

Together in Death:
A Study of Late Bronze Age Double Burials in Mycenaean Chamber Tombs

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The Mycenaean civilization flourished during the late Bronze Age (ca. 1550-1050 BCE) throughout the Peloponnese in Greece and the Aegean. The Mycenaean buried the dead together within communal chamber tombs, and therefore it is not unusual to discover multiple burials within chamber tombs. Multiple burials probably indicate a personal connection, whether it be familial or not, between individuals, as these individuals were specifically chosen by living members of their society to be buried in the same place. In analyzing these tombs, there is often an assumption that double burials were interred at the same time, and yet the evidence for simultaneous burial is rarely examined explicitly. This analysis is hampered by the fact that stratigraphic data and plans of tomb contents were frequently not reported in early excavations. Archaeologists often provide their own assumption as to whether double burials were interred simultaneously or not, with no data to substantiate such assumptions. This study presents a retrospective analysis of published data, including photographs, plans, and stratigraphy, where available, to examine whether double or multiple burials are likely to have occurred simultaneously within a tomb. By looking at the body positioning in situ, where drawings can illustrate a better image than text can describe, the relationship of the bodies to the stromion (doorway) of the tomb and the stratigraphy of the dromos (entranceway) of the tomb, it is possible to evaluate the evidence for sequential or simultaneous burials. This contributes to our knowledge of Mycenaean burial practices, and may have implications for the organization and structure of Mycenaean society.

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This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents who are always open to sharing family history and childhood memories of growing up in Greece, and to my mother for her continuous support as I pursue my passion.

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Chapter 1

Promoting Public Interest in Greek Mortuary Archaeology

Mortuary archaeology studies death and burial by examining archaeological evidence of funerary practices performed by the living for the dead (Parker Pearson 2000:3). By studying death crucial information can be found regarding the development, manifestation, and expansion of social structures and hierarchies (Haland 2014:6). Death is universal, and plays a major role in the development of societies and culture (2014:6). The burial reflects a direct link to past societal decisions and mortuary rituals performed by the living that buried the deceased. Archaeological data and literature are thus very important for archaeologists in interpreting mortuary practices in various contexts.

As T. Papadopoulos (1979:51) pointed out over 30 years ago, despite numerous published works on chamber tombs, there are serious gaps in our knowledge due to brief and sometimes inaccurate excavation reports. S. Papadopoulos (1975) writes in her dissertation on Mycenaean Chamber Tombs that many Mycenaean cemeteries were hurriedly excavated in 1950 to 1971 and many of these excavations remain unpublished. Due to the lack of published archaeological reports, we are forced to rely only on the preliminary and often quite limited statements (S. Papadopoulos 1975:15). Supporting evidence, stratigraphy, plans and sections, drawings and contextual associations and descriptions, where present, may never be reported or published. Basic information is lost, and fundamental data on tomb stratigraphy is at best described in a simple manner, or not described at all and very rarely illustrated (Boyd 2002:24).

Upon excavation of chamber tomb burials, archaeologists often find double burials, in which two individuals appear to be buried beside one another intentionally. All too often the assumption is made that a pair of burials occurred simultaneously, and is published without further discussion or analysis. Assuming that the dead were interred at the same time as the remains are placed beside one another is not sufficient, and more evidence is needed to reach a more persuasive interpretive conclusion. I have examined published literature on Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550-1050 BCE) Mycenaean chamber tomb burials in Greece, with an emphasis on multiple and double burials. My research focuses upon how archaeologists determine whether a double burial occurred simultaneously or asynchronously, and how the archaeological evidence can elucidate the chronological timeline of activities that took place within the chamber tomb.

Greek mortuary archaeology, such as Mycenaean chamber tombs, can promote interest in Greek tourism and benefit the country economically. Archaeology plays a major role in the Greek economy as it attracts millions of tourists annually, creating more jobs for local people and generating income. "Today's visitors to Greece have the opportunity to trace the 'fingerprints' of Greek history from the Paleolithic Era to the Roman Period in the hundreds of archaeological sites, as well as in the archaeological museums and collections that are scattered throughout the country" (Visit Greece 2014). Mass tourism in Greece flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, and with an overflow of international tourists, large-scale construction projects for hotels and other facilities began. The 2004 summer Olympic Games and large-scale nationally funded cultural infrastructures such as the new Acropolis Museum were built and are continuously boosting tourism in the country, creating thousands of jobs, and

contributing to the economic income of the country. Tourism is essential in the Greek economy, as it aids in preserving the numerous archaeological sites and is necessary to fund national excavation projects.

As tourists have a fascination and interest in history, detailed reporting of Greek burials, including Mycenaean chamber tomb burials, can help attract more attention to Greek tourism, which can further promote additional archaeological excavations in the future. The latest headlines regarding Greek archaeology at this time revolve around the Hellenistic or Roman Amphipolis tomb that began to be excavated in the summer of 2014; it could be the next biggest tourist attraction in the country once excavation is completed. There are various international media outlets covering the latest finds, updates and news regarding the tomb and its excavation progress: Ekathimerini; Greek Reporter; Ancient Origins; Fox News; BBC News; Daily Mail; NBC News; National Geographic; etc. With such immense public interest, it is likely to attract a large number of tourists from around the globe, and a developing promotion of the ancient site is underway (Ekathimerini 2014). As news media promote Greek archaeology, more attention, tourism and income could arise, leading to the proper conservation and excavation of archaeological sites in the years to come. As detailed reporting is essential in preserving archaeological data, it is imperative not only for news media, but for academic purposes and interpretive analysis among archaeologists to reconstruct ancient Greek mortuary practices.

My research presents a case study in the problems associated with accessing archaeological collections and records, and how this affects the knowledge gained from archaeological sites, which influences Greece's history and sense of patriotism. Restricted

access to archaeological information limits interpretive conclusions regarding Mycenaean chamber tomb burials. Archaeological records and archives are not easily accessible, and the movement towards digitization is imperative so that global access can be achieved.

