

Staging Death

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Funerary Performance, Architecture and Landscape
in the Aegean

Edited by
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Aleydis Van de Moortel

Politics of Death at Mitrou: Two Prepalatial Elite Tombs in a Landscape of Power

Introduction

Changes in mortuary practices at the transition from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age in mainland Greece have been widely documented, and their relation to the rise of a political elite has been much discussed (e.g., Iakovidis 1981; Graziadio 1991; Maran 1995; Cavanagh & Mee 1998; Cavanagh 2008; Voutsaki 1998; 2010; Papadimitriou 2001; Wright 2004; 2008a; Petrakis 2010). Whereas other dynamics should not be ruled out, and indeed are explored in current scholarship, newly excavated evidence from Mitrou, a coastal site located on the North Euboean Gulf in east Lokris, central Greece, underlines the importance of the theatricality of the funerary realm in the creation and legitimisation of power by the emerging elite. It will be argued in this paper that early in the Late Helladic I pottery phase, Mitrou's leadership introduced radical changes in the spatial organisation of the site as well as in burial practices in an effort materially to construct a new ideology of power. In this new architectural landscape of power, funerary monuments and performances played a crucial role.

In his masterful cross-cultural study of archaic states, Yoffee points out that the establishment of an early state-level society with a political elite is accompanied by and accomplished through the creation of a new ideology of power and a new system of order legitimising elite right to preminent status and resources. The reorganisation of the built environment may be an important material expression of this new order (Yoffee 2005: 33–4, 38–40). Indeed, architecture can be understood as a form of visual 'language' that is shared and understood not only by elites but also others. For instance, a Middle Helladic village with rudimentary organisation, narrow roads, and houses that are fairly similar in size and appearance (Wiersma 2014: 236–8, 243–6) would have given inhabitants and visitors a very different message from a more hierarchical Mycenaean town with a palace, citadel, and houses and tombs of different sizes, shapes, and architectural qualities. Grander, more monumental buildings and higher quality of architecture often are used by elites to express, construct, and legitimise their status in society. As Maran has remarked (2012: 149–50), architecture and the built environment often express social inequality and at the same time, as people move daily through this architectural landscape, relations of power are played out and confirmed both consciously and subconsciously. In a landscape of inequality, access to specific buildings and places typically is restricted on the basis of social status or role, and behaviour is codified. In addition, such landscape often is the setting of public rituals and performances, and it enhances their social significance.

Since, once created, such built environment is ever present in the inhabitants' lives, forcing them to engage with it, it contributes to the internalisation of social inequality and social roles by elites and non-elites. Thus architecture helps construct group identities performatively.

In mainland Greece, I would argue that an ideological realignment such as is described by Yoffee for early states took place to some extent already at the beginning of the *formative* period of Mycenaean palatial society, several centuries before the establishment of palatial states. As Maran has reasoned, the very emergence of a political elite in the archaeological record of Middle Helladic III-Late Helladic IIA must have been the result of a new attitude toward elite status (Maran 2011: 285–8). Middle Helladic society, in his view, *had* a social elite but was dominated by a strong community ethos that allowed only limited material displays of social inequality, imposing tight restrictions on the glorification of individuals in life or death (cf. Voutsaki 2010: 101–3; Petrakis 2010). During Middle Helladic III-Late Helladic IIA, however, elite families throughout mainland Greece, inspired by their understanding of Minoan Crete, made themselves more visible through new practices and new material forms, such as the monumentalisation of their tombs and splendour of burial gifts. This new visibility of the elite represented a radical departure from the values of Middle Helladic society, and it is reasonable to conclude that it was the outward expression of a new ideology of power. At the same time, the material expression of their elevated status must have contributed to the construction of this new elite identity in the eyes of the elite and others.

In central Greece, our understanding of this formative period had been impeded until recently by a shortage of evidence. This situation has now changed because excavations, surface survey, and geophysical surveys conducted in 2004–2008 at the site of Mitrou have produced a uniquely rich data set for studying sociopolitical developments in the Prepalatial period (Van de Moortel & Zahou 2012: 1133–6). Whereas the evidence for rising elites elsewhere on the Greek mainland has come primarily from graves, at Mitrou we are able to study its emergence both in a settlement and a mortuary context, and this from the beginning of Late Helladic I through the Late Helladic IIIA2 Early ceramic phase. Because of Mitrou's very detailed and continuous stratigraphic sequence we can trace this elite development with unprecedented chronological precision.¹ Even though the site has been only partially excavated, our finds provide new evidence for a political elite that asserted itself in

1 On the basis of Mitrou's long and uninterrupted stratigraphic and architectural sequence, Christopher Hale (Melbourne University) has subdivided the Middle Helladic period at Mitrou into 7 ceramic phases (Hale 2016) and he and Salvatore Vitale (University of Calabria) have subdivided the Late Helladic I phase at the site into four ceramic subphases (Vitale & Hale 2012; 2013). The Late Helladic IIA, IIB, IIIA1, and IIIA2 Early ceramic phases are richly represented as well, both stratigraphically and architecturally (Vitale 2011; 2012). All this allows us to study societal developments in the Prepalatial period at Mitrou with unprecedented chronological precision.

novel ways not only in death but also in life. It appears that Mitrou's elite consciously created a new ideology of power at the beginning of the Late Helladic I phase. As part of this new ideology it strove to make its elevated status more visible in society through the construction of elite complexes and elite tombs as well as the development of an elite lifestyle. It even went so far as to alter the landscape of the living and the dead in a radical fashion by laying out a new system of roads in connection with the elite complexes and tombs, and by changing centuries-old burial customs. Behaviour with respect to burial practices as well as the use of at least some of these roads, and presumably also the elite complexes, became codified according to social status or role. By thus imbuing the built environment with social inequality, Mitrou's elite created what I would call a landscape of power. This newly ordered settlement with its elite centres, large roads, and new grave plots would have provided a suitable theatrical backdrop for elite performances, enhancing elite activities while at the same time being enhanced by them. Thus the reorganisation of the built environment and burial areas at Mitrou should be understood as parts of the local elite's conscious strategy of power.

A new architectural landscape at Mitrou in the Late Helladic I phase (17th/16th c. BCE)

In the course of the Late Helladic I phase, two large architectural complexes with elite characteristics were constructed and an orthogonal network of long, straight, paved roads was laid out. The two elite complexes, labelled Buildings D and H, have been only partially excavated, and their architectural plan and precise role in Mitrou's built environment are incompletely understood [Figs. 1, 3, 4]. There is no doubt, however, that their size was impressive for that time: Building D was at least 230 m² in area, and Building H at least 600 m² and perhaps as much as 750 m². Even at their minimum size, Buildings D and H would have exceeded the surface area of any ordinary domestic structure of the Prepalatial period in mainland Greece currently known, as well as that of most domestic structures of the Mycenaean palatial period (cf. Darcque 2005: 139–43, 320–6, figs. 33, 100, 103–4, 111). Both complexes demonstrate special features that differentiated them from the other late Middle Helladic and early Late Helladic structures at Mitrou and that are typically associated with elite architecture: they had the thickest outer walls of any building, ca. 0.75 m wide, and the walls of Building D had been constructed with very large stones, much larger than those used in any other building. Both complexes in addition had areas paved with carefully constructed bright white lime plaster floors not found in other Late Helladic or Middle Helladic structures at Mitrou.

