

NEW EVIDENCE FOR THE PRACTICE OF LIBATIONS IN THE AEGEAN BRONZE AGE

Three recently excavated Bronze Age sites in Troizenia (NE Peloponnese) have yielded new evidence for libations pertinent to cultic and funerary contexts and have now provided additional information about that important ritual of Aegean religion, the most intriguing aspects of which were excellently treated in the past by the organizers of this conference.¹

a. Ayios Konstantinos, Methana

The new evidence for the practice of libation in connection with cult activity comes from the LH IIIA-B sanctuary at Ayios Konstantinos on Eastern Methana.² The continued investigation of that site has so far brought to light several Mycenaean buildings, extending mainly to the N and to the W of the modern church of Ayios Konstantinos (Pl. LXVIIa). As I have argued elsewhere,³ a primary cultic function may be assigned to Room A, lying immediately to the SW of the church (Pl. LXVIIb). The cultic installations of that room comprised a stepped stone-built bench, which was set in the northwest corner, a central platform made out of thin stone slabs resting on the floor, a low ledge running along the southern wall, and a small hearth constructed with a few rough stones placed near the southeast corner.

Together with the remarkable group of votive terracottas deposited on the steps of the bench were found eight kylikes and a large triton shell (Pl. LXVIIc). The kylikes, except for one example of the monochrome type FS 264, were undecorated. Five of those belonged to the low type FS 267, one to FS 272, and one to FS 274. All those common drinking vessels may well have been used for the ritual pouring and drinking of liquids, a type of Mycenaean libation plausibly proposed by Hägg.⁴ Corroborating evidence for the performance of libations in Room A comes from two diminutive vessels also found in the area of the bench. Those were a conical rhyton, decorated with a symmetrically arranged octopus, and a plain dipper (Pl. LXVIId). The two miniatures may have constituted a set, as the dipper was of appropriate size for pouring liquids into that rhyton, but it would be rather too small for any other practical use.

- 1 R. LAFFINEUR, "Fécondité et pratiques funéraires en Égée à l'âge du Bronze," in A. BONANNO (ed.), *Archaeology and Fertility Cult in the Ancient Mediterranean. Papers presented at the First International Conference on Archaeology of the Ancient Mediterranean, Malta, 2-5 Sept. 1985* (1986) 79-96, esp. 82-88; ID., "Weitere Beiträge zur Symbolik im mykenischen Bestattungsritual," in *Kolloquium zur Ägäischen Vorgeschichte, Mannheim, 20.-22.2.1986, Schriften des Deutschen Archäologen-Verbandes* 9 (1987) 125-132; R. HÄGG, "The role of libations in Mycenaean ceremony and cult," in *Celebrations* 177-184; for a recent review of the evidence for libations in the Mycenaean world, see ID., "Ritual in Mycenaean Greece," in F. GRAF (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale. Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert. Castelen bei Basel 15. bis 18. März 1996* (1998) 99-113, esp. 104-105.
- 2 E. KONSOLAKI, *ArchDelt* 46 (1991) Chronika 71-74 with Pls 40-42; ID., "The Mycenaean sanctuary on Methana," *BICS* 40 (1995) 242; ID., "A group of new Mycenaean horsemen from Methana," in *MELETEMATA* II 427-433 with Pls XCIV-XCV; see also C.W. SHELMEERDINE, "Review of Aegean Prehistory VI: The Palatial Bronze Age of Southern and Central Greek Mainland," *AJA* 101 (1997) 537-585, esp. 574-575, with Figs 12-13; H. WHITTAKER, *Mycenaean Cult Buildings* (1997) 164-165; C. MEE and H. FORBES, *A Rough and Rocky Place: The Landscape and Settlement History of the Methana Peninsula, Greece* (1997) 53, 128.
- 3 E. KONSOLAKI, "A Mycenaean sanctuary on Methana," in *Peloponnesian Sanctuaries and Cults, Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 11-13 June 1994* (in press); ID., "Mycenaean religious architecture: The archaeological evidence from Ayios Konstantinos, Methana," in *Celebrations. Sanctuaries and Vestiges of Cult Practice. International Symposium at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 12-16 May 1999* (in press).
- 4 HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, *Celebrations*) 183; HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, 1998) 105.