[By] converting that material and contextual data into broadly accessible digital information, to allow for ongoing and innovative research that engages with this compiled and rich archaeological heritage left by the countless previous generations of those who loved, lived, and died in this place, and by all those today who draw connections, meaning, value, and identify from human heritage [Sustainable Archaeology 2014]

In order to advance research and provide greater public access and awareness, Greece should strive toward digitizing their archaeological collections and consolidating these records into one database or at least a series of easily accessible regional databases. This would facilitate broader access to data for archaeologists and the public and could encourage “people to engage with, analyze and interpret across the totality of this compiled record on a scale that is simply impossible to manage physically, even if collections were readily accessible” (Ahmed et al. 2014:139). Striving for a digitized database could greatly benefit the locals, as they would easily be able to educate themselves on the archaeological ruins that are found near their villages, towns and cities. As there are such an overwhelming number of archaeological sites and ruins in Greece, it is not always possible to post informative signs to inform the surrounding locals or visiting tourists. A digitized database could allow Greek history, knowledge, and heritage to be accessible to local individuals, which is what Greek archaeology should be striving to achieve.

This is a public issue for Greece as there is insufficient government funding to properly excavate, relay knowledge to the surrounding communities, and publish detailed reports that will help build upon the country's vast and rich history.

The archaeological sites and places of historic interest are [an] integral part of the country's identity, as they connect its past with its present and future. This [website] presents hundreds of sites, examples of Greek and world culture, situated all over Greece and spanning some five thousand years [Hellenic Ministry of Culture 2012]

It is imperative for cultural groups to know their own history, and archaeology is able to contribute to this. The Athenian Agora has a public website by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens that is accessible to anyone, in which images, plans, field notes, and data can be viewed. Taking this idea and turning it into a national database could create more awareness, educational learning and enthusiasm from the Greek population and attract further international tourism.

Adding to this issue of accessibility is the once rigid dichotomy between the methods of classical archaeology and anthropological archaeology that influence how archaeology is being practiced in Greece. The integration of both types of archaeology is crucial in creating a beneficial approach to practicing archaeology in Greece. Educating locals on the importance and significance of archaeology to their own cultural history and identity may create an appreciation regarding the importance of preserving archaeological sites. An integration of practice will also be useful at a global level, which will provide a better way to perform archaeology in Greece and gain knowledge that can be integrated into the public sphere of knowledge. This case study identifies the importance of building upon a country's

history of life and culture by studying burials, and has implications for related research in other parts of the world.

I will prepare my thesis in the style of publishing in *Hesperia* – The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. *Hesperia* is an academic journal that is published quarterly. The journal dates back to 1932 when it was founded to publish the work of the American School, although now the journal welcomes submissions from all scholars working in the fields of Greek archaeology, art, epigraphy, history, materials science, ethnography, and literature, from earliest prehistoric times onward (Inside cover of *Hesperia*). Established in 1881 the American School of Classical Studies at Athens is a research and teaching institution dedicated to the advanced study of Greece and the Greek world. As part of its mission, the School directs ongoing excavations in the Athenian Agora and at Corinth and sponsors all other American-led excavations and surveys on Greek soil.

Hesperia has published many of the resources I have read for my thesis, as the material is relevant to my own research. Due to the relevance of my thesis to the journal's array of research questions in Greece, I am hopeful that the audience subscribed to *Hesperia* will find interest in the research I have investigated.

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Chapter 2

Together in Death: A Study of Late Bronze Age Double Burials in Mycenaean Chamber Tombs

2.1) Introduction

Burials are of interest to archaeologists as they provide a direct link to past societies and how they viewed life, death and mortuary ritual. Burials can reveal specific cultural traditions, material culture, social relations, and beliefs involving the human body (Rakita et al. 2005:1). In order to understand past mortuary practices, archaeologists turn to theories and interpretations based upon the type of burial, tomb architecture, artifacts found near the body and the placement of the dead (Baker 2012:21). By studying human remains archaeologists can reconstruct valuable interpretations regarding past lifeways, as the burial itself is a direct link to past societal decisions made by the living members of a group who participated in burying the deceased (Parker Pearson 2000:5).

For approximately 500 years from 1600 – 1100 BCE, chamber tombs were common mortuary structures in Greece (Cavanagh and Lee 1998). Many Mycenaean cemeteries consisted entirely of communal chamber tombs, which were favoured over earlier single pit or cist graves during the Late Bronze Age in Greece. According to Cavanagh and Lee (1998), in Early Mycenaean Greece collective tombs began to be used in favour of single graves. Perhaps these communal tombs were related to a belief that the dead should be buried together, or perhaps it is the familial tomb that gained popularity (1998:55). The chamber tomb was designed in a way that fit the needs of the living population, more so than the

needs of the dead; the tomb specifically facilitates the presence of human individuals maneuvering within its walls (Boyd 2002:83). Chamber tombs were cut into a hillside, or through soft rock, sometimes with additional niches for primary or secondary burials. They consist of an open passage, the dromos, which leads to the hollow chamber, through a narrow entrance-way, the stomion, in which a blocking wall would be built to seal the chamber (Dickinson 1983:57). The hollow chamber is roughly circular in shape with a corbelled vaulted ceiling (Demakopoulou & Crouwel 1998:282), not always symmetrical and with earthen floors. After a burial was placed within the chamber, the stomion would be sealed shut, and the dromos filled with soil. A multitude of activities left traces in the stratigraphy of a tomb: the re-excavation of tombs; the refilling of dromoi; the demolition and reconstruction of blocking walls in the stomia; the reshaping and sometimes reconstruction of tomb floors and walls; the cleaning of tombs; and the occasional plastering of floors (Smith and Dabney 2014:153). Recent studies of soil cores from the dromos have been able to document these processes (Smith and Dabney 2014), but little work has been done on the sequence of events within the tomb.

For my thesis, I am examining Late Bronze Age burials in mainland Greece (ca. 1550-1050 BCE) within Mycenaean chamber tombs, with a specific emphasis on double and multiple burials. Upon excavation of chamber tomb burials, archaeologists often find pairs of burials, in which two individuals appear to be buried beside one another intentionally. All too often the assumption is made that a double burial occurred simultaneously (Anderson Immerwahr 1962; Boyd 2002; Papadopoulos 1970; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994; Smith et al. 2007; Townsend 1955; Vermeule & Travlos 1966) but this thesis seeks to address

questions of temporality: were the individuals buried simultaneously or during different interments? It is often suggested that people were sacrificed to accompany others into the afterlife, despite a scarcity of definitive evidence for human sacrifice in the Aegean Bronze Age. Mylonas (1948) concludes that it was not custom to immolate humans to honour the dead in Mycenaean times (1948:73). Homer, who had great influence on subsequent literature and practices, describes human sacrifices that accompanied burials, and perhaps this is the source of the assumption regarding human sacrifice in Bronze Age Greece. Regardless, it is essential that archaeologists do not assume that double burials were concurrent, but that they observe and record the archaeological context to lead them to an interpretation regarding the burials within the chamber.

