

REVERENCE FOR DEAD ANCESTORS IN PREHISTORIC CRETE

The reverence which the living display for dead ancestors varies greatly from one society to another. In some it is quite transitory, limited to a brief graveside service. It is linked primarily to burial custom and is largely an extension of social relationships which are usually family-centered. In some cases, it is more lasting, but still secular in nature. It is often genealogical, serving to reinforce family identity and pride, and it may have legal importance determining rights of inheritance. It might also be commemorative in nature, serving to strengthen institutions or concepts of nationhood. In other societies, however, reverence for the dead reflects a system of complex religious beliefs which affect many aspects of daily life. It involves repeated acts of ritual, accompanied by prayer and offerings, and a belief in ancestral powers that affect the living, and when it does, it becomes a form of ancestor worship.

Meyer Fortes has summarized some of the critical components of ancestor worship.¹ The most fundamental is the belief that death does not prevent a person from continuing to participate in the life and activities of his family and community, but allows him to do so in a different way than when he lived. A corollary is the belief that the deceased person continues to take an interest in the world of the living, that he has a stake in the future through his offspring. A third component is that death alone “does not confer ancestorhood.” To become an ancestor a deceased person, once “expunged from the world of the living in his human embodiment,” must be “reincorporated among them in his ancestral and spiritual capacity.” This reincorporation of the dead is accomplished by ritual and made “tangible in precise material terms.” The ancestors are “figuratively reembodyed” in “material vehicles of their presence.”² Such vehicles might include memorial tablets, totem poles, shrines and altars, or larger monuments like spirit houses, temple tombs or pyramids. It is this feature of ancestor worship that allows us to identify the phenomenon in the archaeological record. Finally, it should be noted that ancestor worship also cuts across lines of social, economic and political development that often separate societies from one another in other ways. It is found in some traditional societies and in some advanced industrial societies, but not others, just as it is also found in some ancient civilizations, but not others.

In this paper I want to explore the role ancestors played at different times in Prehistoric Crete. What kind of archaeological evidence exists that demonstrates a belief in ancestors and what does it suggest about the extent of that belief? Is there, in particular, evidence for ancestor worship at any time in Crete’s prehistory? The archaeological record offers various kinds of evidence which suggest that the different people who occupied Crete over the passage of two millennia did not share the same beliefs about their ancestors. Some appear to have belonged to ancestor-worshipping cultures, but others did not. The site of Mochlos offers good evidence for three different cultures, in the Dark Ages, the Mycenaean Period, and the Minoan Period during the LM IB and Prepalatial phases, and illustrates the contrasting practises and beliefs of the different people who once lived in Crete. The most recent example at Mochlos is the most unequivocal since literary sources also describe and explain it.

1 M. FORTES, “An Introductory Comment,” in *Ancestors* (1976) 1-16; see also W. NEWELL, “Good and Bad Ancestors,” in *Ancestors*, 17-29, and J. GOODY for a good review of the literature on the subject in *Death, Property and the Ancestors* (1962).

2 FORTES (*supra* n. 1) 7.

The Dark Age

Sometime in the early part of the 7th century B.C. travelers to the northern coast of Crete came upon an ancient Mycenaean tomb. It is not clear how they found it. No one appears to have been living at Mochlos, but other people living in the vicinity may have known of it and led them to it. The tomb is one of thirty tombs that have been excavated in the main LM III cemetery at Mochlos.³ Identified as Tomb 27, it is the central tomb in a line of three which are located here (Pl. LXXVa), but the only one that appears to have been opened when it was discovered in the 7th century. An irregular platform stood over its dromos. It measured c. 1 m in length, 0.55-0.80 m in width and stood c. 0.50 m high. The removal of the upper course of stones in the platform revealed a curious construction beneath with a green schist slab set upright in the midst of another course of stones with two parts of a burial pithos resting on either side (Pl. LXXVb). The part lying to the south, which preserved part of the side and mouth of the pithos, and the part lying to the north, which preserved more of the side wall, were found to join. Two grave offerings of the Orientalizing Period had been placed with some care with each pithos fragment. A skyphos (Pl. LXXVc; P 1604) broken in part, but still standing upright, lay with the fragment on the north, and a small aryballos (Pl. LXXVd; P 1605) lay on its side with the fragment on the south.

