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BRINGING IN THE DEAD: BURIALS AND THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON KYTHERA IN THE SECOND PALACE PERIOD

Summary. *This article analyses the mortuary data of the 'Second Palace' period (c. 1700–1450 BC) on the Aegean island of Kythera. It proposes that the chamber tombs which were first introduced to the island in this period can offer potential insights into aspects of local-level social relations, especially at the central site of Kastri. This approach complements the broader cultural perspective that has usually been taken regarding these tombs, which have been viewed as indicators of Cretan cultural influence and, indeed, colonization. It is proposed that a strong horizontal in-group solidarity was being expressed by the tomb-using group at Kastri through spatial and diachronic uniformity in burial practices, and that this uniformity should be viewed at least partially as a response to local-level social agendas. The hypothesis is then explored that status identities were also being asserted in the burial sphere by at least some members of this group, through tomb location, the resources devoted to mortuary rituals and, perhaps, emphasis on lineage.*

INTRODUCTION

This article considers the burial practices of a Bronze Age island community in the Aegean, exploring various types of social statements encoded in the mortuary remains. The study focuses on and around Kastri, the major settlement of the island of Kythera in the 'Second Palace' period (so termed after the palace-centred bureaucracies of neighbouring Crete, and corresponding to *c*. 1700–1450 BC (in ceramic terminology, Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan I)). Any understanding of social dynamics on Kythera must incorporate several scales of analysis, from the pan-Aegean to the individual settlement site, but particular emphasis is placed here on the latter, to balance past consideration of the Kastri tombs primarily in terms of long-distance cultural contacts. To provide the context for this study, two brief introductory sections are required. The first concerns our current picture of mortuary practices across the Aegean (and particularly the southern Aegean islands); the second considers several spatial scales of analysis that are relevant to this case study. In the subsequent discussion of the Kytheran tombs, it is then argued that the mortuary evidence provides insights not only into long-distance trade and, potentially, migration networks, but also into group solidarities and status relations within the island itself.

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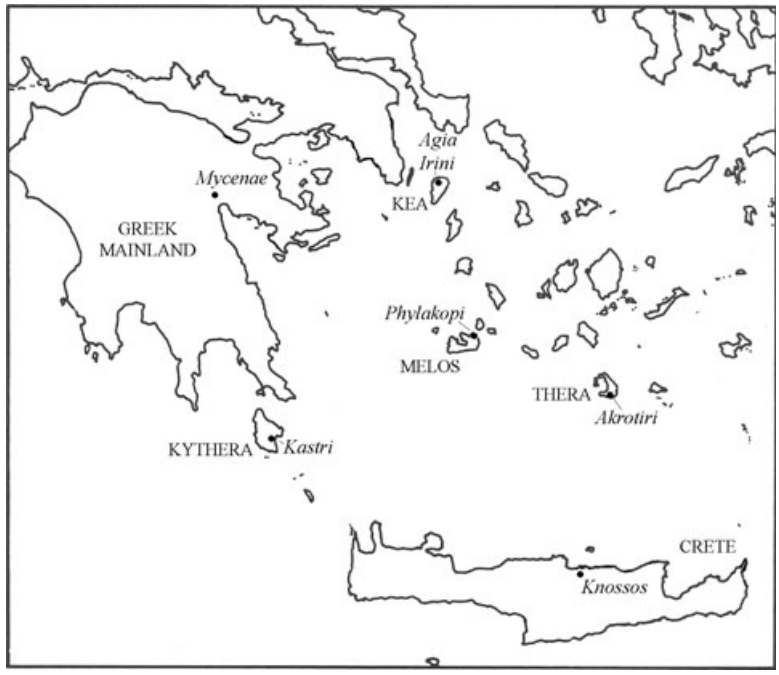

Figure 1
Map of the Aegean, with principal sites mentioned in the text.

The visible dead in the southern Aegean

The Aegean world of the Second Palace period (see Fig. 1) offers a markedly uneven spectrum of burial evidence to the archaeologist. On the Greek mainland (where this era is usually referred to as the 'Shaft Grave' period), graves comprise a substantial proportion of our overall archaeological data. In particular, they provide a crucial resource for investigating the development of more complex vertical hierarchies of power, as it is widely accepted that at this time burial practices played an active ideological role in processes of social stratification at various centres, particularly conspicuously at Mycenae (e.g. Dickinson 1977, 39–58; Mee and Cavanagh 1984; Graziadio 1991; Voutsaki 1993; 1995; 1998).

This abundance of evidence contrasts sharply with the picture on the Aegean islands. Crete in particular is conventionally considered to have yielded puzzlingly little mortuary material (e.g. Warren 1975, 98; Dickinson 1994, 219–20; Rehak and Younger 2001, 402–3; Fitton 2002, 145–6), prompting speculation regarding the methods used to dispose of the island's 'invisible' dead (a picture that would change dramatically from the later fifteenth century BC – see Preston 2004). The vast majority of the population does indeed appear to be difficult to trace archaeologically in death; for the Late Minoan I phase, we have around 30 mortuary sites with which to account for the tens of thousands of inhabitants represented by the dense settlement evidence accumulated through surveys, excavations and chance finds (Preston 2001, 74–151). I suspect it is the lack of ostentatious, elite graves that is actually lamented by many who observe a burial hiatus (that is, the absence of Cretan equivalents of the stunningly ostentatious

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Mycenaean Shaft Graves), and, indeed, there are hints that alternative practices to primary inhumation in tombs were used by at least some of the elite groups (see particularly the Archanes Phourni cemetery – Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1997, 220–1, 223–9). Yet at and around Knossos, the largest palatial centre on Crete, certain elements of the population appear to have taken greater interest in primary inhumation in tombs (the relevance of which for Kythera will be shown below). Moreover, there is evidence that tomb burial was being used here at least partially as a forum for status display, ranging from more peripheral, lower-level 'elites', as has been proposed for certain individuals in the harbour-town chamber tombs (Dimopoulou 1999), to those more closely associated with the palace, as could be argued for the cemeteries at Mavro Spelio (see Forsdyke 1927; Alberti 2001) and the Temple Tomb area (Evans 1935, 964–1018 for the Temple Tomb, if this was indeed used for primary inhumation; Hood and Smyth 1981, 57–8 nos. 307–8, 323). The tomb types concerned vary markedly – predominantly chamber tombs (of varying designs), but also including a round tomb, pithos burials, a monumental structure and a possible shaft grave.