In order to assist in the determination of whether specific double burials occurred simultaneously or asynchronously, the positioning of the bodies is analyzed in relation to the context of the chamber, and archaeologists must also examine the stratigraphy of the stomion (chamber entrance) and dromos (narrow passageway) to gain additional information regarding how many times the tomb was re-opened for successive burials.

2.2) Methods

I reviewed published literature on Mycenaean chamber tombs with an emphasis on double and/or multiple burials. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the term multiple burials in reference to the other interments that are within the same chamber tomb as the proposed pair of burials. It is important to examine all of the interments within a chamber tomb, and not ignore the other sets of remains surrounding a possible double burial, as they can assist in

the reconstruction of the chronological timeline of deposits. I examined illustrations, either photographs or drawings, of the tombs and the remains found within the chamber. The chamber plans clearly display the context of the chamber tomb and show the remains *in situ* before they were moved. In some cases the excavators provided text that was helpful in elucidating the activities that occurred within the chamber tomb.

When analyzing the relevant archaeological reports, plans of chamber tombs were more valuable than photographs in interpreting the sequence of burial, and were most likely to be found in older archaeological reports. More recent reports include clear photographs that can be augmented by software, unlike the older reports in which old photographs can appear blurry without the manipulation of computer photograph software. Unfortunately these modern reports often are lacking chamber plans that can be more explicit than photographs.

It is clear that over the course of a century, archaeological excavation techniques and documentation processes have evolved and resulted in differing interpretations of the sequence of burials within chamber tombs. As many of the archaeological reports on Mycenaean chamber tombs that I reviewed were published between 1955 and 1979, I thought it would be interesting to note the differences in the context that are presented to the reader. A more recent excavation report by Smith and Dabney (2014) emphasizes the importance of stratigraphic layers in reconstructing tomb activity. I noted within Wace's (1932) publication that many chamber plans have individuals laid side by side fairly often, but Wace made no mention of double burials within his text. Perhaps it was later in the century that pairs of burials began to be noticed and discussed within the archaeological literature, although the

idea of examining the remains *in situ* seems to be present within all archaeological reports, no matter the decade of publication.

2.3) Bodies *in situ*

Upon excavating a chamber tomb, the positioning of the remains within the chamber context is vital in reconstructing the sequence of burials. Thus, the preservation of the skeletal remains will impact the range of interpretations that can be offered both during and after the excavation. Poorly preserved remains will be difficult to analyze, while fairly well preserved remains will yield additional observable data in order to attain a clear interpretation. The sequence of these burials is best determined through the relation of the various skeletons to the stonion (Townsend 1955:199), and may also indicate the intent to use the tomb for future burials within the chamber. When no floor space was available, the bones of the previously interred were moved against the chamber walls to provide additional room for more burials (Mylonas 1959:120). The disturbance of bones seems to have been an acceptable action to the Mycenaeans. Boyd (2002:78) suggests that the physical transformation of the corpse from flesh to bone may illustrate the social transformation from recently deceased and individual, to a communal ancestral entity.

Several interpretations can be made regarding the sequence of burials within a chamber tomb via plans or photographs. When a pair of burials together blocks the stonion, this may be an indication that they were the last interments within the chamber with no intention of future use for some time. On other occasions, burials were placed off to the sides

of the tomb (see Figure 1), indicating a clear intention to leave room for additional interments.

Another issue in the use of chamber tombs is the way the bodies were brought into the tombs. There are archaeological reports that use body positioning to determine whether burials were brought in through the stomion or lowered into the chamber from a roof-cut opening. Haggis et al. (in preparation) discusses how the excavation of a Late Bronze Age to Iron Age tholos tomb revealed that it would have been impossible to place an adult body into the tomb via the stomion, as the stomion was simply too small. Due to this discovery, Liston suggested that perhaps the bodies were lowered into the tomb via a roof opening. If the large capping stones of the roof vault were removed, then the southeast quadrant of the tomb was exposed, leaving the north half of the tomb still sheltered by the vaulted roof (Haggis et al. in preparation). Three out of the four burials were placed close to one another in the southeast quadrant of the tomb. Observing the body positioning in relation to the chamber roof, it appears that the bodies were lowered into the tomb. The bodies were tightly flexed, which indicates that they had been bound before being placed in the tomb, making the act of lowering their remains into the tomb easier than if they had been left unbound (Haggis et al. in preparation). This example demonstrates how archaeologists were able to interpret tomb activity based upon the position of the remains relative to the surrounding context.

Another example of archaeologists using remains *in situ* to interpret chamber activities is Aghios Kosmas (Mylonas 1959) where it was concluded that bodies were also being lowered into graves. The excavators discovered that many graves had doorways, but

