

Revisiting the Tomb: Mortuary Practices in Habitation Areas in the Transition to the Late Bronze Age at Kirrha, Phocis

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Introduction

In recent years the occurrence of burials in residential areas has become important in understanding the relationship of the living with the dead and the construction of social landscapes where memory is appropriated and transformed politically (e.g. van Dyke & Alcock 2003; Rakita et al. 2005; Hamilakis 2010; Adams & King 2011; McAnany 2011; Torres-Rouff et al. 2012). While the focus has been on burials in actively inhabited residential areas, graves built over abandoned domestic structures have received less attention (Sarri, this volume; Labrude, this volume). In the former case, placing the dead in the world of the living tends to be construed as a form of re-animation of dead bodies. Building graves in abandoned habitation areas, however, involves an interaction between entities that are often regarded as inanimate. The possibility that even inanimate objects can bring about change, actively affecting their environment, is all the more frequently discussed in archaeology (e.g. Meskell 1999; Chapman 2000; Thomas 2002). In this paper we search for components of this interaction at the Middle Helladic site of Kirrha at Phocis, based on osteoarchaeological evidence that focuses on the mode of burial and the treatment of the dead in mortuary grounds, in particular in graves used to accommodate many burials and in secondary handlings of osseous remains. Excavation data allow us to reconstruct multistage funerary rituals in which the grave, like the 'dead' site, comprises a place of revisitation, where the relationship of the living with the past is redefined and renegotiated. Similarities in certain practices that emerge among different sites of the same period refer to a common perception of this relationship, even if this may be constructed or even reversed through its continuous redefinition.

Placing the dead at Kirrha

Burial use of abandoned residential areas is not uncommon in Middle Helladic times in the Greek mainland (Cavanagh & Mee 1998: 24–5; Boyd 2002: 33–6; Milka 2010; Sarri, this volume), a practice viewed as a turn towards the past and a quest to extend links to it, independent perhaps of chronological continuity; at least in Thessaly, Middle Helladic graves are built over much earlier buildings (Tsountas 1908: 132–47;

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Maran 1995: 70; Adrimi-Sismani 2010: 302). In the transitional Middle Helladic III/Late Helladic I period, funerary practices are characterised by greater diversity compared to the earlier Middle Helladic when there is little evidence of mortuary differentiation (Cavanagh & Mee 1998: 24–5; Dickinson 2010: 21). Key developments in this era 'form a core set of new (or much enhanced)' practices encompassing innovations in funerary architecture, the use of collective burial practices and secondary rites, the development of a more complex funerary landscape and a marked increase in material culture use in mortuary rituals (Boyd 2016). Public forms of expressing the relations of the living with the dead predominate (Papadimitriou, this volume; 2011), while marked status differences are often seen in formal extramural cemeteries (Voutsaki 2010: 76). These new trends gradually develop into tradition during the early Mycenaean period (Late Helladic I-II) and continue through the end of the Late Bronze Age, although burials in simple graves never cease to co-occur (Lewartowski 1995).

In the past, the funerary data have frequently been related exclusively to sociopolitical processes, reflecting elite competition crucial in the development of social hierarchies at the onset of the Mycenaean era (e.g. Cavanagh & Mee 1998: 35, 56, 77–8; Voutsaki 1998). Current approaches, however, highlight the significance of a holistic understanding of funerary action as historically situated, embedded and relational, reflecting complex interactions between individuals, society, and the surrounding environment (Boyd 2002; 2016; Moutafi & Voutsaki 2016). Awareness of the complex nature of mortuary practices as rites of commemoration, often involving substantial emotional and corporeal investment (Chesson 2001; Meskell 2003; Smith 2007; Hamilakis 2010; Torres-Rouf et al. 2012), urges us to reflect on the relationship between habitation and mortuary landscape, and the performance of complex mortuary rituals.

The resumption of systematic excavations at Kirrha (Skorda & Zurbach 2009; 2010; 2011; Zurbach et al. 2015) complementing the existing body of data from the site (Dor et al. 1960; Petrakos 1973; Tsipopoulou 1980; Skorda 1979; 1989; 1992; 2006; 2010), has provided the opportunity to trace a wider range of mortuary practices and look at the interrelationship of burials and inhabited buildings more closely. Recent finds from Kirrha suggest infants and children were buried in Middle Helladic houses during their active period of use or immediately thereafter. They also illuminate the transformation of domestic to mortuary space in the form of cist graves built over or adjacent to Middle Helladic walls and the continuing use of burial areas until Late Helladic I-II. Although a regional character becomes apparent in certain aspects of grave e, certain traits involving diverse secondary rites connect Kirrha to other sites of the mainland. The multiple use of cist graves, dating mostly in the transitional Middle Helladic III/Late Helladic I phase and Late Helladic I-II, is known from a number of sites in mainland Greece (Blegen 1928; Valmin 1938; Dor et al. 1960; Blackburn 1971; Mylonas 1975; Dietz 1980; Taylour & Janko 2008: 121–45; Adrimi-Sismani 2010; Zavvou 2010; Moutafi & Voutsaki 2016; Voutsaki et al. in press). Secondary burials in the vicinity of cist graves, however, are less well-known (e.g. Papakonstantinou 1999; Tsiouka & Agnousiotes 2012; Moutafi & Voutsaki 2016).

