

Tomb Readers: Anthropological Approaches to the Funerary Archaeology of Prepalatial Crete

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Declaration

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Summary

This thesis examines anthropological approaches to the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete. As the primary source of archaeological evidence for the Prepalatial period (c. 3200-1900 B.C.), the early Bronze Age tombs of Crete have attracted significant scholarly attention and interpretative discussion. Funerary practice at the tombs, during which the remains of the deceased were physically engaged with after their initial interment, has traditionally been interpreted as representative of a Prepalatial belief in the simultaneous dissolution of material and social personhood. Bodily decomposition is posited in scholarly discourse as a process through which the individual was understood to have transitioned into part of a collective ancestorhood, with the decomposing dead existing as a source of fear, anxiety and revulsion.

However, the intellectual underpinning of these archaeological interpretations has not hitherto been examined. This thesis is the first sustained investigation into the influence of anthropological models on the interpretation of the Prepalatial funerary record. Through close analysis of the scholarly discussion of tombs across Crete, it demonstrates that the application of anthropological models has had significant impact on archaeological interpretations of Prepalatial funerary practice, eschatological belief and worldview. It illustrates the particular dependence of archaeological interpretations on the anthropological theories of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner, despite their universalising models having been subject to substantial critique in wider anthropological thought. This thesis argues that the uncritical employment of these models is interpretatively restrictive, and highlights the potential for anthropology to offer a diversity of alternate perspectives on bodily decomposition, pollution behaviours and the 'ancestors'. In light of recent archaeological evidence for the physical engagement with decomposing bodies in the Prepalatial period, it argues that interpretations of bodily decomposition as inherently pollutant and actively avoided are ethnocentric, an anthropologically-influenced perspective which it is now time to critically reconsider.

Chapter 1 examines the long history of interdisciplinary discourse between sociocultural anthropology and Cretan archaeology. Focusing on the period around the turn of the twentieth century during which both disciplines experienced substantial development, this chapter illustrates the shared intellectual climate from which the anthropological theories and archaeological discoveries emerged. It is demonstrated that key concepts in sociocultural anthropological thought of the late-nineteenth and early-

twentieth century – those of socio-evolutionary theory, ‘Mother Goddess’ models and ‘survivals’ – continue to shape the way in which the Prepalatial tombs of Crete are discussed and interpreted. Chapter 2 adopts and advocates for a self-reflexive approach, in its consideration of the role of bodily decomposition in modern deathways. It is argued that bodily decomposition is a process which is rarely observed or engaged with, and that our conception of the appropriate treatment of human remains has influenced the ways in which Prepalatial activity at the tomb sites is interpreted in archaeological discourse. Secondary burial in modern rural Greece is discussed as a funerary practice in which bodily decomposition exists as a crucial stage, during which the community physically interact with the remains of the deceased. The chapter concludes with an outline of the main tenets of the anthropological theories of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner.

Chapter 3 demonstrates the extensive influence of the anthropological models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner on the interpretation of the Prepalatial funerary record. Through the analysis of the scholarly discussion of individualised identity and agency, transient personhood, and the fear of the dead in the Prepalatial period, the sustained interpretative impact of these anthropological models is made explicit. It argues that the application of these models is often inconsistent, an inconsistency encouraged by archaeologists’ underlying attitudes to the prolonged interaction with human remains.

It is in Chapter 4 that the wider potential of anthropology is emphasised, in its ability to highlight symbolisms, perspectives and sensory perceptions dissimilar to our own. Concentrating on archaeological interpretations of smell, colour symbolism and symbolic cleansing, it is argued that anthropological frameworks other than those of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner provide us with alternate perspectives on Prepalatial funerary practice and tomb use. In addition, the recent archaeological evidence for Prepalatial interaction with decomposing human remains is discussed in detail, as data which conflicts with traditional, anthropologically-influenced interpretations of the active avoidance, containment and negation of bodily decomposition. Chapter 5 examines the ‘final stage’ of the models of Hertz and Van Gennep, in its discussion of scholarly interpretations of Prepalatial ancestorhood. It argues that the staticity of anthropologically-influenced definitions of ‘ancestors’ is not consistent with scholarly interpretations of the Prepalatial record, and discourages more nuanced understandings of ancestorhood as an interpretative category. In conclusion, the thesis argues for the consideration of alternate models and interpretative questions in future scholarship.

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Introduction

To give them the most gross kind of physical characterisation: the classicist is typically dusty, the anthropologist, sweaty.

