poros 26-9 Iouniou 1998, Vol. A, 257-284. Athens: Municipality of Poros.
- Konsolaki-Yannopoulou, E. 2003b. I mykinaiki egkatastasi sto nisaki Modi tis Troizinias, in Kyparissi-Apostolika, N. and Papakonstantinou, M. (eds.), *Praktika B' Diethnous Epistimonikou Symposiou 'H Perifereia tou Mykinaikou Kosmou'*, 26-30 Septemvriou, Lamia 1999, 417-432. Athens: YPPO-ID' EPKA/ Archaeological Receipts Fund.
- Konstantinidi-Syvridi, E. forthcoming. O lakkoeidis tafos III tou Kyklou A ton Mykinon: Tafos ton gynaikon i tafos ton iereon? in Kalogerakou, P. and Kountouri, E. (eds.), *Timitikos Tomos gia ton Kathigiti Georgio Styl. Korre*. Athens.
- Kostanti, K. 2009. Paidia sto Proistoriko Aigaio. Martyries ton Tafon tis Ysteris Epochis tou Chalkou sto Mykinaiko Elladiko Horo. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Crete, Rethymno. Available at <http://elocus.lib.uoc.gr/dlib/8/7/9/metadata-dlib-017e10b3255d47787262a07863ed83d9_1265005819.tkl>
- Lanaras, B. 2003. Mia intra muros tafi vrefous sto mesokykladiko Akrotiri Thiras. I storia tou ethimou ton intra muros tafon sto Aigaio. Prospatheia ermineias enos idiaiterou evrimatos, in Vlachopoulos, A. V. and Birtacha, K. B. (eds.), *Argonaftis. Timitikos Tomos gia ton Kathigiti Christou G. Douma apo tous Mathites tou sto Panepistimio Athinon 1980-2000*, 445-460. Athens: I Kathimerini.
- Laneri, N. 2011. Defining residential graves. The case of Titris Höyük in southeastern Anatolia during the late IIIrd Millennium BC, in Henry, O. (ed.), *Le Mort dans la Ville. Pratiques, Contextes et Impacts des Inhumations Intra-Muros en Anatolie, du Début de l'Age du Bronze à l'Époque Romaine, Actes des 2e Rencontres d'Archéologie, Istanbul 14-15 Novembre 2011*, 43-52. Istanbul: Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes Georges Dumézil - CNRS USR 3131.
- Lebegeyev, J. 2009. Phases of childhood in Early Mycenaean Greece. *Childhood in the Past* 2, 15-32.
- Lewartowski, K. 1995. Mycenaean social structure: a view from simple graves, in Laffineur, R. and Niemeier W.-D. (eds.), *Politeia. Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 5th International Aegean Conference, University of Heidelberg, Archäologisches Institut, 10-13 April 1994*, Vol I. (Aegaeum 12), 103-113. Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin.
- Maniki, A. 2006. I Tafiki Praktiki tou Enchytrismou sto Aigaio tin Proimi Epochi tou Chalkou: To Paradeigma tou Akrotiriou sti Thira. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Crete, Rethymno. Available at <http://elocus.lib.uoc.gr/dlib/4/1/3/metadata-dlibf2d2582fde3cd39192a1da99446953b0_1241688173.tkl>
- Maran, J. 1995. Structural changes in the pattern of settlement during the Shaft Grave period on the Greek mainland, in Laffineur, R. and Niemeier, W.-D. (eds.), *Politeia: Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 5th International Aegean Conference, University of Heidelberg, Archäologisches Institut, 10-13 April 1994*, Vol I. (Aegaeum 12), 67-72. Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin.
- Mårtensson, L. 2002. Traces of boxes: linings of wooden boxes in Helladic tombs, in Wells, B. (ed.), *New Research in Old Material from Asine and Berbati in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Swedish Institute at Athens* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska institutet i Athen 8° 17) 43-48. Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag.
- Mc George, P. J. P. 2011. Intramural infant burials in the Aegean Bronze Age, in Henry, O. (ed.), *Le Mort dans la Ville. Pratiques, Contextes et Impacts des Inhumations Intra-Muros en Anatolie, du Début de l'Age du Bronze à l'Époque Romaine, Actes des 2e Rencontres d'Archéologie, Istanbul 14-15 Novembre 2011*, 1-19. Istanbul: Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes Georges Dumézil - CNRS USR 3131.
- McGeorge, P. J. P. 2012. The Petras intramural infant jar burial: context, symbolism, eschatology, in Tsipopoulou, M. (ed.), *Petras, Siteia - Twenty-Five Years of Excavations and Studies. Acts of a Two-Day Conference Held at the Danish Institute at Athens, 9-10 October 2010* (Monographs of the Danish Institute at Athens 16), 291-302. Athens: The Danish Institute at Athens.

- McHugh, F. 1999. *Theoretical and Quantitative Approaches to the Study of Mortuary Practices* (BAR International Series 785). Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Morris, I. 1987. *Burial and Ancient Society. The Rise of the Greek City-State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Musgrave, J. H. and Popham, M. 1991. The Late Helladic IIIC intramural burials at Lefkandi Euboea. *Annual of the British School at Athens* 86, 273–296.
- Mylonas, G. E. 1973. *O Tafikos Kyklos B ton Mykinon* (Library of the Archaeological Society at Athens 73). Athens: The Archaeological Society at Athens.