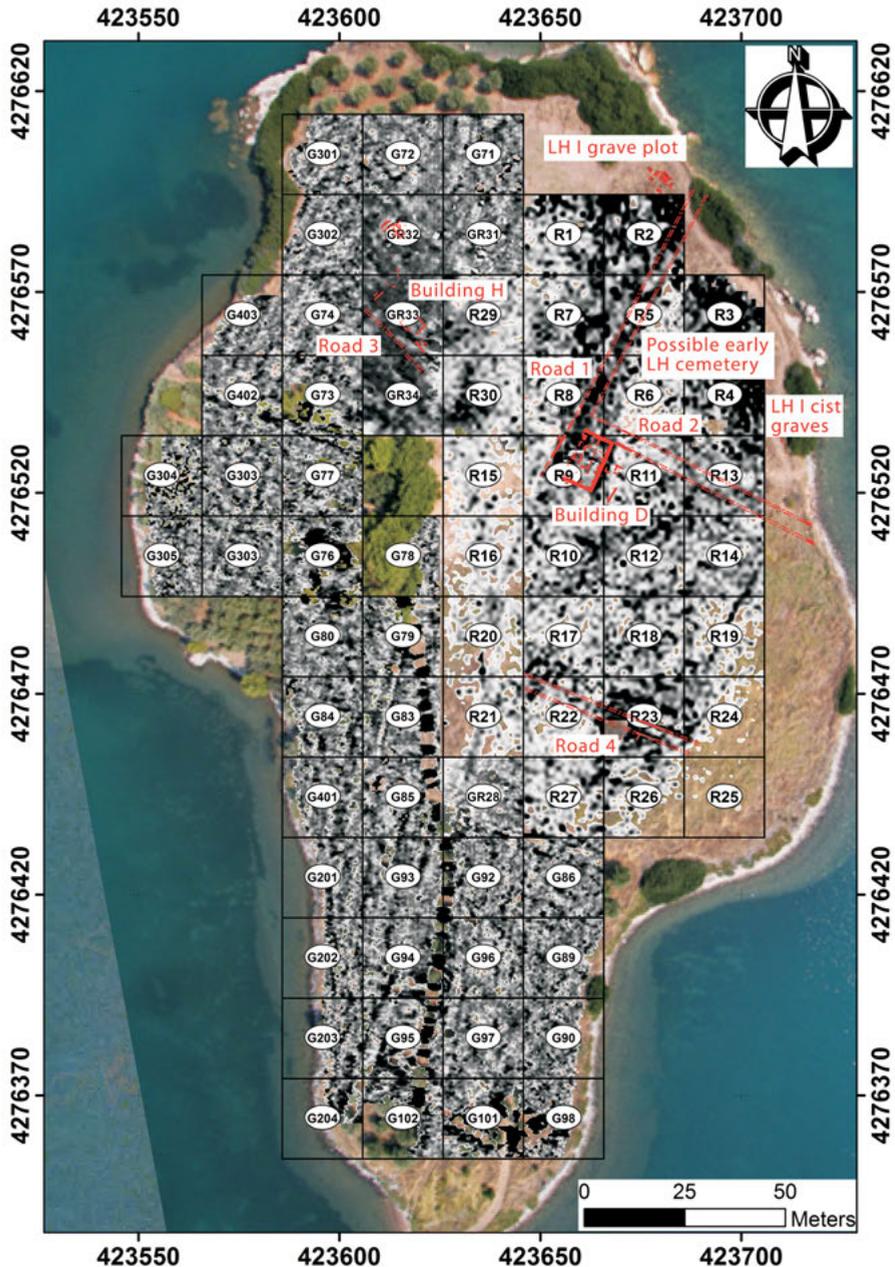


Fig. 1: Outlines of Late Helladic I walls and roads as well as Late Helladic IIB Road 4 superimposed over electrical resistance and magnetic gradiometry maps and balloon photo of the islet of Mitrou. Excavated walls are in solid red and hypothetical reconstructions in red dashes (architectural drawing G. Bianco; balloon photo K. Xenikakis and S. Gesafidis; geophysical maps and overlays G.N. Tsokas, P.I. Tsourlos, A. Stampolidis & G. Vargemezis).



Fig. 2: Plot of early Late Helladic I cist graves with large grave 51, possibly once covered by a tumulus, excavated in trench LR797 in the northeast corner of the islet (balloon photo K. Xenikakis & S. Gesafidis).

Finds from within both complexes also testify to their elite connections (Van de Moortel & Zahou 2012: 1135–6, figs. 6–10; Tsokas et al. 2012: 419–20). Building H produced unusually large concentrations of high-quality Late Helladic I, IIA, and IIB tableware and south Aegean pottery imports, indicative of elite drinking and dining. Specialised cooking vessels identified in this complex testify to the development of an elite cuisine, whereas the finds of unusually large cooking pots suggest that cooking was done for large numbers of people (Lis 2012: 203–9). Building H’s earthen courtyard ostensibly was used for the slaughter of animals and the processing of meat, as it contained concentrations of animal bones in the vicinity of a stone platform as well as lithic blades and cooking pot fragments. This courtyard also provided evidence for the manufacture of purple dye from *Murex* snails, which would have been used to produce purple dyed or purple trimmed garments that may have been worn by the local elite and used as trade items (Vyukal 2011; cf. Burke 1999). The northernmost area of Building H was used for the processing and storage of grain: in Room 1 grinding stones

were found as well as pithos fragments and a concentration of charred cereals. Nearby, a horse-bridle piece made of deer antler, found in a final Late Helladic I destruction level of Building H, testifies to the use of light horse-drawn chariots by Mitrou's elite as well as its participation in far-flung elite exchange networks. With its unusual incised wave band decoration it may have been imported from the Carpatho-Danubian region or represent a local imitation (Maran & Van de Moortel 2014). Building D's finds are still under study, but its elite status is amply demonstrated by our discovery of a finely constructed elite tomb with elite grave goods (see below).