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At Kirrha an integrated field methodology permits a clearer understanding of secondary contexts from a combined architectural, stratigraphical and anthropological perspective. Moreover, it casts light not only on the sequence of funerary actions, which were clearly more complex than the umbrella term 'secondary burial' would imply, but also on the temporal interval between initial interment, exhumation and reburial. The modest architecture and limited grave furnishings of the tombs contrast with the rich array of mortuary practices attested: if social disparities are not apparent using traditional criteria of wealth and prestige, what was the purpose of these complex handlings of human remains, who undertook them and to whom were they addressed? These questions have been raised previously in the context of the transformation of Middle Helladic settlements into mortuary areas in the Shaft Grave period, looking at the relatively short time span within which this phenomenon occurred in many parts of the Greek mainland, its causes and the ways in which it was legitimated (Maran 1995).

While the absolute date of certain burials remains incompletely understood, stratigraphic information in combination with bioarchaeological observations on their placement and condition allows the recognition of complex mortuary practices and their sequence. Intentionality in the construction of secondary depositions, one of the most difficult tasks in funerary archaeology (Duday 2006: 46–8; Andrews & Bello 2006: 17), is attested in several contexts described below. This allows us to reflect on the purpose of multiple relocations as part of a broad set of mortuary practices that may encompass more than one stage of funerary treatment (Weiss-Krejci 2005: 155–6).

Although funerary practices involving the disturbance, removal, and redeposition of human remains are more common from the transitional Middle Helladic III/Late Helladic I period onwards, an assessment of the intentionality and potentially ritualised meaning of 'secondary burial' (first discussed in this sense by Cavanagh 1978; Cavanagh & Mee 1998: 116) is not as straightforward (cf. Cavanagh et al., this volume). Recent advances in field anthropology propose a comprehensive methodology to determine the nature of secondary osseous deposits that includes an evaluation of bone representation based on skeletal preservation patterns, the recognition of anatomical articulations, and the contextual analysis of the bone assemblage in relation to the surrounding architecture and the natural environment (Duday 2006; Bello & Andrews 2006; Moutafi & Voutsaki 2016; Knüsel & Robb 2016). Observations need to be founded on carefully excavated skeletal assemblages that enable a more secure differentiation of accidental from intentional secondary depositions (Andrews & Bello 2006; Moutafi 2015b). Such a rare opportunity materialised during recent excavations at Kirrha through the use of field anthropology and heightened awareness concerning the excavation, curation and analysis of skeletal remains.

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The site

The prehistoric settlement of Kirrha occupies a low mound located on the north coast of the Corinthian gulf 2 km east of Itea, Phokis. The site, accommodating the harbour of Delphi in classical times, was discovered and first explored in the late 1930s (Dor et al. 1960: 13–24). The early excavations produced habitation remains spanning the Early Helladic-Late Helladic, with plentiful levels dating to the late Middle Helladic, on the mound in the vicinity of the modern cemetery church (Sector D; Dor et al. 1960). Following a lengthy break after World War II, rescue excavations at Kirrha were resumed in the 1960s to keep up with building activity in the growing modern town (Petrakos 1973; Tsipopoulou 1980; Skorda 1979; 1989; 1992; 2006). As a result of urban expansion in the southern part of the mound, this section of the prehistoric site came to be better known than the northern half, which is covered by olive groves. The prehistoric settlement occupied an area extending ca. 300 m east-west and 200 m north-south around the summit of the mound where the modern church stands today.

In 2008 systematic investigations were resumed once more, under the auspices of the French School at Athens and the 10th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities. Based on the availability of expropriated land, the new trenches were plotted next to previously explored areas: the Northeastern Sector, east of the modern cemetery, is located next to a Middle Helladic architectural complex with pottery kilns (Skorda 2010), while the Western Sector, located at the west edge of the mound, is characterised by deep and successive Middle Helladic strata (Skorda 2006). Except one adult burial, only infant and young child burials (newborns to three-year-olds) have been thus far found in the Northeastern Sector, adjacent to or built in the walls of the buildings, in cist graves, and in earth pits; grave goods are lacking. In this sector Middle Helladic II is the earliest phase encountered, occurring just below the contemporary surface of the mound. Given that infant burials were set within or adjacent to the floor level of Middle Helladic II structures, we can conclude that the former are either contemporary with the houses or postdate them only by a small amount of time.

The main bulk of funerary data originates from the Western Sector, where early Mycenaean graves were found to superimpose the latest habitation levels of the Middle Helladic III settlement. Two burial groups were identified in this sector. The first one consists of two infant graves: a small mudbrick-lined grave (L104) dug into a floor at the western edge of the trench, and a pithos burial (L475) dug into the ground outside of a house in the southeastern part of the trench. Graves and architectural remains belonging to this phase (D) were preliminarily dated to late Middle Helladic I or Middle Helladic II, and were sealed by a hard, homogeneous, almost sterile layer of yellow soil (ca. 0.15–0.20 m thick) that extended throughout the area and consisted of decayed mudbrick from collapsed house walls. This suggests that the burials were contemporary with the dwellings or, possibly but less likely, set into the settlement

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immediately after it was abandoned (i.e. date to an early phase of the Middle Helladic period). A number of simple pits cut into the surface of the aforementioned layer produced Early Mycenaean (Late Helladic I) sherds dating to phase C (as well the ensuing phase B, which was largely destroyed). Given that some of these sherds may have been intrusive, phases B-C are tentatively dated to the Middle Helladic III-Late Helladic I period.