The stones of this platform had been set at the rear of the the dromos towards the entrance to the tomb, and when they were removed, the entrance was revealed. The chamber was still intact, but had been filled with a dark brown earth and stones foreign to its immediate surroundings. It forms an irregular oval oriented north-south, measuring c. 0.90 by 1.45 m, with its roof rising to a maximum of 1.05 m above its floor (Pl. LXXVIa). A pithos (P 1626) lay beneath this fill resting on its side on the bedrock floor in the eastern half of the chamber. It was oriented north-south with the chamber, its mouth lying to the north. Like other burial pithoi at Mochlos, it had been cut open with a chisel at the mouth and the upper side of the pithos so that the body of the deceased could be placed inside. Normally the cut part of the pithos was then set back in place and used to cover the body once it was placed inside the pithos and a schist slab was used to cover its mouth, but here it was this part of the pithos and the original covering slab which were relocated in the platform above the dromos. The pithos fragments above were reoriented with the mouth facing the south, but belonged to the pithos beneath and joined neatly with this pithos when it was reconstructed. The pithos was also full of dark brown earth, and very little skeletal material remained inside, only one tooth and very small fragments of bone, belonging to an individual aged 30 years or more who appears to have been removed from the pithos.

A flat-bottomed alabastron (Pl. LXXVIb; P 1614) of the Orientalizing Period had been placed on its side on top of the earth in the middle of the pithos. A hydria of the same period (Pl. LXXVIc-d; P 1615), decorated with concentric circles in added white, had been placed upright at the foot of the pithos in the southeast corner of the chamber. The only object in the tomb other than the burial pithos which dated to the time of the original burial was a kylix (P 1636) which lay opposite the hydria at a slightly lower level next to the southwest corner of the pithos base.

The 7th century visitors to the tomb appear to have removed the skeletal remains; they also removed the upper or cut part of the burial pithos, the cover slab and all but one of the original grave goods in the tomb; they filled the rest of the pithos which still lay *in situ* with earth and placed an offering on top of it and at its side; then they closed the tomb and constructed an altar above the dromos, using part of the original burial pithos and the cover slab in its interior, and placed offerings at its side. Having gone to all this trouble, they probably took the skeletal remains and grave goods with them when they departed.

3 J. SOLES and C. DAVARAS, "Excavations at Mochlos, 1992-1993," *Hesperia* 65 (1996) 211-222.

The reopening of Mycenaean tombs and the offering of votives is a phenomenon of the period which has been well-documented on the mainland, though not until now on Crete.⁴ It is also one of the best understood examples of reverence for dead ancestors in ancient Greece. A skeleton in a Mycenaean grave is located, identified as that of an important individual or hero, and removed to another location for some political purpose. Herodotos describes examples in the 6th century when the Spartans located the bones of Orestes and brought them back to Sparta and Kleisthenes of Sikyon persuaded the Thebans to dig up the bones of Malanippos so he could rebury them.⁵ Plutarch describes a famous example in the 5th century when Kimon located the bones of Theseus on Skyros and brought them back to Athens.⁶ Anthony Snodgrass has argued that each of these cases demonstrates an attempt to consolidate the ownership of land. "If a party could claim to be linked by descent or other close association ... with a legendary personage who had once inhabited a place, then their claim to ownership of that place was greatly enhanced."⁷ Never mind that there was no way to know who the skeleton actually was. This seems to be the best explanation for what happened to the skeleton of the individual buried in Tomb 27, an individual who was no more and no less legendary than any other who was so identified. It is not clear where he was taken, but it may not have been any place in Crete. This phenomenon has not been reported at other tombs in Crete, and Snodgrass has argued that hero cults of this kind would not have occurred in Crete where "land-ownership was not distributed among a free peasantry, but was worked by a population of serfs who were bound to the land on behalf of its owners." These serfs had no aspiration to own land and would not have been interested in such "crude proprietary propaganda."⁸ It was a custom elsewhere in the Greek world, however, including some city which may have traced its origins to Crete. If Snodgrass is right, this anonymous Mycenaean from Mochlos was transformed into a specific hero, awarded a hero cult, and provided some community with a sense of identity and security in "an age of apparently fluid and unpredictable settlement."