The apex of the triton shell had been deliberately cut off (Pl. LXVIIe). Natural triton shells modified at the apex have been traditionally interpreted as trumpets when found in cultic contexts,⁵ but they are also likely to have been employed for the practice of libation.⁶ In this case the libation may have been performed with the use of sea water alluding to fecundity and regeneration, a function already suggested for triton-shaped rhyta in Minoan cult and in mortuary ritual.⁷ The performance of this kind of libation at Ayios Konstantinos would be well in context, as the religious symbolism of the votive terracottas seems to point to Poseidon, the personification of the watery element fertilizing the earth and reviving nature, as the most likely candidate for the deity venerated in that shrine.⁸

In the southwest corner of Room A was found an upper segment of a large coarse ware jar, resting on the floor with the neck turned to the ground (Pl. LXVIIIa). That jar may be viewed as a receptacle for liquid offerings channelled into the earth, on the basis of the parallels provided by similar fragmentary pots, presumably used as libation devices, in the Tsountas' House Shrine (first phase) at Mycenae,⁹ in Room XXXII of House G at Asine,¹⁰ and in Room C of the so-called Potter's Quarter at Berbati.¹¹ The pottery associated with it comprised a straight-sided alabastron FS 94, a plain two-handled cup FS 240, a large dipper FS 236, and an animal-head rhyton of outstanding quality (Pl. LXVIIIb-d). The orifice is set at the front of the muzzle, directly opposite the centre of the circle formed by the low neck. The whole surface of the vase is painted with a stippling apparently imitating the skin. The ears resemble those of a fox or a dog, but the muzzle, bulbous and rather short, would be inappropriate to either of those animals. The over-all appearance of the head rather recalls a young pig with still small, not fully developed ears. The Methana rhyton is a close parallel of the fox-head rhyton in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, reported as coming from Tiryns,¹²