Contemporary burial evidence on the smaller islands is scarce, as on much of Crete, though not entirely absent, especially if we focus on the islands with known central sites. The slightly earlier (Middle Bronze II) warrior grave at Kolonna on Aegina (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997) is usually cited within discussions of the emergence of elites on the adjacent mainland, the island being implicitly co-opted as an extension of the latter. Phylakopi on Melos has so far produced no securely datable Second Palace period burials (though questions hang over some tombs emptied in the nineteenth century – Overbeck and Overbeck 1979, 114–19). At Agia Irini on Kea, three intramural and six extramural tombs are attributed to this period – a small dataset, but one with the advantage that it can be compared with earlier mortuary practices at the site, as well as with contemporary evidence from the adjacent excavated settlement (Overbeck 1984; 1986). On Thera, no tombs of this period have so far been reported from the vicinity of the major centre of Akrotiri. However, tombs dated to the late third or early second millennium are known from the central region of the island, at Agios Ioannis Eleemon (Doumas 1983, 28; Marthari 1987, 369–70; 2001, 109–111, 120), and possible Late Bronze I graves have been reported at Cape Koloumvos and Mesavouno (Lenormant 1866, 258; Barber 1981, 20). The future recovery of tombs associated with Akrotiri is a strong possibility, and would be an exciting prospect given the detailed comparanda they would provide with the exceptionally well-preserved settlement, sealed below a volcanic destruction horizon. At present, Kastri on Kythera provides the largest dataset of mortuary material: at least 23 extramural chamber tombs and an intramural cist grave are so far known from the central site, as well as several further tombs in its hinterland.

Scales of analysis

What sorts of questions would we ask of this material? The principal aspect of the Kastri tombs that the archaeological literature has so far explored concerns the cultural affiliations of their users. Coldstream and Huxley (1972, 220; 1984, 108–9; Coldstream 1978, 389–401) first proposed that the chamber tombs at Kastri were of Cretan inspiration; their introduction was equated with the presence of Cretan colonists, an idea that has not been strongly challenged (see, for example, Warren 1973, 322; Branigan 1981, 32; Hägg 1984, 120; Hood 1984, 34–5). A macro-level, Aegean-wide perspective, such as this interpretation of the Kastri tombs involves, has long been recognized as crucial for the study of the smaller islands generally in the Second

Palace period. This phase saw a dramatic escalation in the intensity of regional exchange, rendering this as much a period of 'international spirit' as had been the Early Bronze II phase a millennium before (Renfrew 1972, 34, 451). Particularly noted in the literature of the past three decades are Cretan economic concerns and cultural practices that had considerable impact upon Crete's insular neighbours, as well as upon areas of the Greek mainland and Anatolian littoral. Within the islands, 'Minoanizing' influences – that is, importations of Cretan products and local imitations of Cretan artefacts, styles and cultural practices – are particularly prominent at Kastri and the other, aforementioned, centres of Akrotiri, Phylakopi and Agia Irini. Understanding the relationships between Crete and these centres has been a particular focus of Aegean scholarship, in what has come to be termed (for better or for worse) the 'Minoan Thalassocracy' debate (for a detailed analysis of this corpus of literature, see Broodbank 2004). Interest has centred partly on identifying the economic motivations and trade mechanisms through which Cretan artefacts and ideas filtered outwards, as well as the complex interactions between the islands themselves, and their mainland neighbours. It has also dwelt upon questions of potential Cretan political control of the island centres as trading bases, and/or of colonization movements to these centres from Crete. At Kastri, the ceramics particularly show that strongly Minoanizing features were first introduced at the site in the later third millennium (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 275–7; Kiriatzi 2003; Broodbank 2004, 75–6). Cretan links were retained through the early Middle Bronze Age, before a renewed escalation in the Second Palace period, as Kastri became a major trading centre in the southern Aegean, probably as a link between Crete and the Peloponnese (Sakellarakis 1996, 90–1, 98; Banou 2003). Cretan ceramic shapes were now ubiquitous at Kastri, mainly as local imitations (Broodbank and Kiriatzi forthcoming). This period also saw dramatic population and settlement growth, as Kastri expanded and the surrounding landscape was infilled with numerous small-scale settlements (Bevan 2002); the rapidity and extent of the population expansion on Kythera appears to have been such that immigration episodes from beyond the island may be required, at least in part, to account for it (see discussion by Broodbank 2004, 77–80).

The importance of island-specific (as opposed to more generalizing) perspectives on Minoanization is also clearly apparent, however, as this was not a uniform phenomenon across the Aegean world. Moreover, there is increasing recognition that the motivations of the island populations were critical to the acceptance of external ideas (Cretan economic or political dominance, and especially cultural 'superiority', are insufficient as explanatory factors, as emphasized in Davis' landmark study of Agia Irini (1984). The latter observation not only opens up a range of possibilities for exploring island-based agency in instigating and regulating external interactions. It also highlights the need to consider social agendas and relations that were internally structured and focused within the islands, alongside longer-distance networks of interaction. Here we should acknowledge Broodbank's observation that insular landmasses are not necessarily perceived as self-contained social or cultural units by their inhabitants, and are therefore not always the most appropriate analytical level at which to explore past societies (Broodbank 2000, especially 18–35). However, Broodbank equally suggests that in the Aegean specifically, site nucleation during the second millennium may have made individual islands more coherent as social units (2000, 326). Either way, considering social relations within the islands provides a useful foil to externalist (and particularly Creto-centric) perspectives on the smaller islands. This is especially the case if one considers the typical scale of everyday interactions: for most inhabitants of the islands' centres, their settlement and its immediate land and offshore hinterland comprised their routine environment; Crete lay well outside this arena

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even for the closest of these centres: Kastri is over 80 km, and Akrotiri over 100 km, from the nearest points on Crete.

Survey has dramatically enhanced our understanding of the islandscapes in which the principal centres were located, shedding important light on their diverse site hierarchies (Davis and Cherry 1990; Bevan 2002). At an even finer-grained level, excavations at the centres themselves have permitted us to explore aspects of social relations at these individual sites. Studies have included such themes as the organization of production and exchange (e.g. Berg 2004 for Agia Irini and Phylakopi; Schofield 1990 for Agia Irini and Phylakopi), ideological manipulation of cultural associations (e.g. Whitelaw 2005 for Phylakopi), and continuations of indigenous cultural practices alongside Minoanizing innovations (e.g. Marthari 1987, Immerwahr 1990 and Papagiannopoulou 1990 for Akrotiri), as well as broader considerations of interactions between postulated co-existing immigrant and indigenous communities (e.g. Davis 1979; Schofield 1983; Wiener 1984).

Such settlement-based studies of social relations are not yet possible at Kastri, as less than 500 sq m have so far been excavated of the core inhabited area which, according to preliminary survey results, covered at least 6–7 ha in the Second Palace period (Broodbank 2004, 77). Conversely, though, the funerary remains from Kastri provide an alternative potential route into exploring social identities that is not currently permitted for any of the other smaller-island centres, due to the comparative paucity of their mortuary data. There are limitations to the Kytheran burial evidence, as outlined in the following section, but a case can be made that tomb use here did function as a medium for social dialogues at intra-island levels as well as with the broader Aegean world.