(Redfield 1991:6-7)

In his attempt to distinguish between the supposedly ‘practical’ activities of anthropologists versus the ‘textual’ approaches of classical scholars, Redfield’s portrait is undoubtedly provocative in its polarisation of two interrelated and undeniably more nuanced disciplines. In this essentialising view, the anthropologist perspires during her data collection in the field and conversely, the classicist becomes covered in the particles that have accumulated amongst the ancient volumes with which she spends her days. It is a gross characterisation indeed, juxtaposing physical exertion with intellectual labour, the exoticised ‘field’ and the cloistered library, engagement with the living and the interpretation of the long dead. Yet, crude as it may be, if we turn that same methodological mirror to our own discipline of prehistoric Cretan archaeology, we come to realise that we are both: sweaty and dusty and everything in between, our inquiries into the ancient past employing all of the interpretative tools available to us, whether they be trowel, text or theory.

As a discipline closely connected with both sociocultural anthropology and classical scholarship since its earliest conception (Schlieser 1991:214; Goodison and Morris 1998:113,208; Peatfield 2000:140, Hamilakis 2002:5; Harlan 2011; Eller 2012; Marinatos 2014; Soar 2017:57; see Chapter 1), this characterisation of the mixed methodologies of prehistoric archaeology in Crete is perhaps unsurprising. However, while Redfield (1991:6-7) describes the classicist’s research as ‘conducted through review of texts’, the ‘texts’ to which the prehistoric archaeologist refers are those of a different kind. In the absence of contemporary literary sources, our interpretations must rely solely on the ‘reading’ of the material record, critically engaging with the archaeological remains through which we attempt to discern (amongst many other things) funerary practices, eschatological belief and ancient worldview. Although Goodison (2019:123-4) highlights that the interpretative approach of viewing prehistoric monuments and landscapes as ‘spatial texts’ is one which has been employed since the 1990s (e.g. Tilley 1993; Edmonds 1999), I argue that even

archaeologists who do not explicitly employ such an approach may still be characterised as ‘readers’ of the material record in the broader sense of the word, as consumers open to personal, social and cultural biases, imaginative tangents and interpretative tendencies. It is these ‘readings’ with which this dissertation is concerned, specifically those which employ anthropological theory in their interpretation of the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete.

Funerary archaeology is a particularly fruitful field of inquiry for such an examination of anthropological approaches, as it is a sub-discipline which consists of multiple strands of interpretation in which sociocultural anthropology plays a significant part (Chesson 2001:1, Nikita and Triantaphyllou 2017:68). The diversity of information that tombs and burials provide about ancient people(s) has led to their characterisation as ‘profound windows into human societies past and present’ (Symonds 2009:48), a perspective which is seemingly achieved through interdisciplinary interpretation, in that ‘asking questions of a cemetery can direct us toward avenues of broader anthropological import’ (Charles 2005:19). Yet although cemetery sites are thus posited as ‘windows’ onto the past, when we look closer it becomes apparent that they are not windows, but *lenses*, our perception of prehistoric practices and beliefs fundamentally mediated through a variety of interpretative filters. Like the mirror with which we began, we find reflected in them our own methodological and interpretative foci, our understanding of the funerary record moulded by the anthropological models we use to aid us in our archaeological analyses.

It is this simultaneously reflective and refracted picture which is the subject of inquiry in this dissertation. Our ‘tomb reading’ does thus not attempt a comprehensive re-examination of the archaeological record in the pursuit of new, impossibly objective insight, but rather investigates the archaeologists’ act of *reading* in and of itself. It is essentially an exercise both in and of interdisciplinarity, investigating the interpretative consequences of the application of anthropological theory to a specific archaeological case study. In other words, it is not primarily concerned with looking *through* the interpretative lens, but rather directly *at* it, in turn recognising our own role in its continual creation and re-creation.

The term ‘case study’, however, does perhaps not do justice to my sustained discussion of the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete, nor its suitability to such an approach, as an archaeological context whose interpretations have been influenced by

anthropological theory since the Minoan civilisation's discovery at the turn of the twentieth century. As discussed in detail in Chapter 1, the narrative of the 'Minoan' civilisation of prehistoric Crete began with a palace: a concept, term and trajectory that has shaped scholarship since Sir Arthur Evans' excavations at the site of Knossos began in 1900. Fuelled by literary allusion and cultural affinity, Evans popularised the term 'Minoan' to describe the Bronze Age people(s) who inhabited Crete, and posited them in both scholarly volumes and sensationalist media reports as the precursor to a western, decidedly 'European' civilisation (Evans 1921:24; MacGillivray 2000:182; Hamilakis and Momigliano 2006; Morris 2010).¹

The focus of this dissertation, however, is the funerary archaeology of a period before the emergence of the palaces on Crete – the 'Prepalatial' – a designation originally postulated by Platon (1956), in his reworking of Evans' (1906) division of the Cretan Bronze Age (Early, Middle, Late) into Pre-, Proto-, Neo- and Post-Palatial periods.² As in this dissertation, these two chronological schemata are often used in conjunction with one another, and it should be noted that the Prepalatial era traditionally extends from the Early Minoan I to the Middle Minoan IA (EM I – MM IA) or, alternatively, approximately 3200-1900 B.C. (see Table 1).