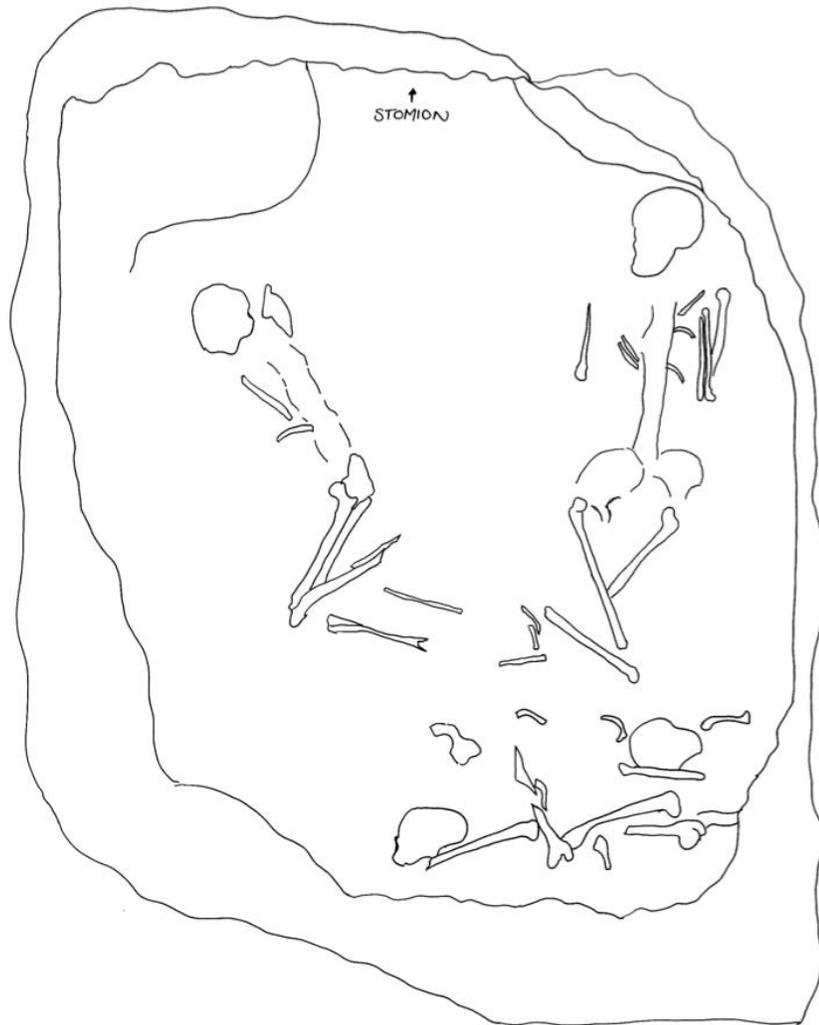


Figure 1. Tomb O 7:5 'Tomb with the Niches'

Burial position in relation to the stonion.

Drawn by Marya D'Alessio from Anderson Immerwahr 1962.

they were simply too small to be of real use for maneuvering bodies, ranging from 0.35-0.68 meters in width, to 0.30 – 0.46 meters in height (Mylonas 1959:65). It seems apparent that the population used the technique of lowering bodies into the grave via the roof opening. The graves were dug into the ground, with the roof reaching the ground level, with the occasional protrusion of 0.05 – 0.10 meters above ground level. The types of roof slabs that were used to cover the graves were rather small, as opposed to more substantial materials; these small slabs would have been easily removed when additional interments were lowered into the grave through the roof and easily replaced once interment was complete (Mylonas 1959:65).

Bodies *in situ* can reveal a great deal regarding the living population's plans for future burials within the tomb as well as how they viewed the body once decomposition was completed. The action of moving older interments to make room for new burials perhaps suggests a belief that once the soft tissue is physically deteriorated, the bones of their ancestors could be co-mingled with other deceased individuals. A common postulation is the idea that sweeping aside of bones is a careless act and that the Mycenaeans held little respect for the actual physical remains of the dead (Papadopoulos 1970:36). This is a cultural assumption that is commonly expressed in articles, but cannot be accepted definitively. Regardless, as Townsend (1955) states, the positioning of bodies in relation to the door is our best clue as to the chronological sequence of burials. The earlier interments are moved into co-mingled piles, while the later interments are typically the set of remains that have *not* yet been swept aside yet, and can reveal a chronological sequence of burials within the tombs.

2.4) Stratigraphy

The analysis of stratigraphy is essential in archaeological excavation, as it displays a timeline of past activities based on the superposition of soil layers. By looking at the stratigraphic layers in the dromoi and stomia, archaeologists can examine evidence regarding the use of the tomb and can develop a more accurate account of the activities that took place therein (Boyd 2002:62). The stratigraphy of stomia reveals the minimum number of times the entrance was filled in (Wells 1990:133). It must be noted that the stratigraphy of the stomia is only useful if the Mycenaeans were depositing individuals into the chamber via the stomion. If they were lowering the deceased into a chamber via a roof opening, the stratigraphy of the stomion will not reveal the tomb activities.

As chamber tombs could be used for multiple burials, the stratigraphy of the dromoi and stomia has the potential to reveal the life-cycle of the tomb to excavating archaeologists. What do we do, however, when there is a lack of stratigraphic evidence accompanying chamber burials (Boyd 2002:85)? The stomia would have been dismantled and refilled several times between interments, yet very few reports document the opening and closing of the stomia and how this connects to the number of burials within the chamber (Smith and Dabney 2014:146). The excavations at Ayia Sotira attempt to address these problems by developing a standard method of excavation, documentation and analysis of tomb stratigraphy (Smith and Dabney 2014:146). By using macro-stratigraphic analysis of sediment fills the archaeologists were able to gain a clear picture of how many times a tomb was reopened. Micromorphological analysis is fairly new, and this data is not available for earlier excavations; however, the larger scale macro-stratigraphic analysis can reveal the

minimum number of times the fill was put back into place to seal the chamber (Wells 1990:133) and can possibly be correlated with the number of interments present within the tomb. “The supporting evidence, the stratigraphy, plans, sections, drawings, contextual associations and contextual descriptions, may neither be reported nor in most cases recorded” (Boyd 2002:24), altering the interpretation of tomb activities. It is hard to say how archaeologists can thus determine how many times a chamber tomb was re-opened for burials without looking at the stratigraphy of the entry way (Boyd 2002:85). Sadly, published reports that lack this kind of evidence provide the reader with only a partial glimpse of the chamber life-cycle.

2.5) Double Burials

When a chamber tomb excavation reveals multiple individual burials, it is necessary to first understand whether the interments occurred simultaneously or separately over a longer period of time (Duday 2009:72).

Table 1 summarizes the excavation reports I reviewed and the data that were presented regarding chamber tomb burials. It includes how many chamber tombs were analyzed, when the tombs were excavated and whether tomb stratigraphy or chamber plans were included, as well as the number of burials within the tombs. I have only included publications in my sample that discuss multiple or double burials within Mycenaean chamber tombs. In order to ascertain whether a double burial is simultaneous or not, several traits can be observed in context in order to determine the chronology of burials. Simultaneous double burials are indicated by specific traits including: 1) the relative stratigraphic position of the

skeletons; 2) the position of skeletons and grave goods relative to each other (e.g., are they intertwined, separate, facing each other, similar positioning, etc.); and 3) the position of skeletons in relation to the stomion. By looking for these traits within published reports, we can better discern whether a pair of burials is simultaneous, or two individuals were simply buried next to one another. I have chosen three case studies of possible double burials to analyze utilizing these criteria.

2.5.1) Double Burial in the ‘Tomb with the Coffins’ – Tomb N 12:4

The most promising example that I have found within my research is in the Athenian Agora, and emphasizes all three indicative traits of a simultaneous double burial. The stratigraphy of the stomion was analyzed and the inferred number of stomion blocking correlates with the number of burials found within the chamber. A proposed double burial was found in a Mycenaean chamber tomb, referred to as the ‘Tomb with the Coffins’ (Vermeule and Travlos 1966:55). Based upon the stratigraphic analysis of the stomion, the tomb had been blocked, or filled in three times (1966:59). As there were four individuals found within the chamber, the blocking of the stomion on *only* three occasions suggests two individuals were deposited simultaneously.