- 5 See P. ÅSTRÖM and D.S. REESE, "Triton shells in East Mediterranean cults," *JPR* 3-4 (1990) 5-14, with refs. to further bibliography; this interpretation is also followed by C. RENFREW, *The archaeology of cult. The sanctuary at Phylakopi* (1985) 327 and 383; for more examples of the ritual use of conch trumpets in other cultures, see J. MONTAGU, "The conch in prehistory: pottery, stone and natural," *World Archaeology* 12 (1981) 273-279.
- 6 Cf. C. BAURAIN and P. DARCQUE, "Un triton en pierre à Malia," *BCH* 107 (1983) 3-73, esp. 54-58.
- 7 C. BAURAIN, "Pour une autre interprétation des génies minoens," in P. DARCQUE and J.C. POURSAT (eds), *L'iconographie minoenne. Actes de la Table Ronde d'Athènes (21-22 avril 1983)*, *BCH* suppl. XI (1985) 95-118, esp. 115; C. BOULOTIS, "La déesse minoenne à la rame-gouvernail," in H. TZALAS (ed.), *Tropis I. Proceedings of the 1st International Symposium on Ship Construction in Antiquity (Piraeus, 1985)* (1989) 55-73, esp. 60 and n. 29; LAFFINEUR (*supra* n. 1, 1986) 88; ID., "La mer et l'au-delà dans l'Égée préhistorique," in R. LAFFINEUR and L. BASCH (eds), *Thalassa. L'Égée préhistorique et la mer. Actes de la troisième Rencontre égéenne internationale de l'Université de Liège (23-25 avril 1990)*, *Aegaeum* 7 (1991) 236; for the symbolic significance of tritons in iconography owing to their revival after hibernation, see ID., "Iconographie minoenne et iconographie mycénienne à l'époque des tombes à fosse," in *L'iconographie minoenne (op. cit.)* 245-266, esp. 257-259.
- 8 KONSOLAKI (*supra* n. 2 and n. 3). At Troizen Poseidon was venerated under the epithet Phytalmios pointing rather to a deity of fecundity than to a sea divinity; PLUTARCH, *Theseus* 6, records that Troizenians offered Poseidon the first fruits of the season, a fact which also indicates a local cult associated with fertility rites, most probably originating in pre-Greek times.
- 9 A.J.B. WACE, "Mycenae 1950," *JHS* 71 (1951) 254-257, esp. 254; G.E. MYLONAS, *Μυκηναϊκή θρησκεία. Ναοί, βωμοί και τεμένη. Mycenaean religion. Temples altars and temena* (1977) 21; E.B. FRENCH, "Cult places at Mycenae," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 41-48, esp. 45; see also HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, *Celebrations*) 178.
- 10 *MMR*² 110-114 with Fig. 31; R. HÄGG, "The house sanctuary at Asine revisited," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 91-94, esp. 93 with Figs 3 and 4; HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, *Celebrations*) 180-181 with Figs 5 and 6; ID., "The religion of the Mycenaeans," in E. de MIRO, L. GODART, A. SACCONI (eds), *Atti e Memorie del Secondo Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia, Roma-Napoli, 14-20 ottobre 1991* (1996) 599-612, esp. 610.
- 11 Å. ÅKERSTRÖM, "Cultic installations in Mycenaean rooms and tombs," in *Problems in Greek Prehistory* 201-206, esp. 201-202 with Pl. 9.
- 12 A.J. EVANS, "The 'Tomb of the Double Axes' and Associated Group, and the Pillar Rooms and Ritual Vessels of the 'Little Palace' at Knossos," *Archaeologia* 65 (1913/14) 1-94, esp. 89; V. KARAGEORGHIS, *Nouveaux documents pour l'étude du Bronze Récent à Chypre* (1965) 228-229 with Pl. 22:6; A.D. LACY, *Greek Pottery in the Bronze Age* (1967) 216 with Fig. 85c; C. DOUMAS, "A Mycenaean rhyton from Naxos," *AA* 83 (1968) 374-389, esp. 384-386 with Fig. 19.

but its modelling and decoration are more realistic and they suggest an earlier date than that of the Tiryns example, ascribed to LHIIIB.¹³ That special item, listed now as one of the earliest examples of Mycenaean terracotta animal-head rhyta, was evidently an heirloom used and kept in the sanctuary until its abandonment, dated by other finds to the end of LH IIIB2.

The Methana rhyton has an extremely narrow neck, which would be rather impractical for pouring liquids inside. Perhaps the manner in which this was filled and emptied was that proposed for narrow-necked rhyta by Koehl,¹⁴ i.e., the rhyton would be lowered into a large jar containing liquid and the liquid would seep into the vessel from its bottom hole; then the upper hole would be covered with a thumb and the filled rhyton could be lifted out of the jar without any liquid escaping; when the thumb was lifted off the top hole, the liquid would stream out of the bottom hole. The function, however, of the Methana rhyton must have been different from that assigned to narrow-necked rhyta by Koehl (i.e., filling other vessels), as it is more probable to have been used for the performance of the libation proper, by letting the liquid flow out onto the ground or in a libation receptacle, such as the jar neck in the southwest corner of the room. The reasoning for this argument is based on the total absence of the jug, or any other vase that could have been filled with this rhyton and then used to perform libation, from the pottery assemblage of Room A. The drinking vessels found in Room A are very unlikely to have been filled with that rhyton, as the liquid offering for which this was intended must not have been drinkable. Animal-head rhyta have been plausibly suggested to serve for blood libation, both in funerary and in religious ceremonies, by Laffineur and Hägg.¹⁵ Arguments against blood libation based on the problem of coagulation would not be valid, since N. Marinatos has already shown that if blood is mixed with vinegar or red wine, coagulation is prevented.¹⁶ This special function of animal-head rhyta seems to be confirmed here by the zoo-archaeological material of Room A, which will be discussed below.