The second group **[Fig. 1]** belongs to the uppermost stratum (phase A) and constitutes the majority of burials in the Western Sector. These include primary, single infant and child burials in cist (L101, L402) and pit graves (L466), commingled infant remains without clear architectural context (L105), secondary single adult burials in earth pits (L152, L456), secondary multiple burials in an earth pit (L401), and both atop and inside another cist grave (L402), successive primary with secondary burials (L150) and secondary burials (L459) in stone cist graves. It is clear that the construction of cist graves L150 and L459 disturbed preexisting residential walls. While L459 was built over one such structure, building the shaft for L150 required the removal of an underlying wall. Only four of these graves were furnished with grave goods, reflecting the scarcity of funerary furnishings in this period. All datable artefacts originate from secondary contexts. L151 contained a miniature vase of problematic date in association with commingled perinatal remains. L150, contained three successive burials, only one of which (consisting of the commingled remains of an adolescent female) was furnished with a small Late Helladic I globular jar. A single secondary burial in L456 was provided with two small Late Helladic I bowls, while the remains of at least four adults and three children in L401 were accompanied by a Late Helladic I-II jug.

It seems reasonable to conclude that this small cemetery dates to the early Late Helladic period, which is consistent with the stratigraphy of the whole area. It is noteworthy that phase A is roughly contemporary with a dense concentration of Late Helladic I graves in Sector D (Dor et al. 1960: 39–42). Apparently, in both areas of the mound graves were set during the Late Helladic I-II period within the ruins of the Middle Helladic III settlement. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that burials belonging to this phase are not strictly contemporaneous. First, some graves are built on top of others (e.g. L455 and L456). Secondly, many secondary depositions in previously occupied graves offer clear evidence of temporal succession (L402), while empty pits may have been used for primary interment (L406). Finally, evidence on body desiccation from two secondary interments (L402 and L152) frames the time in which body exhumation and reburial may have taken place.

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Fig. 1: Plan of the western sector of the excavations (after authors).

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Revisiting the dead at Kirrha

Cist graves

Past excavations at the site have demonstrated that cist graves were used for the performance of a variety of rites involving synchronous and successive interments and the formation of contexts with commingled remains that were assumed to have functioned as primary tombs, ossuaries and even cenotaphs (Dor et al. 1960: 54–64). Such uses have been reported for a number of sites in the transitional Middle Helladic III/Late Helladic I period (e.g. Blegen 1928; Valmin 1938; Mylonas 1975; Taylour & Janko 2008; Adrimi-Sismani 2010; Zavvou 2010), and are corroborated by recent anthropological observations (e.g. Moutafi & Voutsaki 2016; Voutsaki et al. in press). The meticulous excavation of two stone cist graves (L150 and L459) during the 2011 campaign provided the opportunity to substantiate multistage mortuary practices not adequately explained by functional interpretations related to the accommodation of a new interment. Moreover, the encounter in 2014 of the secondary burial of an infant within the primary grave of another (L200) confirmed that these rites were not restricted to the remains of adults. The contextual analysis of subcontexts within cist graves and secondary depositions in earth pits addresses difficulties in interpreting a context as primary, secondary or disturbed; determining the original location of interments found in secondary contexts; evaluating the condition in which remains were at the time of exhumation and reburial; and assessing the temporal distance between such activities.

L150 preserved three subcontexts related to the latest operations taking place in the grave. The uppermost context covering the entire upper layer **[Fig. 2]** contained a fully articulated skeleton of a late adolescent male (ca. 19 years old), in the flexed position and lying on his right side. The skeleton was generally well-preserved, with the most damage along the zone of contact of the right side of the skeleton (and the sides of the bones that were in contact due to posture) with the ground, known to be the most vulnerable to taphonomic alterations (Lyman 1994: 405). The most extreme effects of weathering were noted on the right pelvic bone and the right femur, parts of which had been completely eroded away. The lateral rotation with partial displacement of the left femur and the collapsed thoracic region, two of the most labile articulations in the skeleton (Duday & Guillon 2006: 127), suggest that decomposition took place in an open space, i.e. the body was not covered with soil immediately after the interment. Nevertheless, the maintenance in articulation of other labile areas such as the pelvic region was secured by the tight space of the grave, the presence of architecture and microstructures such as large pebbles fixing the bones in position, and the gradual infilling of the grave with earth.

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Fig. 2: Secondary burial L152 and cist grave L150 with the articulated skeleton on its upper layer (after authors).

A pebble floor and a layer of soil separated this in situ burial from the rearranged bones of two earlier internments below **[Fig. 3]**. Most of the east side of the middle layer contained the heavily commingled bones of a late adolescent female. Taphonomic lesions on parts of the skeleton's left side resemble the damage observed on the previously mentioned skeleton's side that was in contact with the ground during decomposition. The disarticulated bones were not accumulated, suggesting they were not pushed aside to accommodate a new interment. Instead, bones had been cleared at the west side of the tomb to accommodate a rectangular cist or *osteotheke* (ossuary, 0.50 × 0.30 m), the long side of which was parallel to the narrow side of the grave. The *osteotheke* was lined by four large stones, forming a third sub-context within the grave **[Fig. 4]**. The densely packed bones of a young adult male were found within it, the long bones positioned along the long axis of the *osteotheke*. The separate construction of the *osteotheke*, the somewhat lower stratigraphic position of this interment compared to the commingled remains of the young woman, the careful alignment of the bones, and the absence of mixture of bones in the two contexts based on sex and age-at-death characteristics clearly differentiate the two last contexts and point to separate events of secondary treatment in the grave. An unusual provision in this tomb is an adjustment made on the west cover slab and part of a levering system (namely a notch in the upper south corner of the slab, whereas a stone used as a fulcrum had been set outside the grave just in front of the