On occasion, reference will be made to later Protopalatial contexts during the course of my discussion, in an acknowledgement that multiple cemetery sites' use (and subsequently, scholarly discussion) extends across such constructed chronological divides, as the tombs themselves are not solely a Prepalatial phenomenon (e.g. Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997; Murphy 2003; Vasilakis and Branigan 2010; Legarra Herrero 2014; Girella and Todaro 2016; Tsipopoulou 2017a; Driessen et al. 2018). Yet the cemetery sites exist as an important source of information for the Prepalatial period in particular, as relatively little is known of contemporary settlements, with the exception of the site at

¹ Karadimas and Momigliano (2004) have tracked the development of the term in German scholarship of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, before its translation and wider use by Evans, with Karadimas (2015:6-7) discussing the origins of the term 'Minoan' in the Göttingen school in the 1820s and 1830s. Similarly, Marinatos (2009:22; see also 2014:10) highlights that although Evans did not coin the term 'Minoan', he was one of the first to use it 'in a singular way to designate a cultural identity rather than a historical period'. See Sherratt (2009) for a discussion of representations of Knossos and Minoan Crete in the contemporary press.

² See Schoep and Tomkins (2011:6-11) for an overview of scholarly reconsideration (and frequently, rejection) of the concept of a singular 'emergence horizon' in the MM I period, including the timing of the appearance of key phenomena such as palaces (see also Tomkins and Schoep 2010:68).

Myrtos (Warren 1972) . As such, we rely heavily on the funerary sphere for evidence related to the nature of Minoan society, during a time from which no deciphered script survives.

Early Bronze 1	Early Minoan IA Early Minoan IB	Prepalatial period
Early Bronze 2	Early Minoan IIA Early Minoan IIB	
Early Bronze 3	Early Minoan III	
Middle Bronze 1	Middle Minoan IA Middle Minoan IB	Protopalatial period
Middle Bronze 2	Middle Minoan II (A - B at main palaces)	
Middle Bronze 3	Middle Minoan IIIA Middle Minoan IIIB	Neopalatial period
Late Bronze 1	Late Minoan IA Late Minoan IB	
Late Bronze 2	Late Minoan II	Monopalatial period (Knossos only)
Late Bronze 3	Late Minoan IIIA	
	Late Minoan IIIA2	
	Late Minoan IIIB Late Minoan IIIC	

Table 1: Chronology of the Cretan Bronze Age (adapted from Manning 2010:17, Table 2.1)

Although some do take advantage of natural rocky features or supporting slopes, the tombs themselves are built, above-ground structures, which are monumental and communal in nature. Their communality – that is, that multiple interments were made within their confines over a sustained period of time – is one of their defining and most debated features. This is evident in the scholarly discussion about which type of social unit their users belonged, hypothesised as consisting of either clan or tribe (Xanthoudides 1924:7; Branigan 1970b:128), nuclear family (Whitelaw 1983) or rather a differentiation based on social status (Legarra Herrero 2011:70).³ As built cemeteries which were maintained and modified over time, however, they have been argued to have served a wider social purpose, in their interpretation as the main foci for communal ritual activity in

³ Driessen (2015:156-7) suggests that further consideration of the secondary depositional activities of Minoan funerary practice may offer alternative hypotheses, highlighting that the question of whether social status of the deceased was retained post-mortem should be examined.

the Prepalatial period (e.g. Branigan 1970b:135, 1984:35, 1993; Gesell 1983:98; Peatfield 1987:90; Papadatos 1999:52; Soar 2015:288; Tsipopoulou 2017c:112).

The tombs often occur in groups (although not exclusively) and are thus frequently referenced in terms of their respective 'cemeteries', an approach which attempts in its widening of analytical focus to consider the different structures' relationship (spatial, architectural, chronological etc.) with one another, in addition to shared external space. Although the majority of publications related to funerary practice centres on the circular tombs in the south-central region of Crete, a tomb type referred to as a 'tholos' or plural 'tholoi' (e.g. Xanthoudides 1924; Branigan 1970a, 1970b, 1987, 1993, 1998; Murphy 1998, 2003; Blackman and Branigan 1982; Alexiou and Warren 2004; Vasilakis and Branigan 2010; Caloi 2012; Déderix 2015; Boness and Goren 2017), recent and ongoing excavations at the cemeteries of north-eastern Crete are beginning to offset this geographical and interpretative imbalance (e.g. Crevecoeur et al. 2015; Triantaphyllou 2016; Schoep et al. 2017; Tsipopoulou 2017a; Driessen et al. 2018; Kiorpe 2018).