The large dipper and the two-handled cup found near the animal-head rhyton may also be interpreted as libation implements. The dipper would be suitable for transferring liquid offerings from one vase to another and the cup could have been used for pouring some of the liquid out and then drinking the rest, as proposed for the kylix. The alabastron would fit into the libation ritual as a possible container of honey, perhaps used in mixture with water or wine. A deep bowl FS 284 of the so-called Group B, found in the area of the bench, may well have served for the mixing of liquids. To the libation paraphernalia might also belong a spouted coarse ware bowl (for collecting the blood?) and a large coarse ware krater FS 280, both which were retrieved in pieces in front of the bench.

The sanctuary at Ayios Konstantinos has yielded in addition the first secure material evidence of burnt animal sacrifice in Mycenaean Greece.¹⁷ The hearth in the southeast corner of Room A preserved a spit-rest of andesite still in situ and was filled with a thick layer of ash containing a substantial quantity of burnt animal bones. According to Hamilakis,¹⁸ the assemblage from this area displayed a heavy preponderance of juvenile pigs. That deposit was strikingly different from the bone waste from communal feasting, retrieved in other areas of the sanctuary. Sacrificial meals are assumed to have been prepared in another hearth set in the northwest corner of Room B, lying immediately to the N of Room A.¹⁹ As shown by the

13 See LACY (*supra* n. 12). In my opinion, a date within LH IIIA2 would also be possible.

14 R.B. KOEHL, "The function of Aegean Bronze Age rhyta," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 179-187, esp. 181-183 with Fig. 4.

15 LAFFINEUR (*supra* n. 1, 1986) 83-86; HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, *Celebrations*) 183-184.

16 N. MARINATOS, *Minoan sacrificial ritual: Cult practice and symbolism* (1986) 25 n. 80.

17 Cf. HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, 1998) 100-103, who is inclined to connect the animal bones found at cult sites rather with the sacred banquet than with the sacrifice proper; see also B. BERGQUIST, "The archaeology of sacrifice: Minoan-Mycenaean versus Greek," in R. HÄGG, N. MARINATOS, G.C. NORDQUIST (eds), *Early Greek Cult Practice. Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 26-29 June, 1986* (1988) 21-34.

18 Y. HAMILAKIS, "Animal sacrifice and Mycenaean societies: zooarchaeological evidence from the sanctuary at Ag. Konstantinos, Methana," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the History and Archaeology of the Saronic Gulf, Poros 26-28 June 1998* (in press).

19 KONSOLAKI (*supra* n. 2, 1991) 73 with Pl. 42a.

analysis of the animal bones, the meat used for this purpose came mainly from sheep/goat of older age; those samples were mostly unburnt.

The predominance of pigs in the bone assemblage of Room A, combined with the parallel presence of a pig-head rhyton most probably used for blood libation, points to a close ritual connection between animal sacrifice and libation, as was the case in Crete.²⁰ Hägg sees this connection in the Mycenaean ritual as well, especially when libation installations are found in the immediate vicinity of what looks like a sacrificial altar, as in the Tsountas' House Shrine at Mycenae.²¹ The central platform of Room A at Methana,²² located in the immediate proximity of the area where the animal-head rhyton was found, may be proposed as a possible sacrificial altar, if we take into consideration that the bone assemblage from this room was dominated by juvenile animals of small size, which could have been slaughtered indoors.

Fixed installations presumably used to perform libations were found in Area F and in Room G, lying immediately to the N of the church (Pl. LXVIIa). In both those cases the libation devices were connected with a stone-built bench, apparently used for cultic purposes. Area F seems to have been a small courtyard, extending between Room G and the oblong building O, which was most probably a storeroom. On the southern side of that courtyard there was a low, stone-built bench (Pl. LXVIIIe). In the corner space between the western end of the bench and the northern wall of Room O was set a roughly rounded boulder which had a deep conical hollow cut out into it and was vertically pierced through at the lower side (Pl. LXVIIIf). Below the piercing there was no receptacle, as that boulder rested on the floor of the courtyard, and any liquid poured into the hollow would have been absorbed by the earth. The benches of a similar form, also equipped with libation devices, in the house-shrines at Asine²³ and Berbati²⁴ provide good parallels for viewing this feature as a cultic installation meant to receive libations. The proposed interpretation gains support from the finds made in Area F, including the lower end of a conical rhyton and two fragmentary Psi figurines.