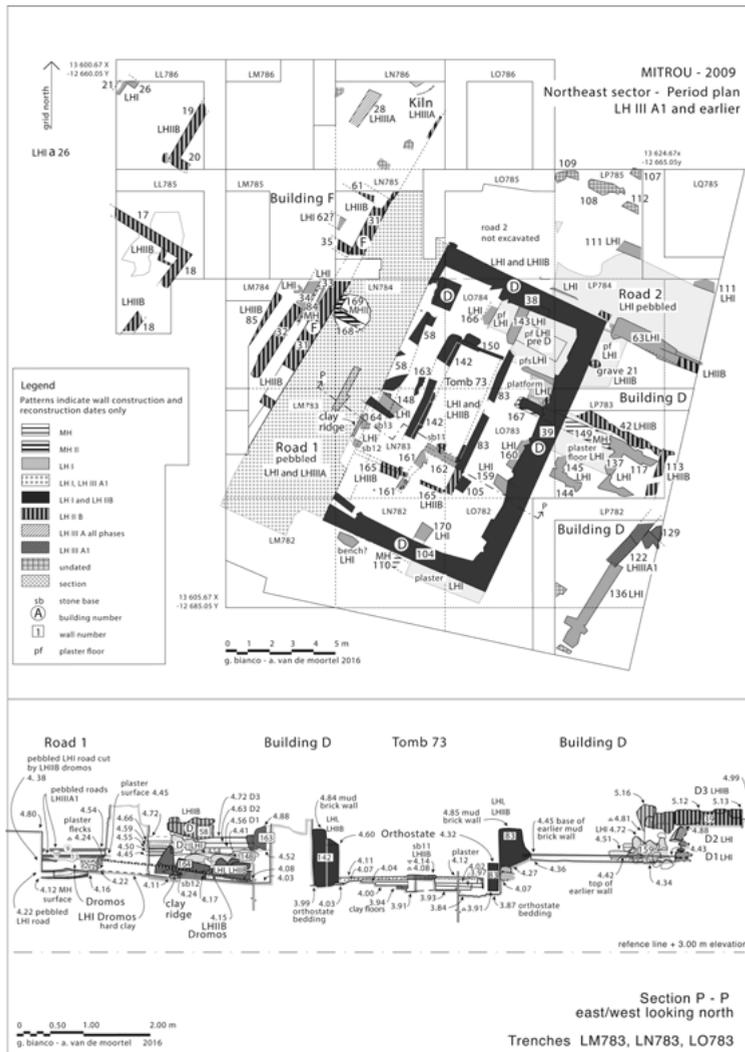


Fig. 3: Plan and section of Building D and built chamber tomb 73 in Late Helladic I-III A1 (G. Bianco & A. Van de Moortel).

In conjunction with the construction of Buildings D and H, Mitrou's settlement layout underwent a radical reorganisation. A network of long straight orthogonal roads was created, appearing as long linear anomalies in the geophysical survey maps (**[Fig. 1]**; cf. Tsokas et al. 2011: 422–3, figs. 11–13). Four of these anomalies have been partially excavated and identified as roads; three of these roads were initially constructed early in the Late Helladic I phase **[Figs. 3, 4]**. Roads 1 and 2, bordering Building D on the west and north sides, respectively, have been excavated over their full widths and determined to be 3 m wide. Road 1, which had 13 major successive pebbled surfaces and is 0.80 m thick, can be traced in the geophysical survey map as a thick black band over a length of 80 m running north-northeast to south-southwest in a straight line. Road 2 can be traced in the geophysical survey by the buildings bordering it over a length of 60 m, running west-northwest to east-southeast in a straight line and ending in the east scarp of the islet, where its remainder has been destroyed in more recent times by the encroaching sea. The two roads met at an angle of exactly 90°, implying the use of precise survey methods in their layout. Road 3, bordering Building H on the southwest, had nine major pebbled surfaces and is 0.75 m thick. Road 4, which was excavated down only to its Late Helladic IIB surface, ran some 60 m to the south of Road 2 and parallel to it. Below Road 1 a Middle Helladic II Final/Middle Helladic III building was uncovered, signalling that the new Late Helladic I road system disregarded the previous late Middle Helladic settlement layout and overrode Middle Helladic property boundaries. With these roads the character of the settlement must have changed drastically. The Late Helladic I roads were up to three times wider than the roads of the Middle Helladic settlement. Moreover, unlike the gravel-and-dirt roads of the Middle Helladic settlement, which invariably were strewn with trash, the Late Helladic I roads were paved with small pebbles and white lime plaster and they were kept meticulously clean (Van de Moortel & Zahou 2012: 1133; Karkanas & Van de Moortel 2014). Excavation and geophysical surveys also show that the new roads had been lined by rectilinear buildings. Thus I believe that in the Late Helladic I phase the character of Mitrou changed from a rural to a more organised, urban settlement. The new road system must have made a deep impression on Mitrou's inhabitants, creating new, straightforward circulation routes and long vistas in the town, and this as well as their meticulous construction and the apparent prohibition to dispose of trash in the roads would have created something of a new, well-ordered world for Mitrou's inhabitants, which reminded them every day of the power of Mitrou's elite.

In addition to helping establish a sense of a new societal order, the roads were closely associated with Mitrou's elite. The three pebbled roads (1, 2, and 3) bordered elite complexes and were constructed at the same time. Karkanas' micromorphological analysis of Roads 1 and 2 showed that their pebbled surfaces were carefully maintained, each with multiple lime-plaster coatings that were remarkably well-preserved and had not experienced normal foot traffic. Thus it appears that these roads were used for special and, presumably, ceremonial purposes (Karkanas & Van de Moortel 2014: 208). Comparison with similar roads found at Late Helladic IIIA-B

Dimini suggests that they may have been reserved for the elite (see below). Such restricted use and exclusive status would have further increased their elite association for Mitrou's non-elite inhabitants. The initial impetus for building the new roads at Mitrou may have been to accommodate a new form of elite transportation: chariot riding. Aegean imagery indicates that chariots drawn by two horses were introduced into the Aegean at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (Crowel 1981: 78–9; 2005). The final Late Helladic I horse bridle piece from Building H shows that Mitrou's elite had adopted horse-drawn chariots by this time. This cheek piece had been reworked at some stage and given serrated edges—a feature that is associated with the use of horses for pulling light chariots (Maran & Van de Moortel 2014: 535, 537, 541). With estimated axle widths of perhaps as little as ca. 1.10 m—as evidenced by the wheel ruts in the Late Helladic IIIA-B roads at Dimini (Adrimi-Sismani 2013: 155; cf. Maran & Van de Moortel 2014: 537, note 29), these chariots would have fitted comfortably on Mitrou's 3 m wide roads.² Thus these roads would have enabled Mitrou's elite to parade in their chariots through the town, presumably wearing purple or purple-trimmed garments, elevated above the onlookers. In this capacity they would have enhanced the theatricality of elite power. That parades were important in the construction and visualisation of Mycenaean elite ideology in the palatial period is suggested by the procession frescoes found at Thebes, Tiryns, and Knossos, and the chariot fresco from Tiryns. In addition, as Maran has argued, the citadels of Mycenae and Tiryns appear to have been designed in such a way as to enhance the theatricality of parades (Maran 2006; 2012: 149–54). The establishment of the long, straight and wide roads at Mitrou suggests that theatricality was important already to this settlement's Prepalatial elite in the Late Helladic I phase. In addition to chariot parades, it is possible that these roads were used also for other kinds of processions and performances that have left no trace in the archaeological record.