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notch **[Fig. 5]**), which betrays an expectation of multiple reopening, although it cannot be determined precisely when the levering system was established. The presence of a single articulated burial and two other rearranged burials in a secondary context suggest that the grave was reopened at least three times if we assume, as the almost complete inventory of the skeletons suggests, that the bodies were initially placed and decomposed in this grave. Nevertheless, as it emerged from the study of secondary depositions in earth pits described below (L152), the completion of the skeletal inventory alone does not suffice to make such assessments. At Kirrha, single secondary burials in earth pits as well, demonstrate remarkable skeletal completion, even though decomposition certainly did not occur in these loci.

The second cist grave (L459) is noteworthy for the occurrence of diverse secondary contexts and the absence of a primary interment. The upper layer was filled with the commingled remains of at least two adults of different sex and age. While disarticulated bones representing most anatomical areas were found throughout this layer, the presence of only a few articulated thoracic vertebrae and a concentration of long bones in the southeast part of the grave suggest bones had been pushed aside. It is tempting to interpret the articulated spinal elements as evidence of primary interment, but articulated ribs among secondarily deposited remains described below (L402) suggest otherwise. The few articulated skeletal remains may result from partially decomposed body parts at the time of reburial. Alternatively, the possibility of sedimentation of infiltrating soil may retain articulations together independent of the state of soft tissues at the time of reburial (Moutafi 2015a). Overall, the heavy fragmentation and erosion of bones in this layer indicate extensive weathering processes during the formation of the assemblage rather than just in situ weathering during decomposition. Taphonomic alterations on these bones differ significantly from those observed on the commingled remains from the middle layer of grave L150, instead resembling the crammed osteological material from L402 (see below).

The lower stratum of L459 rests on the floor of the grave and is separated from the upper one by means of a soil layer. This lower stratum contained the internment of a young adult female carefully arranged and occupying the centre of the tomb conspicuously **[Fig. 6]**. The reversed right pelvis with the sacrum, rib, vertebral and long bone fragments lay on the east side of the bone cluster. At a lower level and at the centre of the cluster lay the cranium, placed on its right side facing east and between the thigh bones. The latter were oriented opposite to each other with the smaller long bones underneath, indicating that the internment was fixed with earth at the time of reburial (or the thigh bones would have rotated over the smaller long bones). The surrounding area contained few bones, but sparse skeletal remains belonging to two adults were excavated near the flanks of the grave. It appears that the floor of the grave was cleaned from preexisting burials, with remains pushed aside and removed to accommodate the specially arranged female secondary burial.

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Fig. 3: Cist grave L150: the commingled remains of the 'middle layer' (left) and the *osteotheke* (right) (after authors).



Fig. 4: Cist grave L150: a closer view of the *osteotheke* (after authors).

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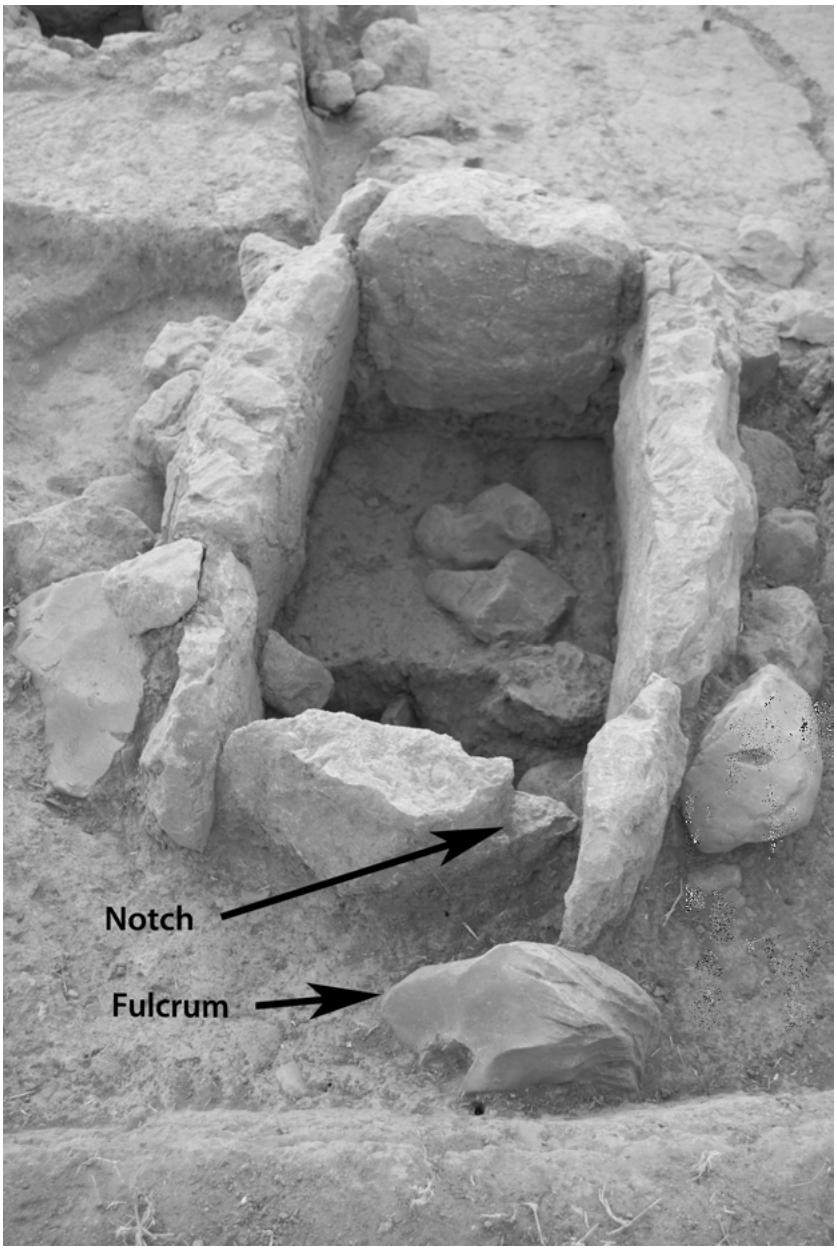