THE KYTHERAN BURIAL EVIDENCE

The following overview of the mortuary evidence is based on both excavated material (particularly the exemplary publication of a number of tombs investigated in 1963–4 (Coldstream and Huxley 1972)) and the more recent survey data produced by the Kythera Island Project (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/kip). The Second Palace period chronology subdivides into four ceramic phases: Middle Minoan (MM) IIIA, MM IIIB, Late Minoan (LM) IA and LM IB.

Kastri

At the core site of Kastri itself (see Fig. 2), the only known intramural burial is a cist grave, dated to LM IB on the basis of stratigraphy, and presumably of an infant (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 53). At least 14 extramural multi-chambered tombs have also been partially or entirely excavated, all producing ceramics datable within the MM IIIA–LM IB period (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 220–58 for Tombs A–H and J–K in the Kastraki and Vothonas Groups; also Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1961, 152–6 for Tomb D in the Kastraki Group; Bevan *et al*. 2002 for two or three tombs in the Tholos Group; two further tombs in the Vothonas area are unpublished). A further nine certain and three probable multi-chambered tombs were documented, at several locations, in the recent survey (three in Vothonas Group 2 are labelled as Tombs L–N for the purposes of this article, following Coldstream and Huxley's sequence). Overall, the tombs currently occur both in cemetery groups and individually, and pending further

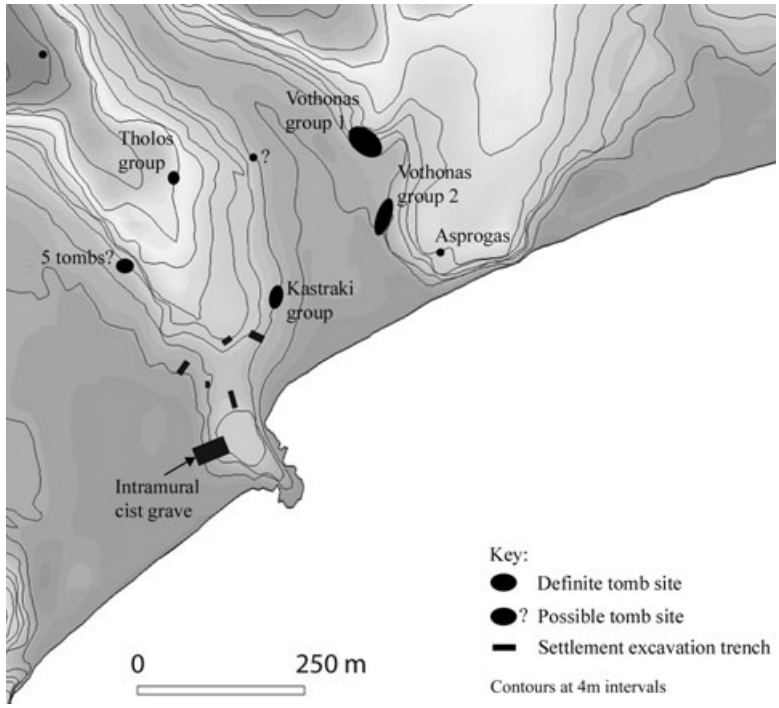

Figure 2
Locations of Second Palace period tombs at the site of Kastri. Vothonas Group 1 comprises Tombs B, E–H; Vothonas Group 2 comprises Tombs K–N; the Kastraki group comprises Tombs A, C–D, J; the Tholos group comprises the two or three tombs represented by Features 5, 9, 21, 25 and 27.

excavations at Kastri, it is unclear how accurately they reflect the original tomb groupings and numbers, but surface observations at most of the known tomb sites do suggest that we are seeing only parts of larger cemetery clusters. The chamber tombs received multiple burials: Tombs D and J produced the highest number (each with at least five individuals), but they are only partially preserved, and they (and other tombs) almost certainly held more originally. The inclusion of children (in Tombs C and J) suggests that we may be dealing with kin groups, although the size of the familial units in each tomb is unclear.

There are certain limitations to these data at Kastri, largely as a result of later disturbances through natural and human causes (see Table 1). We have a good understanding of tomb architecture and the typical ceramic artefacts being deposited. All the tombs so far investigated, however, have either been disturbed to some extent or have been only partially excavated. No intact assemblages associated with individual burials have been recovered, and we have limited information relating to the demography of the burial population (that is, total numbers of burials per tomb, and age and sex profiles) and spatial distributions/sequences of burials within the tombs. Nevertheless, although certain identities within the burying population (e.g. according to gender or age) cannot currently be investigated in any depth due to the lack of required data, larger-scale group identities can.

TABLE 1
Presevation factors in the excavated Kastri chamber tombs

Tomb (and Tomb Group)	Extent of structural preservation	Later re-use
A (Kastraki Group)	Almost intact; 19th century destruction of part of 1 chamber	
B (Vothonas Group 1)	Intact	Classical and Byzantine pottery
C (Kastraki Group)	1 chamber partly preserved (remainder destroyed by 20th century bulldozer); rest of tomb unexcavated	
D (Kastraki Group)	2 chambers and part of a 3rd preserved; 20th century bulldozer removed remainder of tomb	
E (Vothonas Group 1)	Intact	Roman re-use for burial, imperial period
F (Vothonas Group 1)	1 chamber preserved; rest of tomb probably removed by erosion	Preserved chamber plundered and empty
G (Vothonas Group 1)	1 chamber preserved; rest of tomb probably removed by erosion	Preserved chamber contained Late Roman tile
H (Vothonas Group 1)	Intact though architecturally modified in Roman period	Roman re-use for burial (1–6th C AD?); also 12th C AD pottery
J (Kastraki Group)	At least 3 chambers preserved; not completely excavated. Disturbed by 20th century bulldozer	Contained LB III pottery
K (Vothonas Group 2)	Uncertain; noted in a 20th century well shaft	
Tholos tomb(s) (Tholos Group)	Almost entirely destroyed by erosion; partial floors of 6 chambers preserved	

Beyond Kastri

The recent survey of the Kastri hinterland and part of the island's central and southern interior recorded multi-chambered tombs associated with Sites 003, 061, 070 and 083 (Fig. 3; see also Papatsaroucha 2000, 12); further, irregularly shaped chamber tombs at Lioni in southern Kythera (Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1961, 149–50, fig. 17b; Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 263–5), and Kampi Karavas in the north (Tsaravopoulos 1997, 106; Papatsaroucha 2000, 11 and 13), produced Second Palace period material. The multi-chambered tombs within the survey area were found empty but those at Sites 003 and 083, at least, are nevertheless almost certainly Second Palace period in date, because of their close architectural similarities with the Kastri tombs (cf. Figs. 4, 5 and 6). They are surely not the only examples of Second Palace period tombs to have existed beyond Kastri, however, and two explanations for the low recovery rate of definite examples could be suggested.