The Mycenaean Era

Some 700 years earlier at the beginning of the 14th century when this cemetery was in use, offerings were also made at these graves, but by local residents in honor of those who had just died. They are of two kinds: a drinking or toasting ceremony of the sort frequently observed at Mycenaean tombs and a libation poured from an elaborately decorated jug and rhyton. The first was quite common and appears to have been observed at a number of graves without regard to rank, while the second was rare and restricted to a few elite burials.

One of the poorest areas of the LM III cemetery was the area over the earlier LM IB Artisans' Quarter where seven shallow pit graves were dug which probably belonged to one family with two adults and five or six children. They include 4 jar burials with subadult remains and two adult burials, each over 20 years, one buried in a large krater, the other with an infant in a single pithos. The adult burials could not be sexed, but it's likely that a parent and child would be buried together in the same container. Few grave goods were placed with these burials, sometimes a cup or two, but usually nothing at all. Nevertheless, an amphoroid

4 I. MORRIS, "Tomb Cult and the 'Greek Renaissance:' the past in the present in the 8th century B.C.," *Antiquity* 62 (1988) 750-761; C. ANTONACCIO, "Contesting the Past: Hero Cult, Tomb Cult, and Epic in Early Greece," *AJA* 98 (1994) 389-410; C. ANTONACCIO, *An Archaeology of Ancestors, Tomb Cult and Hero Cult in Early Greece* (1995).

5 HERODOTOS, i.68; v.67, 2-4.

6 PLUTARCH, *Life of Theseus* xxxvi.1-2; *Life of Kimon* viii.3-6.

7 A. SNODGRASS, *Archaic Greece. The Age of Experiment* (1980) 38-39. There is of course probably more at work than simply land consolidation. As Koptyoff has summarized the phenomenon, in reference to African politics, "Legitimacy is sought by associating one's origins with mythical events, prestigious historical figures, and grand politics known in the region but often rooted outside of it." I. KOPTYOFF, *The African Frontier* (1987) 72.

8 SNODGRASS (*supra* n. 7) 39-40; see also J. COLDSTREAM, "Hero-Cults in the Age of Homer," *JHS* 96 (1976) 13; ID., *Geometric Greece* (1977) 346.

krater (P 796) lay just below surface near the center of this area, and a few fragmentary kylikes (P 2118, 2870) lay scattered around it also just below surface. They are the remains of a drinking ceremony which apparently accompanied one or more of the burials.