- Nordquist, G. and Ingvarsson-Sundström, A. 2005. Live hard, die young: mortuary remains of Middle and early Late Helladic children from the Argolid in social context, in Dakouri-Hild, A. and Sherratt, S. (eds.), *Autochthon. Papers Presented to O.T.P.K. Dickinson on the Occasion of his Retirement* (BAR International Series 1432), 156–174. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Pader, E. J. 1982. *Symbolism, Social Relations and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains* (BAR International Series 130). Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Papazoglou-Manioudaki, L., Nafplioti, A., Musgrave, J. H. and Prag, A. J. N. W. 2010. Mycenae revisited Part 3. The human remains from Grave Circle A at Mycenae. Behind the masks: a study of the bones of Shaft Graves I–V. *Annual of the British School at Athens* 105, 157–224.
- Parker Pearson, M. 1999. *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing.
- Paschalidis, K. 2016. Ties of affection. Burials of parents and children in the Mycenaean cemetery of Clauss, near Patras, in Papadopoulou-Chrysikopoulou, E., Chrysikopoulos, V. and Christakopoulou, G. (eds.), *Achaïos. Studies Presented to Professor Thanasis I. Papadopoulos*, 207–218. Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology.
- Polychronakou-Sgouritsa, N. 1987. Paidikes Tafes sti mykinaiki Ellada. *Archaïologikon Deltion* 42A, 8–29.
- Pomadère, M. 2010. De l'indifferenciation à la discrimination spatiale des sépultures? Variété des comportements à l'égard des enfants morts pendant l'HM-HRI, in Philippa-Touchais, A., Touchais, G., Voutsaki, S. and Wright, J. (eds.), *MESOHELLADICA. La Grèce Continentale au Bronze Moyen. Actes du Colloque International Organisé par l'École Française d'Athènes, en Collaboration avec l'American School of Classical Studies at Athens et le Netherlands Institute in Athens, Athènes, 8–12 Mars 2006* (BCH Supplement 52), 525–539. Athens: École Française d'Athènes, Editions De Boccard.
- Pomadère, M. 2013. Entre zone d'habitat et cimetière clos, l'évolution spatiale des aires funéraires du début du Bronze récent au premier Age du Fer, in Darcque, P., Etienne, R. and Guimier-Sorbets, A.-M. (eds.), *PROASTEION, Recherches sur le Périurbain dans le Monde Grec* (Travaux de la Maison de l'Archéologie et de l'Ethnologie, René-Ginouvès 17), 225–243. Paris: Editions de Boccard.
- Sarri, K. 2016. Intra, extra, inferus and supra mural burials of the Middle Helladic period: spatial diversity in practice, in Dakouri-Hild, A. and Boyd, M. (eds.), *Staging Death: Funerary Performance, Architecture and Landscape in the Aegean*, 117–138. Berlin: DeGruyter.
- Schepartz, L. A., Miller-Antonio, S. and Murphy, J. M. A. 2009. Differential health among the Mycenaeans of Messenia: status, sex and dental health at Pylos, in Schepartz, L. A., Fox, S. C. and Bourbou, C. (eds.), *New Directions in the Skeletal Biology of Greece* (Hesperia Supplement 43), 155–174. Athens: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
- Schepartz, L. A., Papathanasiou, A., Miller-Antonio, S., Stocker, S. R., Davis, J. L., Murphy, J. M. A., Malapani, E. and Richards, M. 2011. No seat at the table? Mycenaean women's diet and health in Pylos, Greece, in Schepartz, L. A. (ed.), *Anthropology à la Carte: The Evolution and Diversity of Human Diet*, 359–374. San Diego, CA: Cognella Academic Publishing.
- Scott, E. 1999. *The Archaeology of Infancy and Infant Death* (BAR International Series 819). Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Taylour W. D. 1972. Excavations at Ayios Stephanos. *Annual of the British School at Athens* 67, 205–270.

- Taylor W. D. and Janko, R. 2008. *Ayios Stephanos. Excavations at a Bronze Age and Medieval Settlement in Southern Laconia* (Annual of the British School at Athens Supplement 44). London: The British School at Athens.
- Triantaphyllou, S. 2001. *A Bioarchaeological Approach to Prehistoric Cemetery Populations from Central and Western Greek Macedonia* (BAR International Series 976). Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Triantaphyllou, S. 2016. Constructing identities by ageing the body in the prehistoric Aegean: the view through the human remains, in Mina, M., Triantaphyllou, S. and Papadatos, Y. (eds.), *An Archaeology of Prehistoric Bodies and Embodied Identities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Convergence of Theory and Practice*, 160–168. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Tzonou-Herbst, I. N. 2002. *A Contextual Analysis of Mycenaean Terracotta Figurines*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cincinnati.
- Ubelaker D. H., 1989. *Human Skeletal Remains: Excavation, Analysis, Interpretation*. Washington: Taraxacum.
- Ucko P. 1969. Ethnography and the archaeological interpretation of mortuary remains. *World Archaeology* 1, 262–280.
- Van Gennep, A. 1909. *Les Rites de Passage*. Paris: Éditions A. and J. Picard (1981 reprint).
- Voutsaki, S. 2012. From value to meaning, from things to persons: the Grave Circles of Mycenae reconsidered, in Urton, G. and Papadopoulos, J. (eds.), *The Construction of Value in the Ancient World* (Monographs of UCLA), 160–185. Los Angeles, CA: Kotsen Institute.
- Wells, B. 1990. Death at Dendra. On mortuary practices in a Mycenaean community, in Hägg, R. and Nordquist, G. C. (eds.), *Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid. Proceedings of the 6th International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 11–13 June 1988*, 125–140. Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag.