In sum, I believe that the reorganisation of Mitrou's settlement and construction of these new, wide, clean roads signify the rise of a stronger central authority at Mitrou. Even though it is not inconceivable that they resulted from communal decisions on the part of the inhabitants, their close connections to Mitrou's elite centres and activities such as chariot riding make it much more likely that they were implemented at the initiative of Mitrou's ruling elite and represented a conscious effort at creating a new built environment manifesting and legitimising elite power.

Such an extensive system of orthogonal roads thus far is unique in the archaeological record of Bronze Age Greece, but evidence is emerging for its existence in other Late Helladic settlements of central Greece. Some 20 km west of Mitrou (as the crow flies), at the unexcavated fortified settlement of Kalapodi-Kastro Souvalas in northern Phokis, two impressive north-northeast to south-southwest roads lined with

² I would like to thank V. Adrimi-Sismani for permission to refer to this information and for sending me part of the manuscript of her Ph.D. dissertation before publication.

walls, ca. 100 m long and 3.50 m wide, have been documented on the modern surface (Felsch in press).³ Felsch tentatively dates the settlement to the Middle Helladic period, but allows for the possibility that it continued in the early Late Helladic period and was the seat of a local elite group buried from Late Helladic IIA/B onwards in elite chamber tombs excavated at the nearby modern village of Kalapodi (Dakoronia & Dimaki 1998; Dakoronia 2009: 293, figs. 488–9). Given the close similarities of its roads with those of Mitrou, it is conceivable that Kalapodi-Kastro Souvalas had been reorganised into an urban settlement early in the Late Helladic period also.

Two even more impressive, orthogonal roads with earth-and-pebble surfaces have been excavated in the Late Helladic IIIA-B settlement of Dimini, near Volos. One road was 4.50 m wide and at least 95 m long, and the other was even wider and met the first road at right angles, leading to Dimini's harbour. Like the roads of Kalapodi-Kastro Souvalas, the Dimini roads were delineated by walls on both sides. These bordering walls were built on purpose and had an important function because, as Adrimi-Sismani observed, they allowed the roads to be accessed only from the settlement's elite centres, Megara A and B, while preventing their access from any other excavated building (Adrimi-Sismani 2007: 161–2, fig. 15.2; 2012: 160–1, figs. 3–5). These roads were used for chariot riding, as the presence of wheel ruts demonstrates. Thus it is evident that these two wide roads at Dimini were closely associated with the settlement's elite and played an important role in its manifestation of power. Mitrou's Road 1 was accessible from Building F in the Late Helladic IIB phase. Otherwise the roads have not been sufficiently excavated to reveal whether they, too, had continuous border walls limiting their access. However, the fact that Roads 1 and 2 were carefully maintained and not used for normal foot traffic makes it plausible that their access was restricted in a similar fashion. The other roads at Mitrou have not been sampled for micromorphological analysis. Like Mitrou, Dimini had two elite complexes, and the political structure of the two sites may have been comparable, with Dimini representing a more developed, palatial society.

In contrast to central Greece, the southern Greek mainland has not provided evidence for long broad streets with restricted access. This may be due to the fact that little has been uncovered of its Late Bronze Age towns. However, recently a fairly well-preserved street has been documented at Korphos-Kalamianos, apparently a planned settlement established in the palatial period by Mycenae to serve as its harbour on the Saronic Gulf. The most important road of this town (the 'Avenue') was at least 60 m long but only 1.50 m wide on average and quite irregular in shape. Lacking bordering walls, it must have been accessible from the adjacent structures (Tartaron et al. 2011: 602–3, fig. 31). Thus it was much less impressive than the roads of central Greece, and its access was not restricted. Likewise, in palatial Crete and the

³ I am grateful to R. Felsch for permission to mention this information and for sharing his typescript before publication.

Late Bronze Age Aegean islands, roads tended to meet at right angles as in central Greece, but they were as a rule narrower and more winding, and access does not seem to have been restricted. Even when they were wide and straight, such as the Royal Road at Knossos or the two paved roads bordering Building T at Kommos, they were accessible from houses in the town. Thus, on present evidence, it seems that long, wide urban streets with restricted access were specifically a feature of the vocabulary of power of the central Greek mainland in the Late Bronze Age.

A new mortuary landscape at Mitrou in the Prepalatial period (Late Helladic I-III A2 Early, 17th/16th-early 14th c. BCE)

The efforts by Mitrou's elite to create a new landscape of power also extended to the mortuary realm. In the course of the Late Helladic I phase, centuries-old burial practices underwent a drastic change at Mitrou. The timing of this change as well as the construction of two elite graves make it reasonable to assume that this too was brought about by the ruling elite. In the Middle Helladic period the dead at Mitrou were buried individually in cist, pithos or pit graves placed within the ruins of abandoned buildings. Areas alternated between funerary and settlement use, as has been found at other Middle Helladic settlements in mainland Greece (Maran 1995; Voutsaki 2005). The organisation of Middle Helladic society is widely thought to have been kinship-based (Maran 1995; Voutsaki 2005; 2010: 92; Wright 2008b: 238–9; Petrakis 2010; Maran 2011: 285–6), and it is conceivable that the alternating use of land plots for habitation and graves reflects a practice of each family burying its dead on its own property. This hypothesis remains to be tested at Mitrou through studies of biological relationships between the buried individuals.

In the course of the Late Helladic I phase at Mitrou, intramural burials and the alternating use of plots for graves and buildings came to an end. From then until the Late Helladic IIIC Late phase, toward the end of the Postpalatial period, no more ordinary burials have been found within the settlement. Instead, as I have argued, an area of the settlement in the northeast part of the site, covering roughly 2,500 m² and bounded by Roads 1 and 2, appears to have been converted into a cemetery ([Fig. 1]; Tsokas et al. 2011: 425; Van de Moortel & Zahou 2012: 1134). Although most of this area has not yet been excavated and its interpretation is tentative, there are strong clues supporting it. Two permanent burial plots with cist and pithos graves have been excavated at the northern and eastern borders of this area; a recent reexamination of their pottery by S. Vitale and C. Hale has dated the northern plot of cist graves to Late Helladic I phases 1–2 [Fig. 2], and the eastern plot, containing a cist and pithos grave, to Late Helladic I phase 2. The graves were dug into earlier habitation levels but were not covered by later Late Helladic habitation. Furthermore, the remains of a disturbed