Tomb 15, one of the thirty graves excavated in the main area of the cemetery, illustrates the kinds of offering associated with an elite burial.⁹ It held a single burial in a chest larnax, an adult male aged 44 to 56, who has been identified by the “killed” pottery in his tomb as a priest, probably the telestas of the Mycenaean community.¹⁰ Thirty objects had been placed outside his larnax at the southern side of his tomb. They include two broad categories of objects: drinking vessels and ritual vessels. Among the former are another amphoroid krater (P 1156) which contained a jug and pulled-rim bowl (P 1165, 1166), a whole stack of pulled-rim bowls and cups in three different sizes (twelve in all), as well as an undecorated kylix (P 1152). There’s also a ladle (P 1135) with this group, and one may picture the wine in the krater, being scooped out with the ladle, poured into the jugs, from the jugs into the cups, then distributed to mourners at the funerary service in a drinking ceremony similar to that held by the pit graves below. The large number of cups and jugs suggest that more people were involved, however, and the different types of cups suggest different types of recipients who may have had different relationships to the deceased. The single kylix may have been used by his heir, the pulled rim bowls by his immediate family members, the small cups by those more distantly related. Among the ritual vessels are three fancy rhyta (P 1134, 1138, 1141) and two jugs (P 1137, 1155) which make up two sets of equipment. In each case one vase is intended for pouring a libation, the other for filling the libation vase.¹¹ One set (P 1137, 1141) was “killed” however by breaking key parts of the vessels; “killed” before it was placed in the tomb, it apparently belonged to the deceased. The other set (P 1134, 1138, 1155) was not “killed” and unlike the first was used in the funerary ceremony. While the “killed” rhyton was stored in a sheath at the rear of the tomb, these rhyta were placed upside down in the tomb, emptied, and used at the time of burial. They did not belong to the deceased, but to the individual who performed the last rites who may well have been his successor and the new telestas of the community.

The LM III Mochlos graves provide a lot of evidence for social and family relationships in the living community and for the reverence with which the living buried their dead. The burial customs are very much an extension of social relationships. The graves do not, however, provide any evidence for ancestor worship. They do not show evidence for repeated acts of ritual which continue long after the burial service or for the construction of a “material vehicle” housing the ancestor’s spirit. This seems to be true of other LM III chamber tombs in Crete, and probably for the same reason that it is true of graves in the Dark Ages. Only a few elite individuals owned land, while the masses worked as tenants or serfs on this land. Like their Dark Age successors, they had no aspirations to own land themselves. The passing of land from one generation to another, by inheritance or even by the posthumous adoption of a Dark Age hero, is important in ancestor-worshipping societies. To a large extent, “ancestors are established and given ritual care only insofar as they have left land or property to their heirs and successors.”¹² This was simply not the case for the general population in the Mycenaean world.

9 SOLES and DAVARAS (*supra* n. 3) 218-222.

10 J. SOLES, “The Ritual ‘Killing’ of Pottery and the Discovery of a Mycenaean Telestas at Mochlos,” *MELETEMATATA* 787-793. The metope-triglyph decoration of the chest larnax, which is probably inspired by the half-rossette/triglyph motif, reinforces this identification; see M. SHAW, “Aegean Sponsors and Artists: Reflections of their Roles in the Patterns of Distribution of Themes and Representational Conventions in the Murals,” *TEXNH. Craftsmen, Craftswomen and Craftsmanship in the Aegean Bronze Age, Proceedings of the 6th International Aegean Conference, Philadelphia, Temple University, 18-21 April 1996*. *Aegaeum* 16 (1997) II, 499-503.

11 R. KOEHL, “The Functions of Aegean Bronze Age Rhyta,” in *Sanctuaries and Cult* 179-187; and “Rhyta, Libation Jugs, and Priests,” paper delivered to the 97th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, San Diego, California, 27-30 December, 1995, *AJA* 100 (1996) 403.

12 FORTES (*supra* n. 1) 9; see E. AHERN, *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village* (1973) 121, who writes, “an adult male who is a direct descendant of the lineage ancestors and who has married, sired male children and handed down property to his sons is a paradigm of the person with a right to have his tablet placed in the hall.”

One clear exception, however, where there is ample evidence for ancestor worship in the LM II and LM III periods, is the ancient cemetery at Archanes.¹³ Archanes, where many of the built tombs date back into the Prepalatial period, is a cemetery with a very old tradition of ancestor worship, and this may account in part for the continuation of the practise at the site in the Mycenaean era. Like their Dark Age successors, the new Mycenaean settlers at Knossos also lived in an age of fluid and unpredictable settlement. By continuing the ancestor-worshipping practises of their Minoan predecessors, they identified themselves as their legitimate heirs, strengthened their claim to the newly conquered land and established their right to rule.