First, standard survey techniques (here, walkers spaced at 15 m – see Broodbank 1999, 194–7) with their exigencies of time are generally less suited to the recovery of tombs than of settlement sites, given the small size of the surface signature that tomb assemblages leave (unless in a large, densely clustered cemetery) and the ephemeral nature of human remains once exposed on the surface. Indeed, 94 per cent of the tombs (of all periods) recorded during the survey were found through (in descending order of frequency): strategic archaeological reconnaissance for tombs (largely near already identified sites, which were usually settlements), information from local inhabitants, accidental discovery during modern construction activities, and the collection

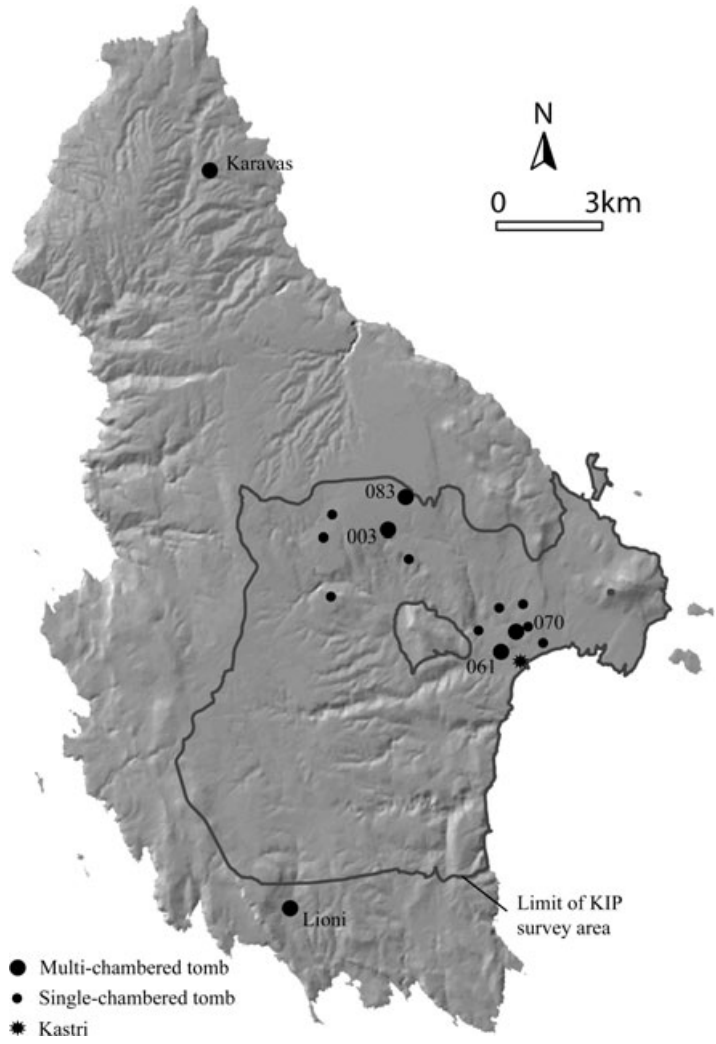

Figure 3
Tomb locations in the Kastri hinterland (with the sites of multi-chambered tombs labelled).

(through gridding) of identified sites after tract-walking. Only 6 per cent of the tombs were discovered during tract-walking itself. A further implication of the high proportion of recovery through reconnaissance and gridded collection (which applies to Kastri as much as to the hinterland) is that the mortuary landscape thereby reconstructed will have a bias towards the immediate vicinity of known settlements, which may be somewhat skewed. Overall, the results of this project highlighted the need to develop alternative (or supplementary) strategies for exploring the mortuary landscape that complement the settlement-oriented strengths of the tract-walking system.

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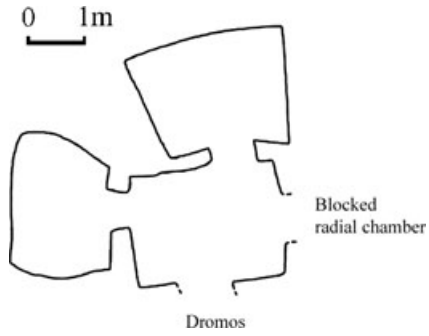

Figure 4
Plan of the multi-chambered tomb at site 083.

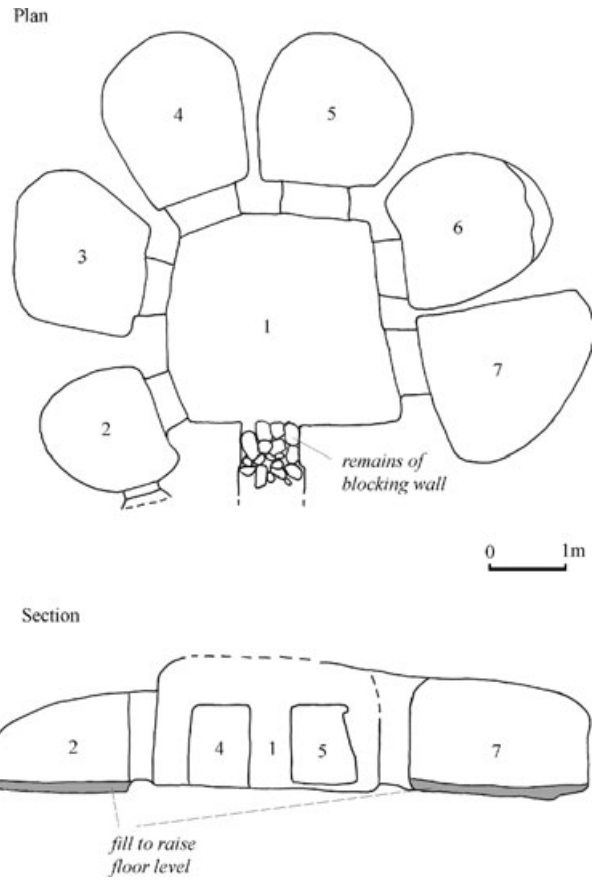

Figure 5
Plan and section of Kastri Tomb E (after Coldstream and Huxley 1972, figs. 73–74).