cist grave have been found at the modern surface in archaeological grid squares LS792–002, LS793–004, and geophysical grid square R5 [Fig. 1]; its associated finds suggest that it dates to Middle Helladic III/Late Helladic I (Belz 2012). In the eastern sea scarp nearby, the latest building documented close to the modern surface is of Middle Helladic II Final/III date, and there are no Late Helladic buildings. Likewise, electrical resistivity tomography in geophysical grid squares R4 and R13 has revealed no buildings close to the modern surface down to a depth of 0.75 m, and comparison of their elevation with the stratigraphy of nearby excavation trench LX784 indicates that the latest structures in those grid squares must date to Late Helladic I at the latest (Tsokas et al. 2012: 409–10). Relatively few structures are visible elsewhere in the geophysical map of this area. Finally, fine-grained surface survey in this area has recovered an unusually high proportion of Middle Helladic pottery fragments and a low proportion of Late Helladic pottery (Belz 2011). All of this indicates that the northeast part of the site was largely devoid of Late Helladic buildings and had been converted into a large cemetery. In later times, perhaps in the Late Helladic IIB or IIIA phase, Mitrou's burials may have been moved offsite to extramural chamber tomb cemeteries, which at the time were being created throughout east Lokris (Van de Moortel 2007: 245–9; Van de Moortel & Zahou 2012: 1135).

The reasons for the abandonment of intramural plots and the presumed creation of a cemetery at Late Helladic I Mitrou are as yet unclear, but a similar phenomenon has been noted at other late Middle Helladic/early Late Helladic sites in mainland Greece, from the southern Peloponnese to Thessaly (Maran 1995; Papadimitriou 2011). With an estimated surface area of 2,500 m², this new cemetery would have been large enough to serve the entire community of Mitrou. At the most basic level, this radical change in centuries-old burial practices represents an effort to separate the world of the living and the dead. The reason for making this change at this time is not certain. Perhaps it was made for hygienic reasons, or justified in this way. Maran (1995) suggested that it was necessitated by settlement nucleation, since at several sites it was accompanied by a reorganisation of the settlement. But this does not explain why an inhabited Middle Helladic settlement area was converted into a cemetery at Mitrou. This location, which was close to Building D, bordered by the sea, and accessible only via Roads 1 and 2, must have been chosen because it created an undeniable connection between the new cemetery and Mitrou's elite. The lack of normal use of these roads even allows us to surmise that the elite exerted control over access to the new cemetery. Arguably, the establishment of a single cemetery serving the entire settlement in Late Helladic I would have moved the mortuary realm from the private into the public sphere, and enhanced a sense of community among Mitrou's inhabitants. At the same time, it would have placed emphasis on the 'theatre of death' in the community, in the sense that it facilitated participation and viewing of funerary events by a larger audience and accommodated permanently visible graves. Papadimitriou (this volume) makes the compelling suggestion, in regards to Late Helladic chamber tomb cemeteries, that formal cemeteries were created in order to establish

locales of collective memory and group identity and to compensate for the loss of private burial plots. His suggestion is equally applicable to late Middle Helladic/early Late Helladic communal cemeteries, in that they became places of community-based, collective memory and identity, whereas the tumuli found in several of these cemeteries may have been family plots that reinforced family-based identity.



Fig. 4: Aerial image of Building D and built chamber tomb 73 as well as other remains. White circles indicate the places where walls of Building D were purposely broken off so they would not touch the funerary enclosure. White arrows indicate remnants of the thick white plaster coating at the exterior facades of the funerary enclosure (balloon photos K. Xenikakis & S. Gesafidis, 2008, 2009; overlay A. Van de Moortel).

Too few graves have been excavated in Mitrou's purported Late Helladic I cemetery to understand its spatial organisation, but the dense spacing and similar orientation of the seven exposed cist graves in the northern plot, in trench LR797, makes it

possible that they had been covered by a tumulus [Fig. 2].⁴ Unfortunately, the proximity of the modern plough zone made the secure identification of such a tumulus impossible during excavation. These seven graves can be dated to the first or second ceramic subphase of Late Helladic I now identified at Mitrou. If indeed they had been covered by a tumulus, the area could represent a bounded family burial plot within the new communal cemetery, reinforcing a sense of family identity. This plot had a striking, dramatic location, as it was situated near the highest point of the site, bordered to the north and east by sea cliffs. If these graves had been covered by a tumulus, this would have been seen by anyone approaching from the sea. The tumulus and the entire new cemetery would have been visible from the current shore south of Mitrou as well, since it was located on a sloping surface facing that shore. With respect to its prominent location and clustering of cist graves, the Mitrou tumulus would correspond to contemporary, slightly earlier, and later tumuli and tumulus groups found elsewhere in central and southern Greece, such as at Pelasgia, Marmara, Vrana, and possibly Antron (Glypha) (Papakonstantinou 2011; Dakoronia 2011; Merkouri & Kouli 2011; Müller 1989: 20–5, figs. 10–11; Müller Celka 2007).

Mitrou's elite tombs: highly visible exceptions to the new rule

This new mortuary landscape provided a fitting backdrop for two Late Helladic I elite tombs that we have uncovered at Mitrou. The first one, tomb 51, is an unusually large slab-built cist tomb (1.80 × 1.50 × 0.90 m) forming part of the early Late Helladic I grave plot possibly covered by a tumulus at the northeast extremity of the islet [Fig. 2]. Recent restudy by Vitale and Hale of pottery fragments found below this large cist grave indicates that it was constructed in Late Helladic I phase 1⁵ and may have been the oldest grave in this plot. It had been emptied and produced only six small fragments of human bone. Four simple spindle whorls and a pottery fragment reused as a spindle whorl were found in it as well, potentially signifying a female burial. A clay animal figurine fragment might have been deposited as a token of devotion in the later Late Helladic period (see below). However, the disturbed condition of the tomb fill makes any such associations hazardous. The unusually large size of cist tomb 51 and its location, near the end of Road 1 and the highest point of the site overlooking the sea, as well as its connection to Building D via Road 1, support

⁴ I would like to thank F. Dakoronia for suggesting the possibility of a tumulus in this location.

⁵ On purely ceramic grounds a Middle Helladic II Final/III date cannot be excluded, but because of cist grave 51's strong connections with Road 1 and Building D, the Late Helladic I phase 1 date is much more likely. For the definition of Middle Helladic II Final/III at Mitrou, see Hale 2016: 282–288.

its interpretation as an elite grave [Figs. 1, 5]. Because of its spatial and visual connections to Building D, it likely was associated with the group who lived in that elite complex. This tomb represents the first attestation of exceptional treatment in death of Mitrou's elite. Its location on the west side of Road 1, separated from the presumed early Late Helladic cemetery by that road and perhaps more easily accessible from the settlement, may also have served to emphasise the special status of the deceased buried within it.