Fig. 5: Cist grave L150: a notch in the upper south corner of the western slab and a stone used as a fulcrum outside the grave in front of the notch (after authors).

In sum, several secondary burials were made in this tomb, but there is no evidence of primary interment. The absence of primary internments is commonly explained as the result of preparation for a new burial that never happened (e.g. Valmin 1938: 204;

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Zavvou 2010: 89). In this case, it seems more likely that the intricate rearrangement of human remains was part of complex, ongoing mortuary practices at the site of the grave. This impression is corroborated by comparable evidence from pit L224 (see below).



Fig. 6: A carefully placed secondary burial on the floor of cist grave L459 (after authors).

L402 is a small stone cist (0.50 × 0.30 m) that accommodated a young child (ca. 2–3 years old) **[Figs. 7–8]**. The skeleton was partially articulated, in the flexed position and lying on its left side, on top of a pebble floor. A thin layer of soil separated this interment from the commingled bones of at least three adults found crammed inside the cist grave, overflowing it. A small cranial fragment and a few other bones missing from the child burial were recovered amidst the commingled adult burials. The partial disturbance of the child burial and the clear separation of the two subcontexts by a layer of soil indicate a punctuated use of the grave separated in time. This is corroborated by the marked difference in preservation between the child's remains (both articulated and displaced), which were in excellent condition, and the heavily fragmented and weathered adult remains. A similar case of a multiple secondary burial (an ossuary of two-three individuals) deposited over the contracted skeleton of a child in a stone cist grave is also known from Malthi in the Peloponnese (Valmin 1938: 200, grave XXVI).

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L200, a larger than the previous stone cist grave (0.87 × 0.58 m), contained the primary and secondary burials of two infants: the skull and postcranial skeleton of one infant was piled on the east part of the cist along the feet of another infant flexed on the right side **[Fig. 9]**. The stratigraphic position of the former in relation to the articulated infant suggests that their placement took place simultaneously. The practice of placing the secondary burial of an infant together with the primary interment of another infant is also known from cist and built graves from Malthi (Valmin 1938, graves XXXVI, XL, XVIII) and one possible case from Ayios Vasilios (grave 24, Moutafi & Voutsaki 2016). In this site, grave furnishing suggested that the first interment that was constructed in the Middle Helladic was pushed to the side to accommodate a second interment of the same (Middle Helladic) or later (Late Helladic) period. Infant bones heaped in one side of the grave are also known from past excavations at Kirrha (Dor et al. 1960, grave 50), Eleusis (Mylonas 1975, grave Δπ4), and Agios Stefanos (Taylour & Janko 2008: 125, grave 12).



Fig. 7: The cist grave of a child (L402) (after authors).

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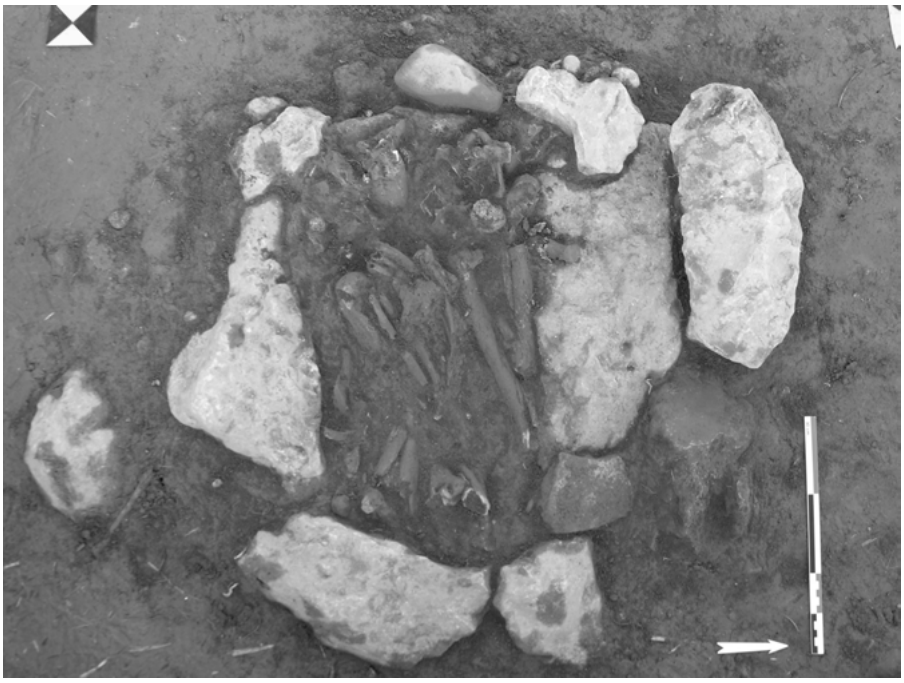


Fig. 8: A multiple secondary burial over the grave of the child in L402, with the ribs in articulation circled (after authors).