The double burial consisted of male skeletons C and D, encased in individual coffins of white wood (1966:55). As Figure 2 indicates, the men were placed parallel to one another with their skulls turned so as to face each other (1966:62). The exceptional stratigraphic evidence from this tomb suggests the stomion was opened on three occasions and with the



Figure 2. Tomb N 12:4 'Tomb with the Coffins'
Double Burial in Athenian Agora
Drawn by Marya D'Alessio from Vermeule & Travlos 1966.

proximity and similarity of the burials to one another, it is entirely plausible that these two individuals were buried on the same day. The archaeologists speculate that they were father and son (1966:68), strictly due to their ages, although this cannot be definitively determined.

Drawings of the chamber tomb with the remains *in situ* and differing stratigraphic layers were supplied in the report as well as accompanying photographs. It is beneficial that archaeological reports include both avenues of illustrative evidence to support hypotheses and conclusions of a simultaneous double burial. This study is an excellent example of how archaeologists can use both stratigraphic analysis and body positioning within the chamber to determine the chronological sequence of burials, as well as demonstrate that a double burial occurred simultaneously. This publication is from 1966, with excavation taking place in 1965, which indicates that the era of excavation cannot always be used as reasoning for lack of contextual evidence.

This is an excellent example of a simultaneous double burial as the skeletons are facing one another, and are so closely associated even though they were encased in separate coffins. The closing of the stonion on *only* three occasions convinces me that the excavator's interpretation of a simultaneous double burial is accurate.

2.5.2) Possible Double Burial in A Mycenaean Warrior's Tomb – Tomb 3

A pair of burials was found in *A Mycenaean Warrior's Tomb at Krini near Patras* by Papazoglou-Manioudaki (1994). The excavation of chamber tomb 3 revealed two separate layers of burials. The upper floor burials revealed four adult individuals who were laid out

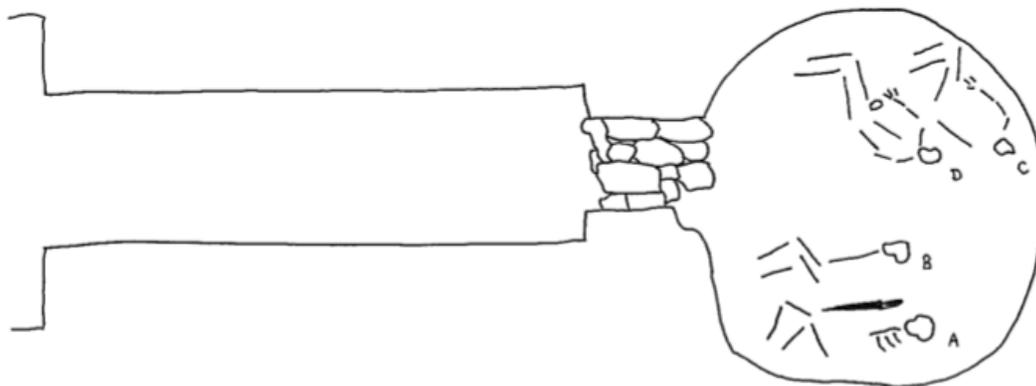


Figure 3. Tomb 3

Possible Double Burial in Mycenaean Warrior's Tomb, Krini

Drawn by Marya D'Alessio from Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994

parallel to one another. The ‘warrior’ as he is coined, due to the extravagant sword buried with him, is laid beside an individual whom Papazoglou-Manioudaki suggests may be his wife or companion since “... their positions [appear] to be closely associated, and [they] were probably buried simultaneously” (1994:176). Based upon Figure 3 it is easily observable that two pairs of individuals are placed on either side of the chamber. If burials A and B (the ‘warrior’ and his companion) are a double burial, then how are burials C and D also not considered a double burial as they are buried parallel to one another as well? By observing the remains *in situ* (Figure 3), it is very plausible that the ‘warrior’ burial A was placed within the tomb first as he is closest to the chamber wall, and then during a later interment burial B was placed beside him within the tomb. This is an easy maneuver as there is ample floor space still available within the chamber. Both skeletons are placed on the right side of the chamber, with the other pair of remains on the left half, leaving room in the middle of the chamber for subsequent burials and/or maneuvering space for the individuals depositing the bodies. Papazoglou-Manioudaki states that the chronological sequence of burials is hard to determine (1994:176) and does not discuss the stratigraphy of the tomb to back up her claim of a simultaneous burial. Individuals placed closer to the wall of the chamber could have been earlier interments, with the individuals interred beside them as possible companions, but perhaps interred years later. This is unclear, as the excavator does not provide enough evidence to prove they were simultaneously buried.

2.5.3) Possible Double Burial in the Athenian Agora – Tomb J 7:2

In 1955, Townsend published her findings from a chamber tomb excavation in a *Mycenaean Chamber Tomb under the Temple of Ares*. This article is almost sixty years old but has an excellent chamber plan of the burials *in situ*, which is rare to find in present day archaeological reports. The chamber tomb that was analyzed was excavated in 1951, with at least fourteen individuals within two distinct burial layers. As shown in Figure 4, burials VI and VII, from the lower level of burial strata, occupy the whole southern half of the chamber. They are laid side by side and head to foot and Townsend claimed, “they seem to be contemporary interments” (1955:195). Based upon their positioning within the tomb, (Figure 4) it seems clear that they could have been interred on separate occasions, as they are not placed in a way that blocks the original stromion entrance. They are also placed head to foot, which raises a debatable question of why the individuals were not placed face to face. Burial VII is placed directly against the wall of the chamber, which is usually an indication of an earlier burial that has been positioned out of the way of the main floor space to allow for easy maneuvering. It is likely that burial VI was placed in the chamber during a later interment, and as there was enough space on the chamber floor, VI was deposited beside the older burial of VII without a need to disturb any remains. If more burials had been interred in this full chamber tomb, it is most likely that the remains of VI and VII would have been moved to create more floor space as is commonly done within Mycenaean chamber tombs.