The second elite grave, tomb 73, is an L-shaped rectangular built chamber tomb (see Papadimitriou 2001: 1–3, 153) constructed in the northwest corner of Building D. It postdates elite cist grave 51 as it belongs to an architectural phase ceramically dated to Late Helladic I phase 3 or 4 [Figs. 3–4]. It was used into Late Helladic IIIA1. This tomb is much larger and more elaborate in its construction than cist grave 51, manifesting a heightened investment in funerary ostentation and the display of elite social status in death. Its original chamber, oriented north-northeast to south-southwest, is very large for this type of tomb ($2 \times 5 \times 1.20$ m) and almost five times larger than cist tomb 51. Its construction is of high quality: the tomb chamber was dug ca. 0.60 m deep into earlier levels and lined with 1.20 m high mudbrick walls projecting above the surrounding surface; these walls were covered on the interior by finely finished, 1 m wide and 0.15 m thick rectangular sandstone slabs (Van de Moortel & Zahou 2012: fig. 9). Similar orthostates were used to line the dromos. Such high-quality orthostates and greenish sandstone material were used exclusively in this tomb, and have not been encountered elsewhere in primary usage at Mitrou, indicating the special status of the burial associated with it. The tomb chamber is likely to have been covered by a flat earthen roof resting on roof beams, as evidence for such roofing has been found in its second phase, and it is a common feature of rectangular built chamber tombs (Papadimitriou 2001: 158).

Tomb 73 at Mitrou had an entrance or dromos oriented at a 90° angle to the west-northwest, and ending at Road 1. In its first architectural phase, the tomb chamber was accessed from this dromos through a fairly narrow opening, or stomion, 0.60 m wide, located at the south end of the chamber [Fig. 5]. It is no longer clear how this stomion had been closed off between burials, as this evidence was obliterated by the later remodelling of the tomb chamber. The dromos was large (3 m long \times 2 m wide) and had an earthen floor sloping up gently from the chamber to Road 1. At its western end it featured a porch with two support bases bordering the road. A 0.07 m high and 0.12 m wide clay ridge with a rounded top had been placed across the porch just west of the support bases [Fig. 3]. Having been made out of unbaked clay, this curious ridge could not have been intended to keep rain water out, and it does not serve any other practical purpose. On the contrary, it would have provided a minor hindrance to people entering or leaving the tomb, requiring them to lift their feet extra high. Thus this clay ridge may have provided a symbolic threshold between the dromos and the road. Comparable clay ridges have been uncovered recently delineating stoas of a courtyard at the Late Helladic IIIA palace of Agios Vasileios in Lakonia (Vasilogamv-

rou 2012: fig. 2).⁶ Their presence suggests to me the importance of delineating particular spaces in this culture. Like the restricting of access to the large straight roads in central Greek settlements, these clay ridges suggest a concern with codifying behaviour in the built environment based on a person's social status or role. The dromos of Mitrou's tomb 73 must have remained open after burial, as no evidence was found for its filling with sediments during the lifetime of the tomb; it was finally filled in early in Late Helladic IIIC.

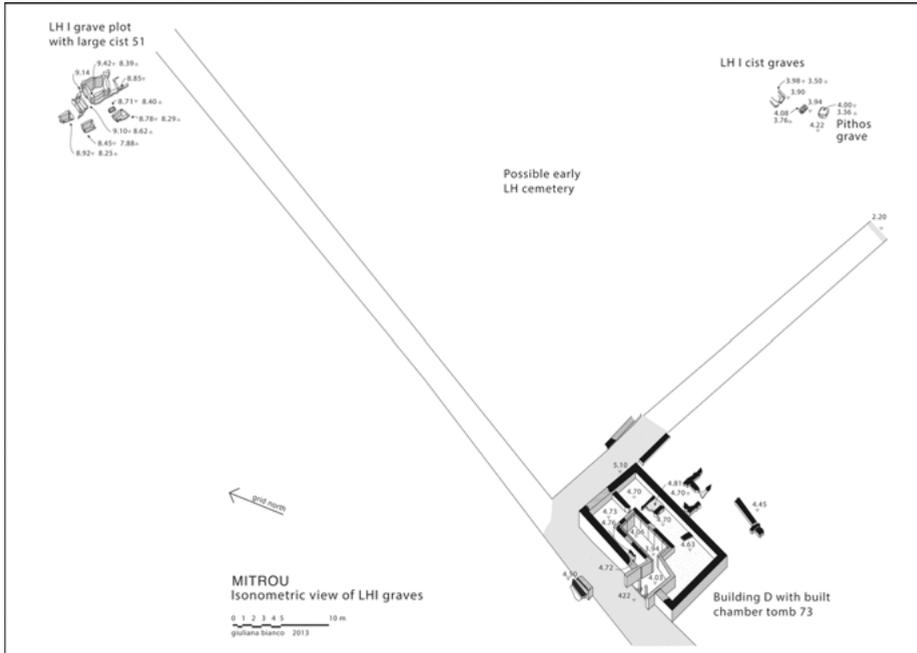


Fig. 5: Isometric reconstruction drawing of Building D with built chamber tomb 73 and its funerary enclosure, Roads 1 and 2, and grave plots in the late Late Helladic I phase; parts of the roads shaded in grey were uncovered through excavation, while the outlined parts were seen in the geophysical survey (G. Bianco).

A large rectangular enclosure (13.50 × 8.25 m) was built around built chamber tomb 73, featuring a substantial wall (ca. 0.75 m thick) constructed with roughly squared calcareous fieldstones larger than any other seen at the site. To judge by the level tops of the stone wall socles and the layers of disintegrated mudbrick sloping down from them to the east, north, and south of this enclosure, this enclosure must have had a

⁶ I am grateful to A. Vasilogamvrou for permission to mention the clay ridges from the A. Vasileios palace. A photo of these ridges was published in *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique Chronique des Fouilles en ligne* 2012, fig. 2 (<http://www.chronique.efa.gr/index.php/fiches/voir/3407/>).

mudbrick superstructure, although it is difficult to determine how high its walls would have been. These walls were wide enough to support a roof, but no trace of the latter has been preserved. The rooms outside the tomb and within the enclosure had earthen floors and must have been accessible during the Late Helladic I phase. No artefacts were found in these, except for a spindle whorl. East of the tomb was a small, low rectangular platform built of roughly squared stones, of as yet unknown use.