Room G, entered from Area F through a doorway placed on axis, consists of a spacious hall measuring internally 7.30m by 5m. Its plan displays a close similarity to that of Room XXXII in House G at Asine,²⁵ which has approximately the same dimensions. Room G at Methana also had two stone bases for wooden columns placed symmetrically on the main axis. At the eastern end of the northern wall there was a secondary entrance, supplied with two steps of dressed stone serving as a threshold. Next to the steps, in the northeast corner of the room, was found a low rectangular bench-like structure, made out of rough stone packed with earth (Pl. LXIXa). By the outer corner of that construction there was a deep conical depression, cut out into a small outcrop of the native rock. The arrangement of this feature may be paralleled to that of the bolster-shaped altar in the Tsountas' House Shrine at Mycenae, which had a curious extension with a round depression, most probably serving as a receptacle for libations or as a kind of stand for a vessel with the same function.²⁶ An alabaster slab with

20 Cf. MARINATOS (*supra* n. 16) 25-32, 49; P. METAXA MUHLY, *Minoan libation tables* (1981) 339; LAFFINEUR (*supra* n. 1, 1987).

21 HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, *Celebrations*) 183-184; see, however, HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, 1998) 101 with n. 14, expressing doubts about the interpretation of the huge stone slab in front of the bolster-shaped altar as a slaughtering table; for this interpretation see MYLONAS (*supra* n. 9) 21 and 92, with Fig. 10, Pls II and III, assuming that the blood of sacrificial animals supposedly killed on the so-called "slaughtering stone" was subsequently poured into the hollow extension of the bolster-shaped altar apparently serving as receptacle for libations; WACE (*supra* n. 9) 255, assigns that stone slab to the second phase of the use of the room and interprets it as a column base; see also FRENCH (*supra* n. 9) 44, repeating that the stone belongs to the second phase, when the bolster altar was completely covered.

22 Tentatively discussed as a dais for a standing statue or priest in KONSOLAKI (*supra* n. 3, 1994 [in press]).

23 See refs. above n. 10.

24 A.W. PERSSON and Å. ÅKERSTRÖM, "Zwei mykenische Hausaltäre in Berbati," *Bulletin de la Société Royale des Lettres de Lund* (1937-38) 59-63; *MMR*² 114-116 with Fig. 33; ÅKERSTRÖM (*supra* n. 11) 201 with Fig. 1 and Pl. 8d; HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, *Celebrations*) 181.

25 See illustration in HÄGG (*supra* n. 10, *Sanctuaries and Cults*) Fig. 1.

26 WACE (*supra* n. 9) 254; MYLONAS (*supra* n. 9) 19-21, 92, with Fig. 10 and Pls II-IV; FRENCH (*supra* n. 9) 44-45 with Figs 5-6, also reporting a miniature kylix from the first phase of the shrine; HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, *Celebrations*) 178 with Figs 1-2; HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, 1998) 104 with Fig. 1; HÄGG (*supra* n. 10, 1996) 604; cf. also the bench of Room XXXII in House G at Asine, above n. 10.

a shallow oval depression observed by Papadimitriou in the porch of the great megaron of the palace at Mycenae, next to a rounded low altar and a kind of square platform, is also assumed to have served for the practice of libation.²⁷ Although Room G at Methana was naturally of a more modest character, the bench in its northeast corner and the depression associated with it could have been used for a similar purpose.

b. Apatheia, Galatas

Libations connected with mortuary ritual may be inferred in a group of Mycenaean chamber tombs excavated at the site of Apatheia on the north slopes of the ridge of Aderes, 1 km south of the Galatas-Troizina road. In three out of the seven tombs investigated, there was a small jug deposited near their inner entrance which could have been used for this purpose. Libations performed with drinking vessels as a farewell toast in front of the entrance of Mycenaean tombs, after walling up the door, have been repeatedly recorded in the past,²⁸ but funerary rites practised within the chamber are elusive and their understanding demands a scrutiny of the archaeological finds, a fact which has not encouraged much discussion.