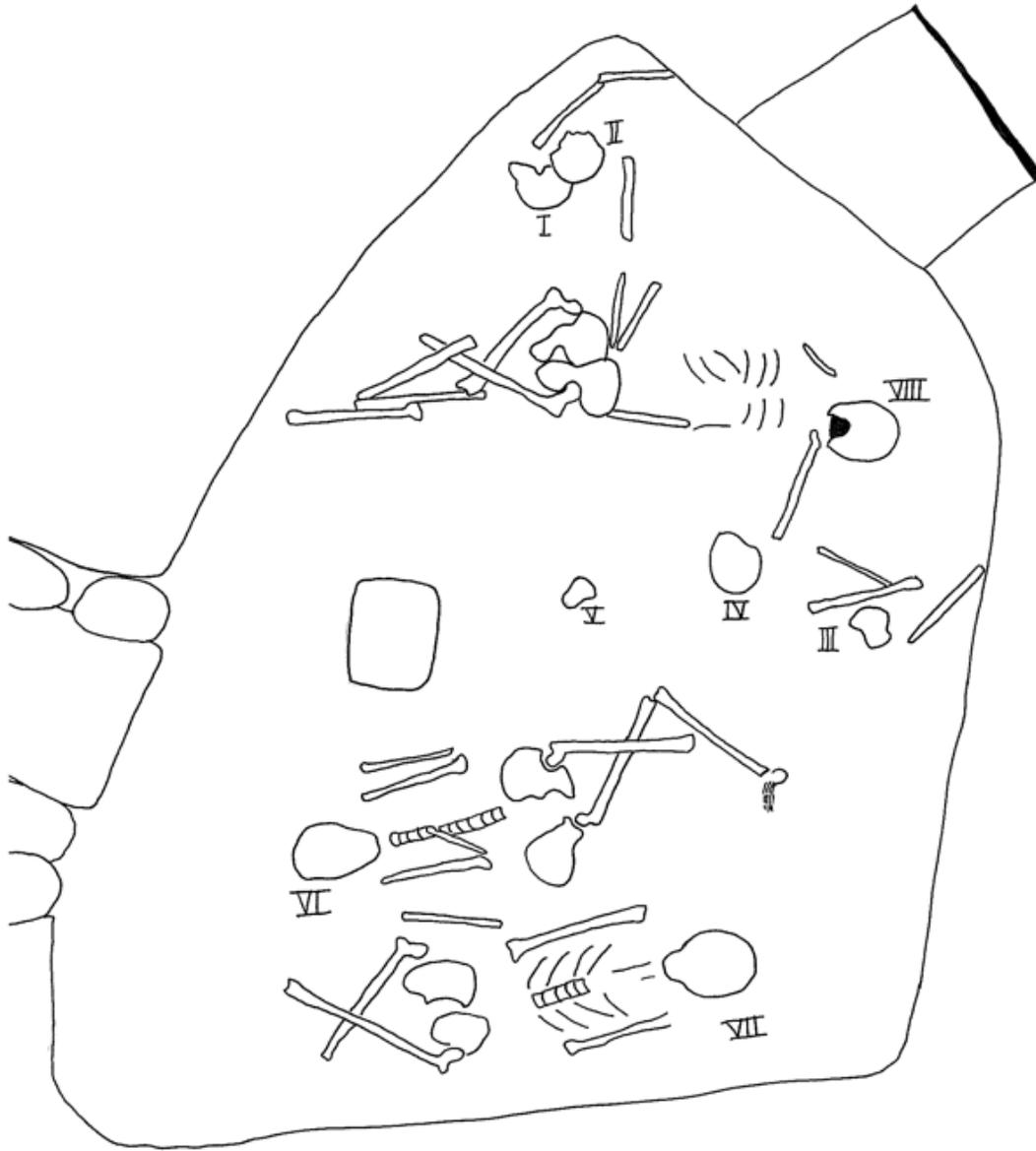


Figure 4. Tomb J 7:2
Possible Double Burial in Athenian Agora
Drawn by Marya D'Alessio from Townsend 1955

2.6) Discussion

When looking at Mycenaean chamber tomb burial data, there are several things to consider when assessing whether or not a proposed double burial is simultaneous. Using the case studies that I have presented as examples, there appears to be one conclusive simultaneous double burial (Example 2.5.1, Tomb N 12:4), and two possible simultaneous double burials (Examples 2.5.2 & 2.5.3, Tomb 3 and Tomb J 7:2). Based upon the literature that I have reviewed, I have only found evidence of one well-evidenced simultaneous double burial, but have found many *possible* examples of concurrent double burials, and several that are ambiguous. Table 2 addresses texts that discuss Mycenaean chamber tombs but do not mention double burials, and mostly focus upon the pottery, stratigraphy, or architecture of the tombs. Table 3 lists all the chamber tomb data that I have reviewed, and presents the likelihood of a double burial based upon the evidence presented in the report. I have organized Table 3 by chamber tomb number and location rather than publication as multiple publications reference the same chamber tombs on a number of occasions.

Table 3 displays that 15 out of 46 chamber tombs do not have enough supporting contextual evidence to make a firm interpretive conclusion regarding the chronology of burials, and 18 out of 46 chamber tombs had separate interments that can be established through chamber context. These numbers account for 33 chamber tombs out of the 46 that I studied as having no indication of double burials. This reiterates why when two individuals are found next to one another, an assumption is made that they were simultaneously deposited, as there is not much knowledge or published literature regarding simultaneous double burials in Mycenaean chamber tombs. There are 4 chamber tombs that had no

remains within them, leaving 9 chamber tombs that mention a possible double burial found within an excavated chamber tomb. With these numbers, I have found that a mere 19.5% of the chamber tombs I analyzed in my study sample have possible double burials. Only *one* proposed pair of burials appears to be a definitive simultaneous deposit from the 46 chamber tombs in my research sample. This indicates that simultaneous double burials are perhaps a rare occurrence as it is difficult to find published literature on examples; a complex process to reinforce, and the preservation of the remains and tomb is essential in reconstructing the chronological sequence of burials within chamber tombs.

Based upon these tables, and the evidence that I have compiled during my research, I can ascertain that simultaneous double burials are a rare occurrence in Late Bronze Age Greece and that more research is necessary to reconstruct simultaneous double burials. It is also worth noting, however, that the data from earlier excavations is largely incomplete, and thus it is difficult to ascertain whether burials took place simultaneously or successively, which is why the majority of archaeological reports classify double burials as *possible* simultaneous interments (Anderson Immerwahr 1962; Boyd 2002; Papadopoulos 1970; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994; Smith et al. 2007; Townsend 1955).