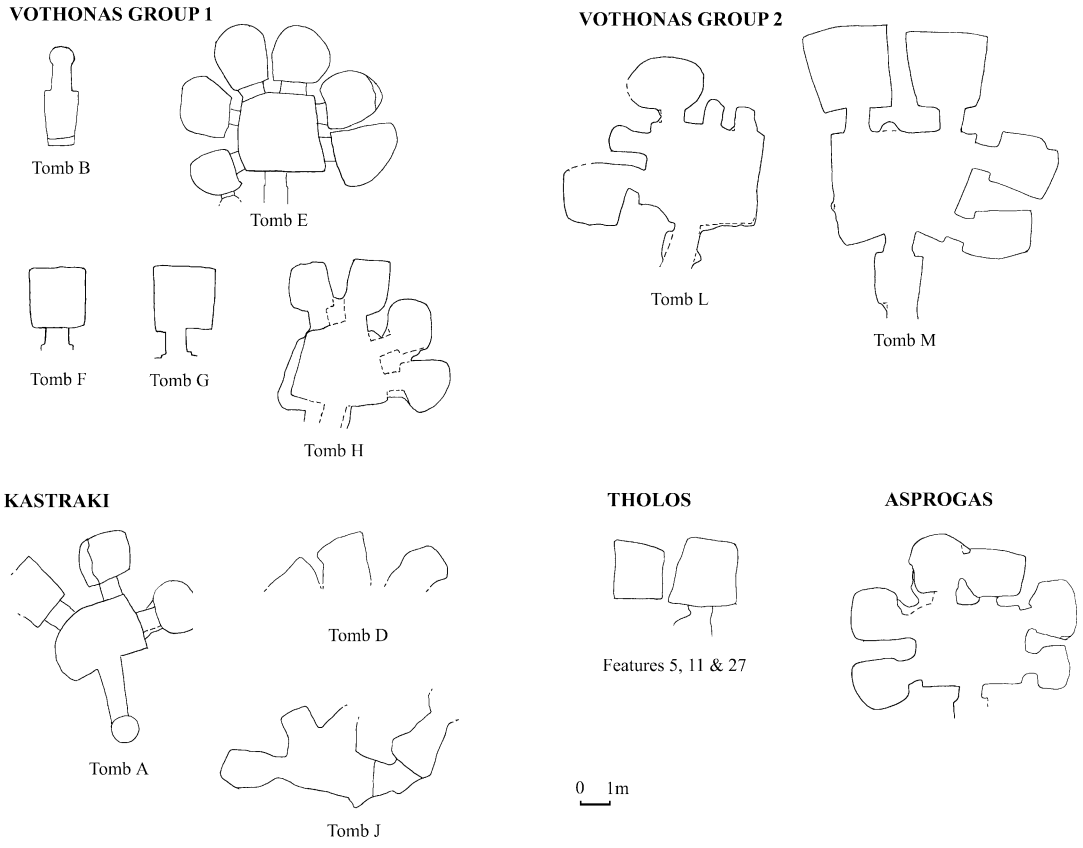

Figure 6
Chamber tomb plans at Kastri.

Second, although a number of empty single-chambered tombs were also documented in the survey (see Fig. 3), they cannot be confidently assigned to the Second Palace period, owing to their lack of datable assemblages. In almost all cases they were located in close proximity to settlement scatters containing Second Palace material. Early Bronze Age and Classical-Roman sites also occur frequently within the survey area, but there is as yet no positive evidence for chamber tomb use on Kythera in the former period, while chamber tombs of the historic era seem to have had a different architectural design. It is possible, then, that a number of these tombs are genuinely of Second Palace period date, but this cannot at present be demonstrated, especially as we lack definite parallels for single-chambered tombs at Kastri (see below) against which to compare them stylistically.

SOCIAL INTERPRETATIONS OF BURIAL PRACTICES AT KASTRI

The Cretan question

One of the most striking aspects of the chamber tombs, both at Kastri and in Kythera more generally, is that they are a new phenomenon here in the Second Palace period. Burial

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evidence before this period is very scarce at Kastri, and as yet non-existent elsewhere on the island, with the possible exception of a Minoan-type pithos burial near Lazarianika (Petrocheilos 1984, 64; Broodbank 1999, 194). The evidence at Kastri consists of an unpublished chance find near the settlement probably derived from a disturbed Early Minoan III/MM I grave at Asprogas, and of two chance finds of MM IA jugs from the area, probably also from graves (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 258 nos. 1–2). A pithos burial found close to the settlement can be dated only to the Middle Bronze Age (and so may either precede or coincide with the earlier chamber tombs) (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 227). The Second Palace period therefore witnessed a dramatic change in the funerary landscape around Kastri with the introduction of the large rock-cut chamber tombs. These represent not only a mortuary innovation at Kastri, but also, potentially, a very different scale of funerary expenditure from previous practices.

A Cretan – and, specifically, Knossian – ancestry of some description for these tombs seems highly plausible. Knossos provides precedents and contemporary parallels for the tomb architecture, with large, multi-chambered tombs at several First and Second Palace period cemetery sites (for the First Palace period evidence see Forsdyke 1927, 246; Cook and Boardman 1954, 166; Muhly 1992). Concerning the mechanisms which underlay the introduction of these tombs to Kastri, the difficulties inherent in identifying migration processes archaeologically are challenging (Broodbank 2004, 67–9), and it is increasingly recognized that our ethnic categorizations of the Aegean populations in this period, on which basis migration episodes have been proposed, have been rather uncritically constructed and may be woefully simplistic (e.g. Renfrew 1996; Preston 1999). Different people will have moved for different reasons, so that careful consideration is needed in assessing which habits and practices we should take as evidence of migratory activities (of various types) when we see their geographical expansion. Nevertheless, given the coincidence of the introduction and use of the Kastri tombs with a marked expansion of the settlement and the Minoanization of a substantial element of the site's material culture, it is not implausible that many of those responsible for the initial introduction and subsequent use of the chamber tombs were ultimately of Cretan origin.

Yet even if the tombs were introduced at least partially via colonization episodes from Crete, significant adaptations accompanied the transferral which also require consideration. Among the idiosyncracies that developed once the idea of chamber tomb use had been introduced at Kastri, most prominent is the high level of conformity to a single tradition in tomb architecture (see Figs. 5–7). The Kastri tombs were carefully rock-cut, usually into sloping ground, with a corridor ('dromos') leading down to a main chamber, whose rectangular carved entrance was sealed with dry-stone walling after interments. This main chamber usually had two or more smaller radial chambers leading off from it, entered through rock-cut rectangular doorways (apparently not walled up). These openings were usually carved at such a height as to create a shallow step up from the main chamber and then down again into the radial chamber. However, this height distinction would have been diminished by introducing soil, sand and pebble fills to raise the chamber floor levels before burials took place, as indicated by remains from Tombs C and E (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 223, 226) and three of the chambers at Tholos (Bevan *et al*. 2002, 59–60, 63). Walls throughout the tombs were generally carefully finished and near-vertical.