The first example comes from Tomb B1, the use of which was dated by ceramic finds from LH IIB to LHIIIA2 (Pl. LXIXb). The remains of earlier burials were collected in two shallow pits, one in the centre and one in the northwest corner of the chamber. After those pits had been filled, bones and grave goods were pushed aside to the western and southern walls of the tomb to offer space for the last interment. The primary burial occupied the western half of the chamber only, leaving the eastern part of it almost empty. The deceased was furnished with a plain wide-necked amphora, placed by the right elbow, and a jug with cut-away neck FS 133 (Pl. LXIXc), placed near the left shoulder. One isolated small jug, which was deposited in the northeast corner of the chamber to the left of the inner entrance (Pl. LXIXd), is very unlikely to have been included in the grave goods of either the primary or the secondary burials. This jug was carefully pierced, after firing, in the area of the belly opposite the handle (Pl. LXXa). The piercing at the belly is unusual, as a hole at the bottom of the vase is the norm for flat-base vessels perforated before firing to be used as rhyta.²⁹ Nevertheless, the position of the hole exactly opposite the handle is well chosen for pouring liquids out quite easily, by slightly lowering the hand holding the vase.³⁰ The piercing and the findspot of that jug suggest that libation was practised as a last funerary ceremony, before closing the entrance of the tomb. If this assumption is correct, the empty space in the left part of the chamber may well be explained as the area occupied by the persons standing there to perform the rite.

Similar evidence for libation in mortuary ritual was offered by Tomb A1 (Pl. LXXb). The skeleton of the latest interment and the remnants of earlier burials pushed aside to the walls of the chamber mainly occupied the western part of the tomb. All the burials may be dated by the associated pottery to LHIIIA2. The primary burial was furnished with a globular flask of the vertical type FS 189, and a wide-mouthed spouted jug FS 102 (Pl. LXXc). The only ceramic

27 I. PAPADIMITRIOU, "Ανασκαφαί εν Μυκήνες," *PraktArchEt* 1955, 217-232, esp. 230-231 with Fig. 7 and Pls 77-79; HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, *Celebrations*) 180 with Fig. 4; HÄGG (*supra* n. 1, 1998) 104.

28 See, for instance, A.J.B. WACE, *Chamber Tombs at Mycenae* (1932) 131, 144; C.W. BLEGEN, *Prosymna. The Helladic settlement preceding the Argive Heraeum* (1937) 237-238, 242; O. FRÖDIN and A.W. PERSSON, *Asine. Results of the Swedish excavations 1922-1930* (1938) 358; A.W. PERSSON, *New tombs at Dendra near Midea* (1942) 32; S. MARINATOS, "Ανασκαφαί εν Πύλω," *PraktArchEt* 1953, 238-250, esp. 247 with Fig. 8; J. DESHAYES, *Argos, les fouilles de la Deiras* (1956) 244; K. DEMAKOPOULOU, "Burial ritual in the tholos tomb at Kokla", in *Celebrations* 113-123, esp. 122 with n. 18 and Figs 22, 23; for a discussion of this custom, see M. ANDRONIKOS, *Totenkult (Archaeologia Homerica* 1968) 93; see also G.E. MYLONAS, "Homeric and Mycenaean burial customs" *AJA* 52 (1948) 56-81, esp. 72; S. IAKOVIDIS, "Τα μυκηναϊκά έθιμα ταφής. Mycenaean burial customs," *AAA* 2 (1969) 120-131, esp. 124, 130; LAFFINEUR (*supra* n. 1, 1986) 82-83.