Built chamber tombs in mainland Greece are extremely varied, and Müller-Celka (1995) as well as Papadimitriou (2001: 194–201) have argued convincingly that they represent the elite's early experiments with making their tombs more elaborate than those of the rest of the population. The origin of this tomb type is local to the Greek mainland. Tomb 73 had been emptied in Late Helladic IIB, but multiple fragments of a large Mainland Polychrome vase inside the tomb as well as a fragmentary non-local Vapheio cup found with human bones outside of the tomb in the east of the enclosure testify to the placement of at least one burial during the Late Helladic I phase. Associated with this phase of the tomb were also four pieces of one or more boar's tusk helmets, two stone arrowheads, one to three small gold nails and a silver nail, a tiny fragment of a bronze sheet—perhaps from a cup or bowl, a turquoise faience spindle whorl, as well as a tiny amber bead. Even though these are scant remains accidentally left behind after the removal of the tomb's contents, they are indicative of the presence of one or more warrior burials and at least one female burial of high status. The bell-shaped spindle whorl made of this exotic faience material with its bright blue-green colour may represent an elite woman's symbol of female domesticity and high status, as was argued by Maran (2011: 287–8) for the gold-covered spindles from shaft grave III in Grave Circle A at Mycenae. Because of the extreme scarcity of faience at Mitrou in this period, this spindle whorl is likely to have been imported from the south Aegean. The occurrence of amber beads both in the tomb and in an earlier phase of Building D shows that Mitrou's elite had access to also this striking, high-status material imported from the north roughly when it was first acquired by elites elsewhere in Greece (Maran 2004; 2013). The arrowheads from tomb 73 are long slender specimens of Karo's 'crab-claw' type typical for the Late Helladic period; they are similar to the ones found in Shaft Grave Circle A at Mycenae (Karo 1930: 208, pl. 101, nos. 536–540) and somewhat more slender than those from the Middle Helladic II elite warrior grave at Kolonna (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997: 19, 22, 28–35, fig. 6.4 nos. 1–2, 5–6; fig. 9.4 nos. 1, 4–5, pl. 3). The small gold and silver nails are identical to nails found in Grave Circle A at Mycenae and the Dendra tholos tomb, where they secured ivory hilts and grips on decorative dagger and sword handles (Karo 1930: 143, 162, pl. 146, nos. 803, 804b, 805, 806, 807; Persson 1931: 61, pl. 24). Together with the large size and architectural splendour of the tomb, these finds suggesting originally rich furnishings would have made a strong statement about the new ideology of power of Mitrou's leadership: its wealth, warlike ethos, and access to special and exotic goods from the south and north.

Current investigations indicate that built chamber tomb 73 had been set into the northwest corner of Building D's complex when the latter was actively inhabited; it seems that Building D continued to function as a dwelling after the tomb was built. In this final Late Helladic I architectural phase, as well as later during the use span of the tomb, new walls were constructed and earthen as well as white lime plaster floors were laid east of the funerary enclosure [Fig. 3]. Pottery and finds associated with these floors are still under study. The funerary enclosure had been purposely separated from the rest of the architectural complex by breaking off the ends of exterior cross walls so that they would not touch the enclosure, and by covering the exterior facade of the enclosure with a thick coating of white lime plaster which was renewed several times. This lime coating has been preserved at various places on the north, east, and south facades of the funerary enclosure [Fig. 4]. These arrangements support the notion that Building D was inhabited as a residence during the use span of tomb 73.

A tomb set into a living complex is unique for Prepalatial mainland Greece (cf. Papadimitriou 2001: 189–90 and *passim*), and its establishment would have been highly significant, marking an escalation in the display of power of Mitrou's elite. For one, its location would have sharply contrasted with the new burial practices of Mitrou's population: whereas people now buried their dead in a designated communal area, abandoning their traditional family plots and clearly separating the world of the living and the dead, the inhabitants of Building D constructed a large tomb *inside* their own living complex, thus setting themselves clearly apart from the rest of the community and demonstrating that the new burial practices did not apply to them. Furthermore, by breaking off the exterior cross walls and coating the enclosure with bright white lime plaster the elite may have wanted to make an alternative symbolic gesture signalling that it, too, wanted to separate its dead from the world of the living—but that it did so in its own way. Thus tomb 73 and its gleaming white enclosure would have served as a permanent reminder of the power and special status of the elite deceased buried within. In order to reach the communal cemetery, Mitrou's inhabitants may have passed by this funerary enclosure, or they would have seen it from the cemetery and would have been reminded of the elevated status of the elite.

Tomb 73 remained visible and accessible from Road 1 through its open dromos throughout its use span. The fact that this dromos slightly projected into Road 1 and was directly accessed from that road, rather than from the interior of Building D, is a clear indication that prominent visibility in the public eye during and after burial was deemed important. As Papadimitriou has argued (2011; 2015; this volume), the dromos was a transitional space, a passage between the world of the living and the dead, between public and private, and a place rich with symbolic connotations. It is possible that the deceased dressed in purple or purple trimmed garments and adorned with gold and amber jewellery and other accoutrements of status was carried around in procession along the wide roads lined with members of the community and brought into the white enclosure, where the body was viewed in the dromos by a mourning

audience filing by prior to burial. Even though the dromos afforded a public view of the tomb entrance, it would have allowed only a limited and select number of spectators to witness actual entombment, in contrast to most other funerals at Mitrou which took place in an open, more accessible area. Likewise, whatever rituals took place in the small rooms surrounding the tomb would have involved only a small group of people.

In the Late Helladic IIB phase, the chamber of tomb 73 was extended south to a length of 7 m, making it the largest rectangular built chamber tomb presently known in Prepalatial mainland Greece [Fig. 3]. A wooden support was added to the southern part of the chamber to hold up the roof. The stomion was widened to 1.50 m; to judge from the linear remains of stone rubble, it would have been blocked by such rubble between burials. The dromos was given a new, sloping clay floor that covered the Late Helladic I support bases of the porch and ended flush with Road 1. The walls of the rectangular enclosure were widened to an impressive 1–1.20 m. Flimsy earthen floors have been identified in most rooms of the enclosure, but not everywhere. The flimsiness of these floors as well as the fact that the wider enclosure walls no longer had an interior facade suggest that the entire enclosure was now filled with earth, forming a tumulus. Within the enclosure and to the south of tomb 73 we identified one small cist grave and a pit grave that were largely empty and may date to this phase. East of the enclosure wall, in the presumed inhabited part of complex D, new walls and earthen surfaces were constructed. Some pottery and other finds, currently under study, have been recovered in association with these spaces.