Just as the dromoi, entrances and chambers share characteristic features across different tombs and tomb groups, the overall radial arrangement of chambers in each tomb also displays rather limited variation (Tomb J being exceptional in its apparent irregularity, though it is only partially explored). The presence of multiple chambers in each tomb appears to be the standard

Figure 7
A view of the partially destroyed tomb at Asprogas (taken by L. Preston).

practice: no convincing example of a single-chambered tomb has been found so far at Kastri. As suggested by the excavators (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 221), Tomb B (Fig. 6) seems to have been abandoned before its construction was completed, given its small, amorphous chamber and the absence of burial remains (though the ceramic sherds retrieved are consistent with mortuary assemblages, and may derive from ritual activities in the vicinity, associated with neighbouring tombs). Tombs F and G (Fig. 6) were interpreted by their excavators as single-chambered tombs (Coldstream and Huxley ibid.), but are actually more likely to have been rear radial chambers of two multi-chambered tombs, whose main and lateral chambers have since been lost in the severe erosion of the slope at whose base they lie. During the recent survey a further rear chamber was documented at the same level in the slope, belonging to a similarly truncated tomb but preserving parts of the main and one lateral chamber.

These highly conformist characteristics of tomb design were a local feature, and contrast markedly with the more varied mortuary spectrum at Knossos. Even if we disregard the other tomb types being used concurrently at Knossos, the chamber tombs alone are more eclectic in their layouts, with no two tombs sharing the same plan and no examples of the regular radial arrangement of chambers that typifies Kastri (Fig. 9).

A similar picture emerges from analysis of the Kastri tomb assemblages. The ceramic vessels, which comprise the vast majority of recovered artefacts, represent a very limited range of functions and a prescribed repertoire of shapes (Table 2). This in turn implies a rather standardized set of mortuary rituals, especially as a large proportion of the ceramics seem to have been used in activities associated with the burials. The majority are open vessels (mainly cups), complemented by jugs and other large pouring/container vessels; the other principal categories are vessels for lighting or burning (presumably oil), and skeuomorphs of vessel shapes usually made from stone or metal. This repertoire contrasts with the contemporary Kastri settlement deposits, partly through differing ratios of certain vessel types (though the limited extent of the settlement excavations makes detailed comparative quantifications hazardous). For example, the skeuomorphs are very rare in the settlement material – the 'blossom bowl' is so far absent, and the ring-handled basin attested in Deposit Epsilon only (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 101). The

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TABLE 2
Preservation factors in the excavated Kastri chamber tombs

Tomb	Consumption														Container/pouring												Skeuomorph		Lighting/burning		
	Conical cup	Hemispherical cup	Bell up	Straight-sided cup	Shallow spouted cup	Stemmed cup	Kefiin cup	Cup/bowl	Tumbler	Kalathos	Shallow bowl with lugs	Conical bowl	'In-and-out' bowl	'Flowerpot'	Plate	Bridge-spouted jar	Low-spouted jut	Ewer	Oval-mouth amphora	One-handled jar	High-spouted jut	Unclear	Baggy alabastron	Squat alabastron	Askos	Rhyton	Ring-handled basin	Blossom bowl	Lamp	Brazier	Censer
A																								1					1		
B	4								9														1								
C	27	6							3			4	1	1	14				1										2	1	1
D	79	8	2	2			2	1	1	2	1	12		1		1	3	6	1	2	6	2		1			1	3	5	2	1
E	97	5	4			2	1		6	3	2	3			1		9	11		1		3	1			1	6	5	1	2	1
H	1																														
J	104	5	3		2	1		1	1						1		3	1				2	2				3	1	1	3	3
K									1								1														
Tholos group	218	3				2			4	6		3					2					3					3	3			

tomb groups also display a marked preference for low-spouted jugs over hole-mouthed jars. But the principal difference is the absence of certain coarse-wares in the tombs that are prevalent in the settlement deposits: pithoi (large storage vessels) and cooking wares, such as tripod cooking pots, trays and basins. The combination of a prevalence of open and container/pouring vessels, the lack of cooking shapes, and also the absence of animal remains in the Bronze Age levels of the tombs, may indicate that the consumption activities during the mortuary rituals were focused on drinking rather than on food (cf. Hamilakis 1996; 1998).

Our understanding of Second Palace period tomb assemblages around Knossos is rather limited by comparison. The only tomb that has been fully published shows a similar predominance of cups and numerous jugs (Muhly 1992), though it would be hazardous to assume that this is representative of all Knossian burials, given the aforementioned diversity in the tomb architecture. However, two differences can be observed between the contents of the chamber tombs of Kastri and Knossos. These are the lack of skeuomorphed clay vessels in the latter, and the absence of coffins or other burial containers (clay pithoi, clay larnakes or wooden biers) in the former (as observed by Dickinson 1994, 220), which are commonly attested at Knossos (Forsdyke 1927, 264–9, 276–82; Cook and Boardman 1954, 166–7; Muhly 1992, 191–4).

Overall, therefore, while the Kastri community was highly receptive to Cretan-derived practices, the idea of chamber tomb use was deliberately modified rather than simply transferred. A distinctive, highly standardized *local* vocabulary developed quite rapidly in terms of funerary architecture and, probably, ritual practices, in strong contrast to the more eclectic mortuary symbolism of Knossos, and this adaptation requires explanation. It suggests that external referencing to Knossos was not the only significant factor at play in tomb use at Kastri, and also that the burying population was modifying tomb burial practices at least partially as a response to stimuli within the local social environment. In particular, the move towards standardization strongly suggests that a horizontal in-group solidarity was being expressed among the tomb-using population.

The creation of tradition

A further point of interest concerns the longevity and conservatism of these burial practices through the Second Palace period. Cumulatively, the ceramics from the excavated tombs represent the entire period, though the relative paucity of MM IIIA material suggests that tomb use was less prevalent in this initial phase (Table 3). The use of individual tombs seems

TABLE 3
Periods of use of the Kastri chamber tombs (based on datable ceramics)

Tomb	MM IIIA	MM IIIB	LM IA	LM IB
A			Y	
C	Y	Y	Y	
D	Y	Y	Y	Y
E		Y	Y	Y
H			Y	
J		Y	Y	Y
K			Y	
Tholos			Y	Y

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Figure 8
A view of the rear radial chambers (two incomplete) of Tomb L at Vothonas (taken by L. Preston).

commonly to have spanned several generations. Not all tombs have produced evidence for use across the whole of the period, but use across at least three ceramic subphases seems to be the norm: the exceptions either produced only a few ceramic artefacts in total, due to plundering or difficulties of investigation (Tombs A, H and K), or were only preserved to a very limited extent (the tombs of the Tholos Group).