29 KOEHL (*supra* n. 14) 179 with Fig. 2.

30 A second possible example of a juglet pierced at the lower belly after firing, in this case right below the handle, was observed in the material pushed into the northwest corner of the chamber, to the right of the primary burial. This was a hand-made coarse ware jug with cut-away neck, apparently belonging to the earliest phase of the use of the tomb. Its function as a libation vessel is, however, dubious, because the surface of the vase is worn and the hole might be fortuitous.

finds made in the easternmost part of the chamber, in the area to the left of the entrance, were the joining fragments of a small jug, which was unevenly fired and rather ill-formed (Pl. LXXd). The poor quality of the vessel, in contrast to the exquisite pottery contained in that tomb, and its deposition area suggest that this jug was not included in the grave goods, but was most probably used for the practical needs of a libation rite before the packing of the stomion. The empty space in the easternmost part of the chamber may be similarly recognised as the standing place of the persons who performed the ceremony. In the dromos of the same tomb, in front of the blocked entrance, were found in shattered condition a cup FS 222 and a conical cup FS 204, as well as some fragments of other drinking vessels, and a leg of a tripod cauldron, all which imply ritual drinking and dining after the doorway had been walled up.

Funerary rites performed within the grave were also recognised in Tomb A5 (Pl. LXXe). That tomb contained an unusually large number of skeletons (no less than 31), and nearly all of them were completely or partially disarticulated. The only exception was a skeleton of an individual buried in the supine position with legs extended within a pit dug out into the floor in the western side of the chamber. The deposit with the disarticulated skeletal material above that primary burial seems to represent a single episode of secondary burials coming from the cleaning of other tombs nearby. In addition to the human skeletons, that tomb also contained some animal bones and an articulated dog skeleton,³¹ which was deposited by the southwest corner of the chamber. According to the zoo-archaeological analysis conducted by Hamilakis,³² the animal bones provided evidence for the ritual deposition of at least two dog carcasses or parts of them that had been skinned. They also offered evidence for a funerary dining ritual at which hare and birds were consumed. A juglet (Pl. LXXIa) found in that layer immediately to the right of the inner entrance, together with a small rounded alabastron, is not unlikely to have been employed for a libation rite forming part of those funerary ceremonies. The alabastron might have contained a small quantity of honey that was used in mixture with water or wine for a last liquid offering to the deceased.

c. Magoula, Galatas

Some evidence for funerary libation rites was also offered by the excavation at Magoula, a coastal hill situated 2 km west of Galatas. Here was recently located a major Middle and Late Bronze Age site, presumably identified with Prehistoric Troizen.³³ On the west slope of the hill of Magoula have so far been excavated three tombs, each of those representing a different stage in the development of Mycenaean tholoi and offering invaluable information for a new study of their architecture.

Tomb 1, constructed mainly above the ground, is a tholos of exceptional size that may now be added to the rare examples of Pelon's Class C.³⁴ Its spacious chamber, measuring 11m in diameter at the base, was supplied with an altar-like structure consisting of few thin stone slabs laid on the floor against the walling of the eastern side, in an area to the right of the inner entrance³⁵ (Pl. LXXIb). The tomb was disturbed in antiquity and the pottery associated with the burials was very poorly preserved. Kylikes of normal and miniature size (Pl. LXXIc) predominated in the assemblage of the chamber, a fact which may be proposed to indicate the practice of libation, perhaps along with other funerary ceremonies related to that potential

31 For similar examples of dogs deposited in Mycenaean tombs, see L.P. DAY, "Dog burials in the Greek world" *AJA* 88 (1984) 21-32.

32 Y. HAMILAKIS, "A footnote on the Archaeology of Power: Animal bones from a Mycenaean chamber tomb at Galatas, NE Peloponnese," *BSA* 91 (1996) 153-166 with Pl. 35.

33 E. KONSOLAKI, "Magoula at Galatas: a new MH-LH centre in the Saronic Gulf," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the History and Archaeology of the Saronic Gulf, Poros 26-28 June 1998* (in press); ID., "The role of Prehistoric Troizen as a border site in the NE Peloponnese," in *Trade and Production in Premonetary Greece VIII: Crossing Borders, Athens 12-13 Dec. 1998* (in press).