The Minoan Period

The Minoans who founded the Archanes cemetery belonged to a very old, ancestor-worshipping culture. Perhaps the best evidence for this is the careful retention and veneration of skulls in Early and Middle Minoan tombs.¹⁴ At Mochlos Richard Seager reported “parts of at least thirty skulls” carefully tucked away in one corner of Tomb Chamber I.¹⁵ Excavators at other sites have reported similar finds. Tomb III at Gournia contained as many as 24, the tomb at Myrtos, Pyrgos, as many as 65, Palaikastro Tomb VII as many as 97.¹⁶ The most numerous and best preserved examples, however, come from Archanes where the excavators found hundreds of skulls carefully stored in vases and sarcophagi. These skulls belonged to the recent dead, but also to those who had died centuries before. In Gournia Tomb I, for example, the Minoans of the MM IA period dug a pit to store skulls from the ruined EM II Tomb III, the remains of ancestors who had died at least 600 years earlier, and redeposited these skulls in the pit with new offerings.¹⁷ They then continued to use the tomb for a couple centuries, well into the Protopalatial period. Burial in all these tombs occurred in two stages, the initial laying out of the corpse, and the later removal of the skull and dispersal of other bones. Offerings, sometimes including food as well as stone and ceramic vases, were made at each stage, placed initially with the corpse, then alongside the relocated skull.¹⁸ At Archanes remains of plaster lay with several skulls and the excavators suggested that the skulls may also have been smeared with plaster like the famous examples from Jericho.¹⁹ In this way, through repeated acts of ritual, the deceased was “reincorporated” among the living “in his ancestral and spiritual capacity.”

There is some evidence too that these ancestors were exploited for political purposes. Joanne Murphey has recently argued that local chiefs in the Prepalatial Period “sanctified their power over” the “community by claiming a physical and ideological connection to the ancestors.”²⁰ This is of course a common function of chiefs. Descended from the ancestral founders of the community, they have access to them that others lack. The archaeological evidence for this function in Prepalatial Crete is the placement of altars and shrines at elite tombs where these chiefs and their ancestors were buried.²¹ Seager first commented on this practise in the two elite tombs at Mochlos, I/II/III and IV/V/VI. He noted that Chamber III was never used for burials and was probably “connected to funeral rites of some sort” and

- 13 Y. SAKELLARAKIS and E. SAPOUNA-SAKELLARAKI, *Archanes, Minoan Crete in a New Light* (1997) I, 258-267.
- 14 Not to mention the skull curated in Room 89 at Myrtos, Fornou Korifi; see P. WARREN, *Myrtos, An Early Bronze Age Settlement in Crete* (1972) 83.
- 15 R. SEAGER, *Explorations in the Island of Mochlos* (1912) 18.
- 16 J. SOLES, *The Prepalatial Cemeteries at Mochlos and Gournia and the House Tombs of Bronze Age Crete* (1992) 251-255; for the Mesara, see K. BRANIGAN, “Ritual Interference with Human Bones in the Mesara Tholoi,” in *Thanatos. Les coutumes funéraires en Égée à l’âge du Bronze. Actes du colloque de Liège 21-23 avril 1986, Aegaeum* 1 (1987) 43-51.
- 17 SOLES (*supra* n. 16) 8-9, 31.
- 18 SOLES (*supra* n. 16) 247-250.
- 19 SAKELLARAKIS and SAPOUNI-SAKELLARAKI (*supra* n. 13) 250-252.
- 20 J. MURPHEY, “Ideologies, Rites and Rituals: A View of Prepalatial Minoan Tholoi,” in *Cemetery and Society in the Aegean Bronze Age* (1998) 27-40.
- 21 SOLES (*supra* n. 16) 255-258.

that Chamber IV was “in its original scheme” probably also not used for burials, “but rather as a mortuary chapel through which the important burial chamber of No. VI was reached.”²² Discoveries made during the 1971 cleaning of these tombs pointed to the same conclusions. Chamber III was hypaethral and enclosed a small rock shelter in the face of the adjacent cliff, while Tomb IV/V/VI had a carefully constructed altar built up against its south facade. Fragments of stone vases lay on the altar and several intact stone vases lay in Chamber III, all of which may be identified as the remains of offerings that had been placed in these two locations.