This long-term use seems, moreover, to have been envisaged by the original users of the tombs, rather than resulting from decisions of subsequent generations as a convenient alternative to carving out new structures. The layouts of tombs H, L and M at Vothonas indicate that room was being left for the addition of further radial chambers, which were never in fact added (though the carving of two such chambers seems to have commenced in Tomb L – see Figs. 6 and 8). This implies that the tombs were constructed in more than one episode, with radial chambers being added as further burial space was needed, and, crucially, that this expansion was anticipated. There is also continuity in aspects of the ceramic assemblages – and, by implication, the ritual practices that they represent. The lack of intact assemblage groups has forced previous excavators to rely largely on stylistic criteria for dating individual vessels. However, drinking vessels remain popular through the different ceramic subphases, despite changes in specific forms as a result of broader trends in ceramic styles.

Ideologies of similarity and difference

These various features of continuity and longevity cannot simply be explained as products of habit and unconscious conservatism, given the novelty of these tombs when first introduced at Kastri in MM IIIA. Instead, they were consciously maintained and deliberately emphasized. By this means, they continually reinforced internal cohesion through the creation of a fixed tradition around which the tomb-using group's identity could be maintained. Whether or not the introduction of these tombs was pioneered by Cretan immigrants, the principal audience of the tombs and the rituals which they hosted would have been internal – that is, the tomb users and other members of the Kastri community and its hinterland. Visitors to the settlement would have seen the tombs, particularly around the Vothonas harbour (for a reconstruction of the

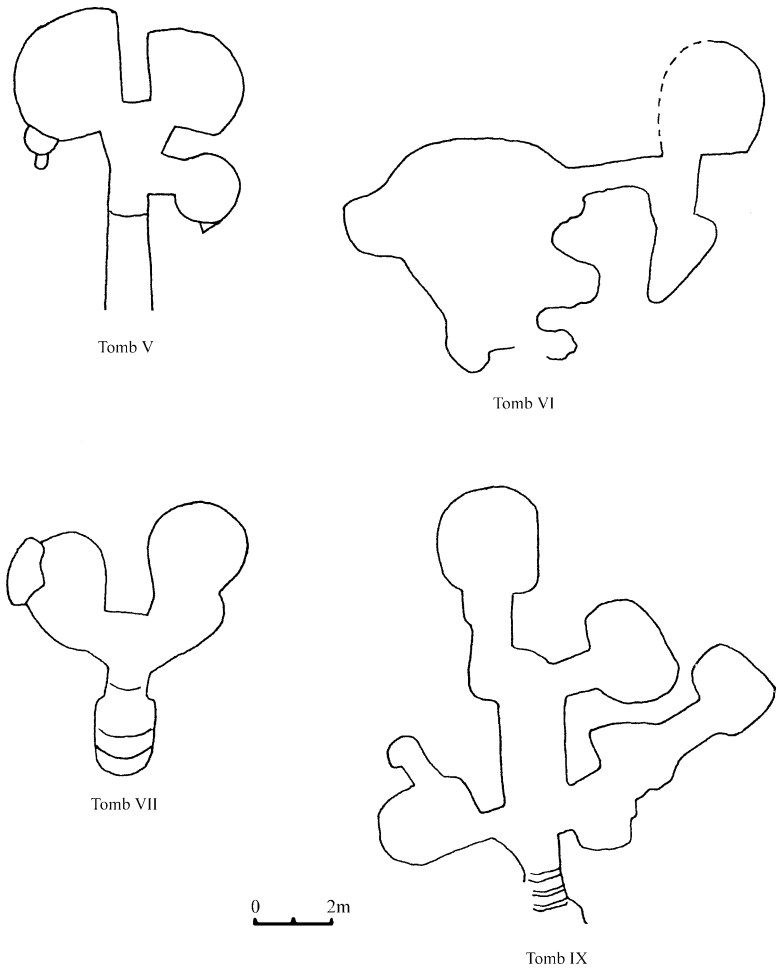

Figure 9
Plans of Protopalatial and Neopalatial chamber tombs at Mavro Spelio, Knossos (after Forsdyke l927, figs. 8, 14, 15 and 19).

original coastline, see Bevan 2002, 233 fig. 12), but would not, presumably, have witnessed the burial rites themselves, nor fully understood the local coding of these mortuary practices.

The internally cohesive symbolic system would have provided a shared vocabulary for interaction and, perhaps, competition among the participating group, as discussed further below. Burial may also have functioned as a forum for emphasizing social exclusivity if this tomb-using group perceived itself to some extent as standing in opposition to the remainder of the community. It is not currently possible to establish precisely what proportion of the Kastri population was represented by chamber tomb burial, but it is highly unlikely that it was universal. In terms of burial numbers, we should anticipate that we have so far recovered only a fraction of the original complement of tombs associated with this site. But if (pending more extensive excavation-led prospection) we pessimistically estimate that our current dataset of 23 tombs

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represents as little as 10 per cent of the original total, and if we allow for a generous average of 20 burials per tomb, we would reach an estimated maximum of 4600 burials for the entire Second Palace period. This would be equivalent to an average of 460 burials per human generation (the two-and-a-half century span of this period being roughly equivalent to ten human generations). Turning to estimates of the *living* population, at a calculation of 250–450 people per hectare (see Bevan 2002, 246, drawing on Whitelaw's estimates for contemporary Crete (2001, 24–6)), we could estimate a standing population of 1500–3150 in the core settlement of Kastri when it reached its maximum extent of 6–7 ha. Although it is not yet possible to ascertain whether this population level was reached early in the Second Palace period or built up gradually over the generations (nor do we have a reliable estimate for the settlement size in the preceding period), the estimated burial numbers as proposed above are unlikely, within either scenario, to be able to account for all of the settlement's population across the period as a whole, and the existence of alternative disposal practices for some of the dead should therefore be expected.

The extent to which chamber tomb use was being mobilized at Kastri as an expression of differentiation within the local population, and potential underlying reasons for any such differentiation, are intriguing questions to consider. Chamber tomb use may be partially explainable within the framework of migration, as discussed above, especially as migration situations can potentially accentuate levels of self-awareness and solidarity among incoming groups. Yet it is significant that Cretan associations seem not to have been exclusive to the tomb-using group at Kastri: Minoanizing styles pervade the entire ceramic assemblage of the Second Palace period settlement so far recovered from excavation and surface survey. This would suggest that differences between the chamber tomb-using and other components of Kastri's population were not based simply on an axis of Cretan versus non-Cretan cultural affiliations.