34 O. PELON, *Tholoi, tumuli et cercles funéraires* (1976) 391.

35 For "altars" and benches in Mycenaean tholoi, see PELON (*supra* n. 34) 352-355.

altar.³⁶ A beaked stirrup jug FS 151 of LH IIIA2 date (Pl. LXXId), which was found in that area, could also have served as a libation vessel. The presence of a large quantity of food waste (especially pig bones) in the floor deposit of the chamber indicates that funerary practices also included food offering or ritual dining, or rather both.³⁷

Tomb 2 is a very small tholos sunken into the ground below the lintel. The diameter of the chamber is 3.80m at the base, i.e., this tomb belongs to Pelon's Class A, which is unfamiliar in the NE Peloponnese.³⁸ Plundering in antiquity had left no valuable grave goods behind, except for an agate lentoid with a representation of a lion attacking a bull, ascribed to the LH IIB. In addition to the sherd material that may be assigned to LH IIB and previous periods, the floor deposit of the chamber also yielded fragmentary pottery datable to LH IIIA-B. The most complete pot was a jug with cut-away neck FS 136 of LH IIIB1 date (Pl. LXXIe), representing the latest phase of the use of the tomb. Two perforated vessels in sherd condition (Pl. LXXIf) should rather be connected with the rite of libation than with the furnishing of the deceased,³⁹ provided that the performance of libations within Mycenaean tombs may now be established with the previously mentioned examples. Food residues contained in the floor deposit of this tomb imply that here, too, food offering and ritual dining formed part of the mortuary ritual.

Conclusion

The use of rhyta and other perforated vases, in addition to common jugs and ordinary drinking vessels, for the ritual pouring of liquids in Mycenaean cult and funerary ceremony seems to indicate that in certain cases the liquid offering was meant to flow out through a different opening from that used to pour it inside. As a basic idea underlying this practice, may be proposed the concept of the transition from this world to the other, via the vessel used as a liminal zone. Libation was often accompanied with food offering, as well as with drink and food consumption by the living. This pattern of religious behaviour apparently reflects the desire of human beings living in the profane world to communicate with the realm of the beyond through embodied experiences shared symbolically with the supernatural recipients of the offerings. In this respect, the libation rite of the Bronze Age people may be viewed as one more episode in the agelong agony of man trying desperately to transcend all limitation of time and space and approach the Unknown.

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36 For funerary ceremonies associated with altars or benches in Mycenaean tombs, see E. PROTONOTARIOU-DEILAKI, "Θολωτός τάφος Καζάρμας," AAA 1 (1968) 236-238; ID., "Θολωτός τάφος Καζάρμας," AAA 2 (1969) 3-6 with Fig. 3; DEMA KOPOULOU (*supra* n. 28) 119-122 with n. 19 and Figs 6-7; cf. ÅKERSTRÖM (*supra* n. 11) 204-205, on Kolonaki Tomb 4 at Thebes.

37 For food offering and funeral meals in Mycenaean mortuary ritual see, for instance, ANDRONIKOS (*supra* n. 28) 91, 106; BLEGEN (*supra* n. 28) 238, 259; IAKOVIDIS (*supra* n. 28) 124, 130; MYLONAS, (*supra* n. 28) 72-73; see also ÅKERSTRÖM (*supra* n. 11) 205.

38 PELON (*supra* n. 34) 391, 405; another example of Pelon's Class A in the Argolid is the small tholos tomb at Kokla, see DEMA KOPOULOU (*supra* n. 28).

39 Cf. BLEGEN (*supra* n. 28) 213-214, who describes the remarkable group of five perforated vessels and a libation table found in Tomb XLIV at Prosymna as an apparatus for liquid offerings, but who finally concludes that those were personal belongings of a priest buried in that tomb; Blegen's find may now be compared to the group of silver drinking vessels associated with the bench of the tholos tomb at Kokla, which, according to DEMA KOPOULOU (*supra* n. 28) 119 and 122-123, were "most likely intended for use in a burial ritual." Vessels of this kind would suggest a libation ritual.

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