It is important to note that many Prepalatial tombs were maintained in good condition for centuries.²³ They contained the skulls of previous generations and continued to be used into the Protopalatial period by which time palatial polities had replaced the chiefdoms of an earlier era. Presumably they were no less important to the ruling elite of these polities than they were to their chiefly predecessors and continued to be used for purposes of political legitimation. At Chrysolakkos, where burials ceased to be made at the end of the Protopalatial period, offerings continued into the MM III period.²⁴ At Archanes, in Tombs B and 3, and at Myrtos, Prygos, all tombs constructed in the MM IA period, burials and offerings continued to be made even into the LM I period. The practise of ancestor worship did not come to an abrupt halt in Crete when a new type of burial in rock-cut chamber tombs was introduced in the Neopalatial period. It continues in old tombs like those at Archanes, Chrysolakkos and Myrtos, Pyrgos, but is also practised in new tombs of the periods. The Temple Tomb at Knossos is the prime example where skulls and skeletons of earlier burials were stored in the outer pillar crypt, while the inner crypt was used for new burials, and where an upper columnar shrine was added above the pillar crypt as an important part of the tomb’s design. The practise of ancestor worship also seems to be depicted at this time in at least one of the terracotta models from Kamilari.²⁵ Few built tombs were constructed now, however, and the change in burial customs that occurred with the introduction of the chamber tomb required a change in the location of ancestor worship. Chamber tombs did not lend themselves so readily as built tombs to the practise of ancestor worship. The built tomb was a visible, three-dimensional structure that could accommodate large numbers of burials and could be visited and entered daily, while the chamber tomb was used by a smaller number of individuals and was not as accessible. The introduction of the chamber tomb therefore also marked a shift in the focus of ancestor worship from the tomb itself to other buildings where an architectural feature of the tomb could be replicated and still serve as a “material vehicle” for the dead ancestors.

As J. van Leuven has pointed out, of all Minoan shrines, the pillar crypt is the most closely associated with tombs.²⁶ It has its origin in tombs at the end of the Prepalatial period and it continues to be associated with tombs and burials even in the Late Bronze Age. It was this type of tomb shrine which the Minoans chose to reproduce outside the tomb when the introduction of chamber tombs occurred. The house tomb at Myrtos, Pyrgos, demonstrates the way the pillar crypt worked.²⁷ The crypt was used for laying out the deceased, while its upper columnar room, which contained some 300 vessels, as well as stone vases and triton shells, remained open as a place of offering. The pillar is specifically designed to provide a shaft from the world of the living to the burials below. The pillar stands in the underworld, the column stands in this and rises to the heavens above. They replicate the cosmic axis which shamans use to contact the ancestors below and gods above.²⁸ When the Minoans shifted the focus of their ancestor worship from tombs to other kinds of buildings, it was natural that they should choose the pillar crypt as the new “material vehicle” for their dead ancestors.

22 SEAGER (*supra* n. 15) 37, 44.

23 As J. MURPHEY has written (*supra* n. 20) 35, “The presence of the ancestors was represented in the tombs through the retention of the skulls and long bones over the period of a millennium.”

24 V. STURMER, “La céramique de Chrysolakkos: catalogue et réexamen,” *BCH* 117 (1993) 123-187.

25 See D. LEFÈVRE-NOVARO, this volume.

26 J. VAN LEUVEN, “Problems and Methods of Prehellenic Naology,” in *Santuaries and Cults* 14-15.

27 G. CADOGAN, “Pyrgos, Crete, 1970-1977,” *ArchReports* (1977-1978) 73-74.

28 M. ELIADE, *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1964) 261-274.

Mochlos also provides a good illustration of one of these buildings.²⁹ In the 16th century at the beginning of the LM IB period, the occupants of the Minoan town at Mochlos were expanding their settlement and preparing to build a ceremonial building when they came upon an earlier Prepalatial building of the 3rd millennium B.C. This discovery may or may not have been a factor in their decision to build a ceremonial building on the spot, but in either case it determined to a large extent the shape of the ceremonial building that they erected on the site and designed in such a way as to honor their dead predecessors and provide a cosmological link between the living and the dead.³⁰