Fig. 9: A primary (center and right) and a secondary (upper left) infant burial in cist grave L200 (after authors).

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Earth pits

Recent excavations at Kirrha demonstrated that simple earth pits, besides being used for adult (L511, **[Fig. 1]**; Dor et al. 1960: 45) and infant primary interments (L238, L466 **[Fig. 1]**), were also used to accommodate single and multiple secondary burials.

A small oval pit (L152, 0.60 × 0.40 m), found in close vicinity to cist L150 **[Fig. 2]**, contained the densely packed bones of a middle-aged man. Another one nearby (L456) contained the secondary burial of an adult along with two small Late Helladic I bowls **[Fig. 1]**. More such pits encountered in 2014 (e.g. L504 and L201B **[Fig. 1]**) suggest that this practice was not rare at Kirrha. Although no reference to secondary burials in pits was made in past excavations at the site, a pit with a few bones in disorder (Dor et al. 1960, grave 26), and another located at the exterior of a stone cist of an infant (Dor et al. 1960, grave 43) 'tout contre les dalles de couverture' with the bones of an adult 'reduced to dust' are noteworthy (Dor et al. 1960: 122). The reburial of bones and grave goods in pits adjacent to cist graves is known from Middle Helladic Thessaly (Papakonstantinou 1999) and southern Greece (Mylonas 1975). It is conceivable that L150 was the original location of the secondary burial in L152, an assumption also supported by its remarkable skeletal completion, but the issue remains open. Excessive sedimentation on the latter material, absent in neighbouring contexts, suggests that the primary burial may have been made in a different, still unidentified environment.

Multiple secondary burials in pits of various sizes and shapes are also known from the Western Sector. The commingled remains of at least four adults of both sexes and different ages, two children, and an infant, along with an intact Late Helladic I-II jug, were found in the sizeable pit L401, which was dug against an earlier wall, probably dating to Middle Helladic I-II **[Fig. 10]**. Although the bones were placed in the pit in disarray their preservation was relatively good, unlike the material in L402 (see above), pointing to the occurrence of different formation process between the two assemblages. Beneath L401 had been dug a secondary burial in a pit (L224) with the orderly arranged remains of an adult furnished with steatite pearls **[Fig. 11]**. The nearly rectangular configuration of the assemblage resembles the female burial on the floor of L459 where the skull laid on its side between long bones and other skeletal elements. A comparable complex of graves placed on top of each other is also known from Lerna where a shaft with the secondary burial of seven individuals (two young adults, two adolescents, a three-year-old and an infant) was constructed above a pit with five articulated skeletons, four adults and a new born child (Blackburn 1971, graves 23 and 22, respectively).

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Fig. 10: Pit L401 with several adult and subadult remains and two Late Helladic I bowls (after authors).



Fig. 11: Secondary burial L224 below pit L401 (after authors).

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Time between first interment and reburial

Secondary interments L402 and L152 offer rare insights on time elapsed between primary and secondary burial activities. Several adult ribs among the adult bones in L402 were anatomically articulated in the midst of the commingled remains **[Fig. 8]**. Given that this area comprises one of the most labile articulations of the thorax (Duday & Guillon 2006: 129) it seems that at least this segment of one body had not been fully decomposed when exhumation and reburial took place. A similar situation was noted in the single secondary burial of L152, where a large part of the spine was found articulated among the remaining, tightly packed remains of a middle-aged man **[Fig. 12]**.

Estimating time since death based on the state of body decomposition is one of the most complex undertakings in forensic anthropology as it depends on a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as the circumstances of burial (e.g. open-air, earth-covered or placed in a container), its depth and exposure to organisms accelerating decomposition, temperature and moisture fluctuations, the amount of fat available on the body at death, and the presence of disease (Ferreira & Cuhna 2013). Although a buried corpse may start decomposing only weeks after burial in a temperate environment (Duday & Guillon 2006: 127), a number of possible factors affecting decomposition speed compels us to postulate a period of few months to a few years elapsed between the first interment and the secondary deposition (Galloway 1997; Bass 1997). The absence of other articulated remains in L402 may be due to the transportation of body parts and skeletal segments from burials in varying states of decomposition.

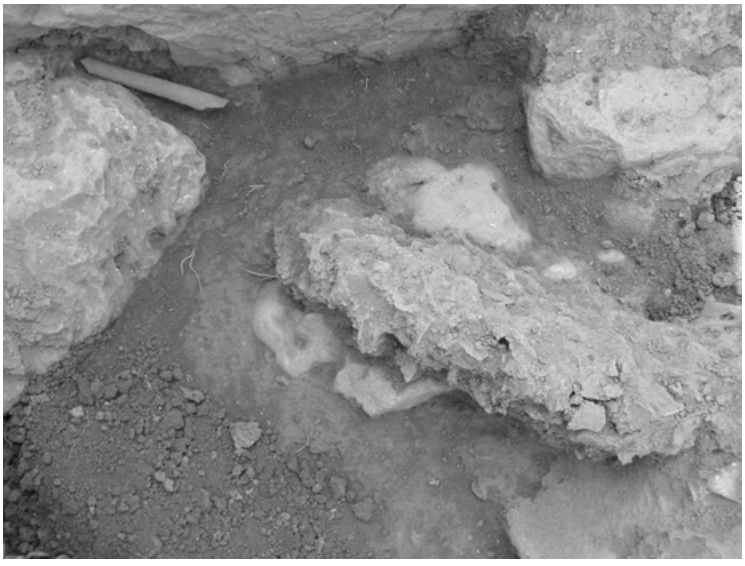


Fig. 12: Spine in articulation in secondary burial L152 (after authors).