Status identities

There are intriguing suggestions that levels of *vertical* differentiation were, however, being expressed through burial by at least some of the tomb-using community. Displays of resources and appeals to tradition could have functioned for status display both internally within the tomb-using group, and externally, if access to chamber tomb burial was perceived as a privilege. The cemeteries were conspicuously located, framing and perhaps even overlapping with the settlement sprawl on the north, west and probably south sides, perhaps interspersed with looser units of habitation which attached to the expanding urban core. A number of others overlooked the northern of the two harbours that flanked the settlement in the Bronze Age – an equally conspicuous location for attracting the attention of the living, given Kastri's strongly maritime focus. Indeed, it is notable that the largest tombs so far recovered (Tombs L, M and N) are located at Vothonas (see Fig. 2: Vothonas Group 2). It is also worth noting again the impressive quantities of vessels in the tombs associated with drinking activities. In the recent excavation at the Tholos location, for example, where all finds were recorded and curated, a single deposit in a heavily eroded chamber (Feature 5: only 18 cm in maximum depth across 2.88 sq m) produced 139 reconstructable vessels (Bevan *et al*. 2002), 93 per cent of which are jugs and cups. Vessels found in a single tomb could potentially be the residues of more than one drinking ceremony, given that multiple burial was practised. However, at least three Kastri tombs have produced numerous vessels stacked together (Chamber Dy of Tomb D (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 224), the pit in Tomb J (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 226) and Features 5 and 25

at Tholos (Bevan *et al*. 2002, 59, 63 and figs. 5, 7 and 9)), and such 'sets' may plausibly be considered remnants of individual burial episodes. These would represent funerary ceremonies involving a large participating audience, probably outside the tomb (for reasons of space) and therefore visible in the landscape.

Only a few artefacts of valuable materials have been retrieved from the tombs so far investigated: one faience and four stone vessels from three tombs (A, C and D). But it is noteworthy that none of these specific tombs had been disturbed or re-used after the Second Palace period, and plundering may account for the absence of comparable artefacts in other tombs so far investigated. A number of imprecisely provenanced twentieth-century finds from the Kastri area are particularly notable in this respect: 12 stone bowls, a faience vessel, jewellery of gold, rock crystal, amethyst, agate and jasper, and a steatite sealstone (Coldstream and Huxley 1972, 259–62). Stylistically, these artefacts would fall comfortably within the Second Palace period, and they almost certainly derive from one or more tombs in the locality. As such, they offer a tantalizing hint of the wealthy assemblages that accompanied at least some burials of this period. Clay ring-handled basins and blossom bowls, referencing more valuable prototypes in stone and metal, are more common components of the assemblages (and the former are unique to Kastri within the Aegean – see also Bevan *et al*. 2002, 78). Overall, the resources devoted to these tombs (and the apparent association of tomb use with high status at Knossos also) suggest that we are dealing with a group at Kastri which was using burial as one forum for display, and which may well have included the controlling elite of this centre.

The maintenance of a shared tradition in mortuary use emphasized above may also have been tied in with internal status competition. These tombs permanently transformed the landscape around Kastri, and the episodic rituals during their re-use would have created an impression of longevity and immutability for the groups who used them. The consumption activities in the burial rites may have been associated with the perpetuation of social remembrance, the rituals acting as a mechanism for transmitting knowledge about the past and sustaining tradition (e.g. Connerton 1989; Hamilakis 1998). If, as was probably the case, the tombs represented kin-based units, and also if status was (at least partially) transmitted by descent, these ongoing rituals would have served to advertise the stability of these lineages, presenting the image of an established group which offset the social and probably political transformations attendant upon the settlement expansion. Indeed, if social status was partly linked to the longevity of one's lineage, tombs which had been in use for the longest periods could have been used to advertise and authenticate the prestige of the families associated with them.

BEYOND KASTRI

The tombs beyond Kastri also raise interesting questions regarding the interactions between the community at this centre and its hinterland, although our dataset is currently small. The multi-chambered tombs may represent burial practices accompanying groups that were moving out from Kastri to occupy this hinterland, and/or may have been used as expressions of affiliation with an elite core at the regional centre. Site 083 is one of the few slightly larger sites in Kastri's hinterland (though still under a hectare in overall size); Bevan (2002, 221–2) has suggested that the size difference may simply have been the result of different social and economic activities at Site 083 from those of the usual farmsteads (of 0.1–0.3 ha) that occupied this landscape, but such an interpretation does not exclude the

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possibility that this site was also ‘ “more important” within a Kytheran socio-economic (or political) hierarchy’ (Bevan, ibid.).

Whether or not they had status associations, the focus of inspiration for these hinterland tombs was almost certainly Kastri, rather than anywhere further afield, especially as the multi-chambered tombs at Sites 003 and 083 closely echo the architectural canon developed at the island’s principal centre. With three radial chambers each, however, they are not on a scale to rival the largest Kastri tombs. If at least some of the single-chambered tombs documented in the survey were also Second Palace period in date, as discussed above, this might also have intriguing implications in terms of scales of emulation, with a downsizing of the hinterland tombs’ size, whether due to available labour, smaller family units in the hinterland farmsteads, or perhaps the anticipation of a more temporary period of habitation than at Kastri.

CONCLUSIONS

It is impossible to achieve a full understanding of larger-scale interactions and processes in the Aegean without also examining social structures and ideologies at finer-grained levels. The burials at Kastri and beyond probably bound up a variety of social relationships and meanings in a single tradition. Lack of data currently precludes our answering the intriguing question of the extent to which internal differences were being expressed between individuals within the tomb-using community at Kastri, for example on the basis of gender, age or status. However, we can access more readily certain aspects of collective identities and agendas of the tomb-using population.

Following the initial introduction of chamber tomb use at Kastri early in the Second Palace period, the standardization of tomb forms and ritual practices, through time as well as space, is remarkable. It was a highly self-referencing system, with nothing comparable on Crete or any of the other islands, suggesting a strong emphasis on internal group solidarity, perhaps mobilized partly to facilitate internal communication and competition and partly in opposition to other elements of the Kastri community. If the latter, there are no indications at present that Cretan ‘ethnic’ affiliations were a factor in social differentiation. There are, however, indications that burial was used to express vertical, status differentiation within the tomb-using community – and perhaps by this community as a group if access to chamber tomb burial was considered a privilege in itself. These mortuary strategies would have functioned to affirm internal social and political differentiations attendant upon the demographic and economic expansion of Kastri, and the infilling of its hinterland. A colonization episode(s) from Crete in the Second Palace period would be consistent with this scenario, but even if a population influx took place, there is far more to the story than that, as the tombs were used in an ongoing dialogue regarding identities within the island.

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