The most common pattern that is evident from my research is that two individuals that have been interred beside one another are most commonly believed to be a double burial. However, the number of possible double burials within Table 3 reinforces the view that most individuals buried near one another can be interpreted as separate interments based upon contextual evidence within the chamber. This can be accounted for based on the spacing and positioning of remains within the chamber. As is made clear in Figure 1, the Mycenaeans

needed room to maneuver within the chambers when interring the dead, and perhaps placing the deceased beside one another was practical rather than personal. There does not appear to be a geographical pattern with double burials, other than an abundance of possible double burials from the Athenian Agora. This could be due to the number of chamber tombs that have been excavated in the Agora that could be related to the populous of Ancient Athens and the frequency of infrastructure construction that has occurred whereupon chamber tombs have been found, in comparison to more rural areas of Greece where construction is not as frequent.

It is clear that double burials present problems with interpretation as archaeologists have often assumed that two bodies placed next to each other were buried at the same time, yet within this thesis I have proven that simultaneous double burials are not a common occurrence. Even though determining whether a double burial occurred simultaneously is difficult, it is possible for archaeologists to accurately reconstruct tomb activities by examining the tomb stratigraphy, tomb layout and body positioning. It is essential that the archaeological context of the tomb be documented properly to make a precise interpretation of the burials and for future study. I am hopeful that there are additional simultaneous double burials in Greece, so that further research can be performed and more knowledge can be acquired, so that we may better understand Mycenaean society and mortuary practices.

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Appendix

Tables

Table 1 – Analysis of Mycenaean Cemeteries in Research Sample

Site	Year of Excavation	# of Chamber Tombs Mentioned	# of Chamber Tombs analyzed	# of burials	Illustrations	Stratigraphy section included
Achaea cemetery (Papadopoulos 1979)	1919 - 1970	Over 219 - only 40 with known plans	40	At least 74	No	No
Athenian Agora (Anderson Immerwahr 1962)	1931 - 1965	~21	21	~68	Yes	Yes
Athenian Agora (Townsend 1955)	1951	~40	1	~14 – 16	Yes	Yes
Krini (Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1994)	1958	3	1	14	Yes	No
Dendra cemetery (Astrom 1977)	1959	14	3	~32	Yes	Yes
Athenian Agora (Vermeule & Travlos 1966)	1965	45	1	4	Yes	Yes
Gymnasium Cemetery at Aigion (Papadopoulos 1970)	1967	11 excavated	11	~31	Yes	Yes
Ayia Sotira cemetery (Smith & Dabney 2014)	2006 - 2008	6	4	~19	Yes	Yes
62 various sites across Greece (Boyd 2002)	N/A	~53	All	Unknown	Yes	Yes

Table 2 - Reports on Mycenaean Chamber Tombs, but with no mention of double burials:

<u>Astrom 1977</u>
Cavanagh and Mee 1998
Dickinson 1977; 1983
<u>Demakopoulou and Crowel 1998</u>
<u>Mylonas 1959</u>
Papadimitriou and Shelton 2001
Papadopoulos 1979
Rutter 1975
Smith and Dabney 2014
Wace 1932
Wells 1990

Table 3 - Appendix of Chamber Tombs in Research Sample

Site	Chamber Tomb #	Date of Excavation	Original Position of skeletons	Skeletal Context	Burial
Agora – Areopagus	N 21-22:1	1939	N/A	N/A	0
Agora – Areopagus	N 21:5	1939	Unknown	Fragmentary set of remains	2
Agora – Areopagus	M 21:2	1947	Supine	Not closely placed to one another	2
Agora – Areopagus	M 21:3	1947	Unknown	Commingle bones	2
Agora – Hill of Nymphs	A-B 18:1	1947	Flexed	Lying near one another	3
Agora – Hill of Nymphs	A 18:4	1948	Laid on their sides	Two juveniles placed one on top of the other	4
Agora	J 7:2	1951	Supine	Placed head to foot near stomion	3
Agora	J 8:4	1933	Unknown	Close together, badly disturbed context	1
Agora	J 8:1	1951-1952	Unknown	Badly destroyed tomb	1
Agora	J 8:2	1952	Unknown	Three individuals, badly disturbed context	1
Agora	J 8:3	1951	Unknown	Inconsistent plan with excavation text – unknown original context	1
Agora - Northeast Corner	O 7:7	1951	Unknown	Scattered bones from one individual	2
Agora – Northeast Corner	O 7:5	1951	Supine	Placed on near chamber walls, with commingled pile at back wall	2
Agora – Northeast Corner	O 7:2	1952	Unknown	Disturbed tomb context	1
Agora – Northeast Corner	O 8:4	1954	Flexed	One complete skeleton with deteriorated second skeleton and possible third	2
Agora – Northeast Corner	P 8:8	1953	Flexed	One juvenile skeleton	2

Burial Legend:
5. Simultaneous deposit
4. Likely simultaneous deposit
3. Possibly a simultaneous deposit
2. Separate interments
1. Unknown
0. No remains found

Agora – Northeast Corner	P 9:4	1954	Supine	Three skeletons in original position, two on either side of chamber, one in center of chamber	2
Agora – East Side of Stoa of Attalos	Q 8:8	1953	Slightly flexed	Four skeletons; two on either side of chamber, one on slightly raised burial level, and one in a burial pit	2
Agora – East Side of Stoa of Attalos	Q 8:4	1953	Supine	Evidence for twelve interments, commingled piles of bones except for the two latest interments, with one having been slightly pushed aside	2
Agora – East Side of Stoa of Attalos	R 7:1	1953	Unknown	Two skeletons, with badly destroyed chamber context	1
Agora – East Side of Stoa of Attalos	R 7:2	1953	Scattered bones	Disturbed chamber tomb	2
Agora – East Side of Stoa of Attalos	Q 10:3	1953	Scattered bones	One disordered skeleton	2
Agora – East Side of Stoa of Attalos	Q 10:2	1953	Supine	Two skeletons, lay in order	3
Agora – East Side of Stoa of Attalos	Q 10:5	1953	Supine, flexed	One juvenile skeleton	2
Agora – East Side of Stoa of Attalos	Q 10:6	1953	One supine and one placed on side	Two skeletons, parallel to the other	3
Agora – South Central Area	N 12:4	1965	Supine, slightly flexed	Two individuals encased in identical coffins, parallel with their heads turned to face the other	5
Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery	Tomb A	1969	One supine, one slightly flexed	Two individuals, one placed alongside chamber wall, the other near the mouth of the stomion	3
Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery	Tomb 1	1969	Supine, flexed, commingled	At least nine skeletons, most within bone pits or burial cists, with one individual just inside the stomion	2
Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery	Tomb 2	1969	N/A	N/A	0
Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery	Tomb 3	1969	N/A	N/A	0
Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery	Tomb 4	1969	Supine and fragmentary	Two individuals, one with fragmentary bones scattered	2