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Age-at-death and commemoration

A rather interesting picture emerges in regards to the treatment at death of different age groups at Kirrha. The burials of infants and young children present a range of diversity that is perhaps broader than that of adults: they are buried not only in different containers and modes of burial but appear to claim their own area. The East Sector that was potentially still active at the time of burials seems thus far to be almost exclusively used for the burial of infants and young children. This spatial distinction is also known from Thebes, where 'a distinct concentration of single burials of infants/children' was noted in the west sector of the East Cemetery (Aravantinos & Psaraki 2010: 381). The Western Sector at Kirrha on the other hand, where early infant graves were also present (L104, L238, L475), is later occupied by the graves of adults in addition to children.

At Kirrha the burials of infants and young children appear continuously in the habitation area in both phases of its use. The graves of adults, however, seem to enter the habitation area after the abandonment of the buildings and its transformation to a mortuary area. Funerary practices in the transitional Middle Helladic III/Late Helladic I period, while largely similar between adults and juveniles in terms of grave type (pits and cists), mode of burial (primary and secondary), and body placement (mostly flexed on either side, with a predilection for the left, cf. Dor et al. 1960: 53; Ruppenstein 2010: 436), are clearly more complex for adults in terms of bone relocations. Nevertheless, the remains of subadults, albeit not as commonly as those of adults, are also rearranged in secondary contexts, either as bones heaped to the side of a cist (L200), or in pits accommodating several individuals (L401). Moreover, both the graves of children can function as a 'pole of attraction' for the secondary interment of adults (L402) and the graves of adults can comprise a 'point of reference' for infant burials. The burial of an infant in a pit (L466) was located outside cist grave L459 **[Fig. 1]**, a practice that is also known from other sites such as Laconia and Ayios Vassileios (Zavvou 2010: 92, with references; Voutsaki et al. in press; Cavanagh et al., this volume).

The concept of displacement, therefore, seems to describe the remains of adults more than those of juveniles, although the latter can also form part of secondary practices. These differentiations in the use of space for burial may help interpret differences between 'intra-' and 'extramural' cemeteries (Voutsaki 2004) that may actually concern burial in active or non-active areas, rather than concepts of exclusion of young ages in the mortuary practice. The persistence of subadult inclusion at Kirrha throughout the Early Mycenaean period, with their remains placed in clear association, or even collectively, with those of adults, is in contrast with the pattern of exclusion and age segregation suggested in contemporaneous 'extramural' Early Mycenaean cemeteries of shaft graves, tholoi, and chamber tombs in the Peloponnese, particularly in the Argolid and Messenia (Cavanagh & Mee 1998, 129; Gallou 2004: 366; Voutsaki 2004, with a list of examples).

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Conclusions

In this paper the relationship of domestic and funerary space at Kirrha was assessed through interdisciplinary study and field anthropology. Skeletal remains in the graves and surrounding areas were given equal weight rather than treated selectively, casting light on multifaceted ritual processes as well as the biocultural identity of the deceased and the handling of their remains. Using osteological and contextual evidence it was demonstrated that the construction of secondary burial niches and the arrangement of the bones (position, alignment) were intentional. Different trajectories and variety of practices in the formation of secondary deposits were documented. Taphonomic characteristics, such as weathering patterns, breakage and skeletal completeness, were found to differ not only between primary and secondary depositions but also among secondary contexts and even within the same grave. The circumstances of partially articulated remains have suggested that time elapsed between initial interment and secondary treatment was sometimes shorter than anticipated, implying perhaps that the burials in question were removed in haste to make space for new ones or a need to perform rituals 'on time'.

Performance of mortuary rites within cist graves and many forms of secondary burial outside cist graves hitherto unattested at the site were largely substantiated by recent finds at Kirrha. What kind of effect would continual interaction with lifeless remains, parts of decomposed bodies, and the recently deceased, have had on tomb visitors and ritual participants? The levering system found on L150 certainly suggests awareness, perhaps already since the tomb's construction, of the need to repeatedly reopen the grave. The multiple use of this tomb for at least one primary and two secondary burials, including the 'orderly' secondary internment in the *osteotheke*, and the placement of an adolescent literally over the (tended and jumbled) remains of his ancestors (L150) make ongoing ritual performance at the grave likely. The later placement of a secondary burial (L152) in direct vicinity to it reinforces the impression that the cist remained visible in later times. In a similar vein, the unusually arranged secondary burial of a young woman in the lower layer of L459, the many commingled and heavily weathered adult remains in the upper layer of the same tomb, and the burial of an infant outside its west wall suggest elaborate, multiple and selective ritual revisitations of the dead. In addition, multiple secondary depositions of adult remains over the almost intact cist grave of a child (L402) and of mixed adult and juvenile remains (L401) over the orderly secondary burial of an adult (L224) speak for practices with a strong emotional appeal. Why were some secondary burials commingled while others were reburied in orderly fashion in the same grave or pit?