Even though this final use phase of the tomb was looted in the Late Helladic IIIC and Protogeometric periods, we found in this stratum remains of three fine pattern-painted clay alabastra and a piriform jar as well as six pieces of one or more boar's tusk helmets, a bronze arrowhead, a rock-crystal disc, two to four amber beads, a bronze ring, and 11 pieces of gold jewellery (including a fairly small finger ring, two thin chain bracelets, several beads, a pinhead, and pieces of gold foil that had been sewn onto a dress). Thus at least one other male warrior and probably another female—to judge by the small size of the ring—must have been buried in this phase (Van de Moortel & Zahou 2012: 1136, fig. 10a-c; Maran & Van de Moortel 2014). Only a few small fragments of human bone have been recovered from this use phase of tomb 73, so it is not possible to comment on the precise number of bodies or the layout of individual burials within the chamber. These grave goods demonstrate that from Late Helladic IIB onwards Mitrou's leaders adopted the full package of elite burial goods developed in the Mycenaean heartland of the northeast Peloponnese, consistently with other areas of the Greek mainland (Vitale 2008; cf. Davis & Bennet 1999; Wright 2004: 77–80). No doubt such furnishings represent an aggrandising strategy by local leaders, who were keen to increase their prestige by linking themselves to the emerging elite culture of southern Greece. This gradual adoption of Mycenaean elite customs, together with the fact that built chamber tomb 73 featured local architectural characteristics and continued in use throughout the Prepalatial period, suggests that

Mitrou's leadership was continuous and Mycenaeanisation was a gradual process of assimilation that mixed local or regional with Argolid elements, rather than the outcome of war or conquest and forced transplantation of elite practices from the Argolid (cf. Vitale 2012: 1151–2). In contrast, the appearance of Mycenaean rock-cut chamber tombs with Mycenaean-type burial goods elsewhere in east Lokris from the Late Helladic IIB phase onwards seems to signal a different form of Mycenaeanisation. Only five or six rock-cut chamber tombs dating to the Prepalatial period have been found at three different locations in the Atalante-Livanates area of east Lokris, and all may have been elite tombs (Van de Moortel 2007: 245–6). It is conceivable that these elites were new, and sought to strengthen their position by adopting the Mycenaean rock-cut chamber tomb. It is also plausible that they originated from an area further south, bringing this funerary form with them.

In the Late Helladic IIIA2 Early phase, after the destruction of Buildings D and H, which likely signified the political demise of Mitrou's elite through conquest, the chamber of tomb 73 was no longer used for burials, but its dromos remained open until early in the Late Helladic IIIC period (Van de Moortel & Zahou 2012: 1136–7; Van de Moortel et al. in press). Road 1 was resurfaced numerous times with pebbles and lime plaster, perhaps as often as every ten years (Karkanas & Van de Moortel 2014). Eighteen Late Helladic IIIA-B figurine fragments found on Late Helladic IIIA2 Middle to Late Helladic IIIC surfaces of Road 1, concentrated near the dromos, suggest ongoing public rituals related to the Prepalatial leaders buried in tomb 73 (O'Neill, pers. com.). Similar clusters of fragmentary palatial-period figurines have been found outside the stomion of Mycenaean tombs and near monumental walls of tombs such as the peribolos wall of the Tomb of Klytaemnestra at Mycenae or the Kyklos wall near tholos tombs 2 and 3 at Peristeria; these figurines are interpreted as remains of memorial ceremonies for the dead (Tzonou-Herbst 2002: 145–61, 180–4; 2008: 217).⁷ The long social afterlife of tomb 73 and the multiple resurfacings of the adjacent road at Mitrou strongly signal the enduring awe in which the Prepalatial elite of this site was held for about 200 years after the demise of its rule. It also gives a clear indication of the important role that the elite tombs and landscape of wide paved roads must have played in the memorialisation and glorification of Prepalatial elite power.

Conclusion

I hope to have demonstrated that the manipulation of the mortuary realm and its spatial manifestation was carried out by Mitrou's emerging elite in the Prepalatial period for political purposes. The new ideology of power allowed the elite to construct

⁷ I thank I. Tzonou-Herbst for alerting me to the finds of figurines near Mycenaean elite tombs, and discussing their significance with me.

and express its special status through material means and become much more visible in society than it had been in the Middle Helladic period. It also allowed it to change the architectural landscape at Mitrou radically and assign the living and the dead to specific locales. This new built environment was intended to visually remind Mitrou's inhabitants on a daily basis of the changed world in which they lived and of the increased power of the ruling elite. In this elite strategy to materially construct and legitimise its power, the theatricality of the funerary realm played an important role. Already early in the Late Helladic I phase, Mitrou's elite accorded itself special status in burial. Oversized cist tomb 51 was placed in a grave plot possibly covered by a tumulus, and located near the highest point of the site overlooking the sea. At the same time it was separated from the remainder of the purported new cemetery by Road 1, the same wide straight road that materially as well as visually connected tomb 51 to Building D. With the construction of built chamber tomb 73 within Building D, one or a few generations later, Mitrou's elite took a further step. It created a highly visible exception to the newly introduced practice of burial in a communal cemetery, with the dromos of tomb 73 and the white-plastered walls of its funerary enclosure serving as a visual reminder of the elite's exceptional status. It is no exaggeration to state that over time, Mitrou's leadership increasingly distanced itself from the rest of the community. Galaty and Parkinson (2007: 10) have interpreted the Mycenaean palatial elite as a 'networked elite', i.e. an elite that legitimises its power in part by separating itself from its own community and creating supporting networks with elites elsewhere. I would argue that we see the first stages of such a networked mainland elite at Mitrou. As a counterpoint to elite exceptionalism, the creation of a communal cemetery replacing private family burial plots at Mitrou may have been intended to draw the various families or households of the settlement closer together as a community, as it must have facilitated the viewing of and participation in funerary events by larger audiences and created permanently visible monuments of collective memory and group identity.

Thus the evidence from Mitrou has given us a much fuller picture than we had before of the emergence of a Prepalatial elite in central Greece and the strategies it developed to enhance and legitimise its power. It is clear that Mitrou's early elite was not only warlike but well versed in the establishment and management of an organised settlement, and aware of the ideological effects of a constructed landscape for the living and the dead. The inspiration for these new developments appears to have been largely local to mainland and, more specifically, central Greece. In material terms, cist tombs and built chamber tombs were grave types local to the Greek mainland, and Mitrou's orthogonal network of straight roads, highly charged with elite connotations and at least in part restricted in access, appear to have been a central Greek feature. Elite grave goods in the first use phase of elite tomb 73 mixed local with imported goods. Even though Mitrou has produced sporadic finds of Minoan pottery and was involved in intense maritime contact with Ayia Irini on Kea and Kolonna on Aigina via the Euboean Gulf from the Middle Helladic II Early phase

onwards (Hale in press), it actually experienced a downturn in external trade during the Late Helladic I phase, as is indicated by the decrease in pottery imports (Vitale & Hale 2012). It is only at an advanced stage of its development, in the Late Helladic IIA and IIB phases, that Mitrou's elite began to import large amounts of Mycenaean pottery and adopt Mycenaean elite practices (Vitale 2012). Thus we may conclude that Mitrou's elite developed its own vocabulary of power, strategies to legitimise it, and settlement organisation in the Late Helladic I phase prior to 'Mycenaeanisation'. Perhaps it did so to assert its own identity in reaction to outside influences. Whether or not this was the case, our finds show that Mitrou's elite understood how to project power through the rearrangement of the built environment and the mortuary realm into codified performative spaces, and that these ideas owed nothing to Minoan Crete or Mycenae.

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