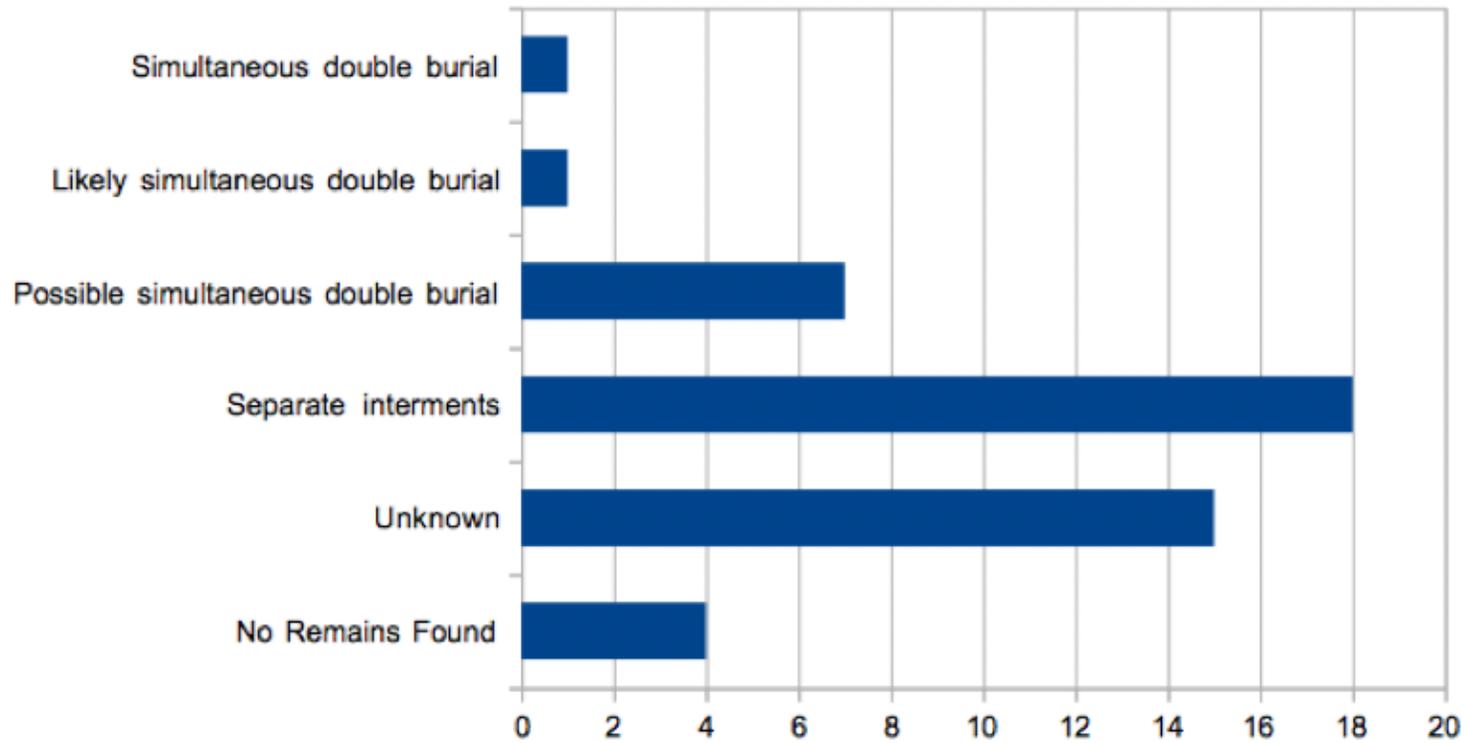
Burial Legend:
5. Simultaneous deposit
4. Likely simultaneous deposit
3. Possibly a simultaneous deposit
2. Separate interments
1. Unknown
0. No remains found

<u>Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery</u>	Tomb 5	1969	Supine, slightly flexed	Two individuals lay parallel in close alignment	3
<u>Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery</u>	Tomb 5a	1969	Unknown	Commingle fragmentary bones	1
<u>Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery</u>	Tomb 6	1969	Unknown	Commingle bone pit	1
<u>Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery</u>	Tomb 7	1969	Laid on its left side, flexed position	One interment	2
<u>Aigion-Gymnasion cemetery</u>	Tomb 8	1969	Unknown	Poorly preserved bone which were greatly scattered	1
<u>Dendra cemetery</u>	Cuirass Tomb 12	1967	Unknown	Poorly preserved bone; fragmentary	2
<u>Dendra cemetery</u>	Tomb 13	1960	Scattered remains	At least 15 individuals; tomb and context disturbed	1
<u>Dendra</u>	Tomb 14	1962	Scattered remains	Commingle, niche burials, fragmentary bone	1
<u>Argos</u>	<u>Tomb T. 164</u>	1991	Supine	One supine burial and four individuals in a commingle pile	2
<u>Palaiokastro, Arcadia</u>	Tomb 6	1980	Unknown	~ 7 individuals within the tomb	1
<u>Barnavos, Ancient Nemea</u>	<u>Barnavos Tomb</u>	2002	Unknown	Commingle poorly preserved bones; badly disturbed from looting; at least four individuals	1
<u>Ayia Sotira cemetery</u>	Tomb 4	2002	Unknown	3 burial pits within chamber containing 8-9 individuals	2
<u>Ayia Sotira cemetery</u>	Tomb 5	2002	Unknown	Chamber collapse and poor preservation of remains in primary and secondary burial pits	1
<u>Ayia Sotira cemetery</u>	Tomb 3	2002	N/A	No human remains found	0
<u>Ayia Sotira cemetery</u>	Tomb 6	2002	Unknown	~ 10 individuals	1
<u>Krini near Patras</u>	Tomb 3	1958	Supine, slightly flexed	4 individuals found in the upper strata burial layer	3

Burial Legend:
5. Simultaneous deposit
4. Likely simultaneous deposit
3. Possibly a simultaneous deposit
2. Separate interments
1. Unknown
0. No remains found

Graph 1

Analysis of 46 Chamber Tombs in Research Sample



Graph 2

Analysis of 46 Chamber Tombs in Research Sample