The south facade was set back towards the center of the building where the Prepalatial remains were located in order to leave an open space above those remains, while the southwest and southeast wings of the building projected on either side of this space. A terrace wall was constructed along the south face of the southeast wing to provide an approach to this space which lay at a higher level than the terrace that ran along the south side of the building. A small rectangular and free-standing structure was set in this space directly above the Prepalatial building. Two pillar crypts were located immediately to the east inside the southeast wing of the building and columnar shrines were located in the rooms above. These three areas, outside on the terrace and above the Prepalatial building and inside in the rooms above the pillar crypts, were used as places of offering. A large number of conical cups, including some used as lamps, were placed on the terrace and along the edge of the ramp leading to the indented space, and the rectangular structure in this space served as an altar where more cups or other offerings could be placed. The pillar crypts were designed to work very like that in the Myrtos, Pyrgos, tomb, which was still standing when Building B.2 was constructed and probably familiar to residents of Mochlos. Equipment for libations, including a rhyton and strainers, as well as marine style pottery from Knossos and a three dimensional religious tableau with a boat and female figure, were located in the columnar rooms above the two pillars.

Conclusions

The widespread practise of ancestor worship in Minoan Crete, but not among the people who occupied the island in the Mycenaean and Dark Ages, underscores the difference in the religious beliefs of these different people. It is one of many differences which is also reflected in the different types of shrines these people maintained. It probably also included very different concepts of Potnia who may have been one Great Goddess to the Minoans, but many different female deities to the Mycenaean and Dark Age inhabitants of the island. The contrasting beliefs about ancestors also point to fundamental differences in the social and economic organization of the island. While the Linear B tablets and Greek inscriptions provide evidence for a feudal society in Crete during these later periods, the practise of ancestor worship suggests quite the opposite for Minoan Crete. The distribution and ownership of land in ancestor-worshipping societies is widespread. This is because the land belongs to the ancestors in these societies and is held in trust to be passed down from one generation to the next. Minoan Crete is likely to have enjoyed a more egalitarian society, therefore, in which the small farms and country villas and town houses that dot the landscape in the Neopalatial period are not so much manifestations of a landed aristocracy as they are evidence for the existence of a large middle class of free, land-owning people.

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29 SOLES and DAVARAS (*supra* n. 3) 184-194; J. SOLES, "The Collapse of Minoan Civilization: The Evidence of the Broken Ashlar," in *POLEMOS* II, pl. IIIa.

30 The erection of actual buildings at specific locations in order to house, honor and provide access to ancestors is a common phenomenon in the ethnographic record. The "keda" in Flores in Eastern Indonesia are a good example. See S. HOWELL, "Access to the Ancestors, Reconstruction of the Past in Non-literate Society," in *The Ecology of Choice and Symbol, Essays in Honor of Fredrik Barth* (1991) 228-230.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Pl. LXXVa	Tomb 27 in the LM III cemetery at Mochlos, from west.
Pl. LXXVb	Altar above dromos of Tomb 27, with P 1604 to left, from west.
Pl. LXXVc	Skyphos (P 1604) placed along north side of altar.
Pl. LXXVd	Aryballos (P 1605) placed along south side of altar.
Pl. LXXVIa	Tomb 27 with LM III burial pithos (P 1626), from above.
Pl. LXXVib	Alabastron (P 1614) placed on top of LM III burial pithos.
Pl. LXXVic	Hydria (P 1615) placed at foot of LM III burial pithos, front view.
Pl. LXXVId	Hydria (P 1615), side view.