It is clear that burial practices at Kirrha extended well beyond the simple burial of the body. A role was attributed to the osseous remains that cannot be contained in functionalist interpretations. Human bones, even before the complete decay of soft tissues, are touched, sensed and transported. Some of the remains associated with secondary burials L402 and L152 may have been malodorous even. It seems legitimate

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to ask who may have performed the rituals, if they were part of the kin or specialists in such practices. A form of detachment is hard to envision given the extent of the secondary practices and the inclusion in these of the remains of infants too. The emotions surrounding loss and death and the abandonment of a habitation area articulating conditions that can no longer return, are stirred in every new visit to the transformed habitation-mortuary area. A mnemoscape is formed, where memory is stimulated and negotiated continually. The abandoned buildings are transformed through practices that recall the same repetitive action: recurrence to the habitation and mortuary grounds, rearrangement, redefinition. Propelled by the common 'attribute' of both habitation and mortuary remains as dead, now passive partakers of the society that cares for them, we may ask whether the reenlivening of both through this iterative interaction, aimed at awakening or even constructing the memory of a presence that no longer exists. Something has changed in the world irreversibly and an attempt is made to adhere to the past, no matter how recent this may be. The exhumations and transportations of the dead remains, document the still articulated labile joints in L152 and L402, may have taken place relatively soon after the initial interment. From these rearrangements, infant remains are not exempted. Either as part of collective or single secondary graves, they too are relocated to a new mortuary environment such as an ossuary (L401), or are piled within the grave as a secondary burial in direct vicinity to a preexisting or newly deceased (L200). A sense of continuity and an unbroken unity appear to be highlighted with these practices taking place perhaps within a rapidly changing world.

Although secondary graves of infants are known from a number of sites of the Greek mainland, grave L200 comprises one of the clearest examples of a secondary burial of an infant in a cist used for the first interment of another. A connection with the ancestral remains, including those of infants, is built at the moment of death. It is the past and the present that come together in relations of continuity rather than a specific age, sex, or socioeconomic group. The emphatic detection of emerging elites in the multifaceted mortuary rites of the transitional Middle Helladic III/Late Helladic I period (Voutsaki 1998) necessitates explanations that may only minimally concern mortuary diversity at Kirrha where single graves prevail. So does the individuality of the remains of the deceased. Even in cists that were used repetitively (L150 and L459) individuality is largely maintained. Mingling, nevertheless, also exists and may also include children (L401; Blackburn 1971, graves 23, 36, 69, 83; Taylour & Janko 2008: 142–3); it may occasionally concern only adults placed over a child's grave (L402; Valmin 1938, grave XXXVI); or mixed adult and juvenile remains (L401; Blackburn 1971, grave 23) dug over a secondary (L224) or a primary (Blackburn 1971, grave 22) pit.

Could this continual recurrence to the past express an intention to seek protection in turbulent times, or meaning in times that were rapidly changing? People often seek reference to the past when they feel insecure and search for roots and points of reference to the 'familiar' and the 'secure'. We do not know yet if in this period

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socioeconomic hierarchies expressed also in health and dietary disparities, were in the process or were already developed, as becomes clear later in the Late Helladic III (e.g. Iezzi 2009; Schepartz et al. 2009; Papathanasiou et al. 2012). Arguably, the complexity of burial practices characterising Mycenaean collective tombs was already present in these early times and simpler graves. At the same time, the funerary record at Kirrha suggests that the individuality of secondary interments tended to be preserved, a phenomenon sometimes observed in the transitional period (e.g. examples from the Shaft Graves of Mycenae, Boyd 2015: 434–8). This may indicate tension between individual and collective identities on one hand, and tradition and innovation on the other (cf. Boyd 2002; 2016; Voutsaki 2010; Moutafi & Voutsaki 2016). It seems likely that transformations taking place at the political and social domains affected reciprocally the way with which the past was viewed and funerary practices materialised. The creation of collective identity through reference to relations of lineage or descent with a real or constructed past comprises a powerful mechanism of social reproduction, as recently discussed for the collective funerary practices that were introduced in the Early Mycenaean period (Boyd 2002; 2015, 2016; Voutsaki 2010).

The return to abandoned buildings and existing graves, the proximity of primary and secondary burials, and the intimacy involved in handling the dead remains convey a sense of familiarity with the ancestral remains and a connection with the ancestral grounds. The practice of burial in abandoned habitation areas is a broad phenomenon in the Greek mainland and many of the funerary rites at Kirrha have parallels with other sites. Through these, a connection seems to be sought with a past, perhaps impersonal, that is shared in a broader geographic area. The construction of lineage, therefore, in the communal rather than the family sense seems to better describe the practices of recurrence to the habitation and mortuary milieu. If power games and games of prestige were played out too, these did not leave their mark on the funerary setting. Instead, a sense of unity with a past reality and a common perception of the relation with death and the dead in a large geographical region become apparent. We may never come to know the range of emotions that were negotiated with every new visit to the mortuary landscape and the notion of memory that was constructed and deconstructed with each new arrangement of the deceased remains. What we do seem to have in hand, however, is a glimpse of a mortuary landscape where identity, not in the narrow limits of the individual but in the broader frame of a community, was perceived in relation to the past and its negotiation.

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