The north-eastern tombs differ architecturally to those found in the south-central region in that they are rectilinear in form, leading to their traditional designation as 'house tombs' due to their similarity to rectilinear domestic architecture, although this has been subject to debate (Evans 1924:xii; Soles 1992:224-5; Branigan 1970b:154). While the geographical characterisation of circular tomb chambers as located in the south-central region and rectilinear forms in the north-east largely holds true, it must be acknowledged that it is not without its exceptions, with the multi-period cemetery at Archanes-Phourni containing both tholoi and rectilinear burial buildings (Sakellarakis and Sapouna Sakelleraki 1997; Maggidis 1998; Papadatos 1999; Papadopoulos 2010) and a small circular tholos recently excavated at Messorachi Skopi described by its excavators as an 'anomaly' due to its location in the east of the island (Papadatos and Sofianou 2013:26).

Although the fallacy of a monolithic, homogenous 'Minoan' civilisation will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1, it is important to note that the scope of our discussion includes the funerary archaeology of Crete as a whole, in that it focuses on the archaeological interpretation of both the tholoi and house tombs, in addition to the few examples of contemporary rock shelters used for burial (Triantaphyllou 2012; McGeorge 2008, 2011). However, this is not to say that the 'funerary record' of Prepalatial Crete is an unchanging, static or known entity, as exemplified by the ongoing excavations (or, in some cases, re-excavation) at sites such as Koumasa, Sissi and Petras (e.g. Boness and Goren

2017; Driessen et al. 2018; Tsipopoulou 2017a; Kiorpe 2018), the unfortunate destruction or dilapidation of tombs over time, and the number which remain unexcavated and/or understudied (Goodison and Guarita 2005). Indeed, the rural location and relative obscurity of some of the 78 known tholoi has led to certain sites having been ‘discovered’ and (re)named by multiple scholars, causing subsequent confusion in their wider identification and discussion. To avoid such complications here, it should be noted that where I refer to specific tholoi, I have used the nomenclature as outlined in Goodison and Guarita’s (2005) catalogue.

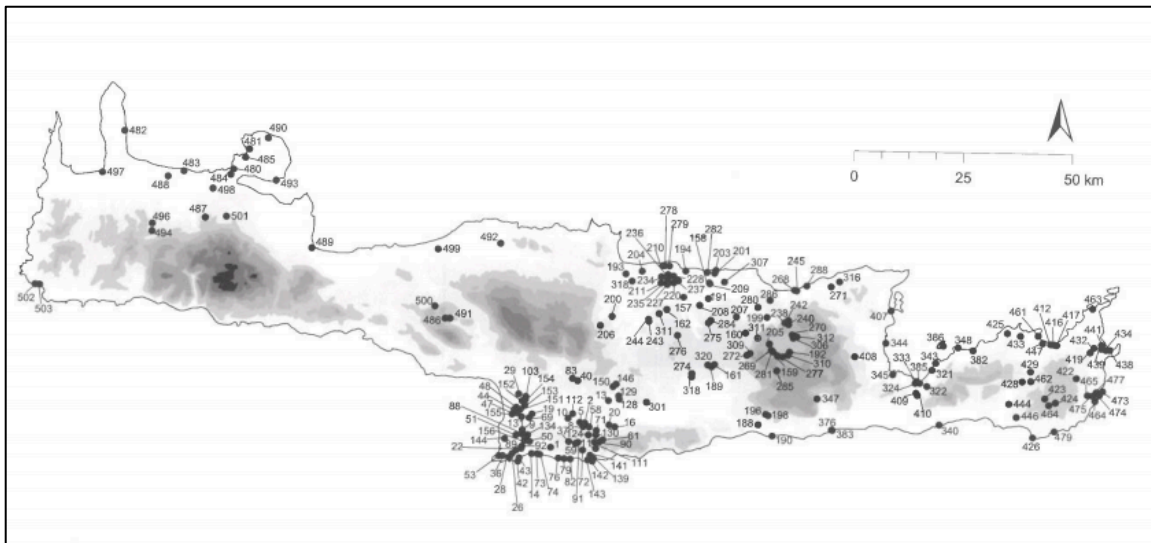


Figure 1: EM II-MM II cemeteries on Crete. Selected sites mentioned in my discussion are as follows: Apesokari A (2), Apesokari B (5), Ayia Kyriaki A (22), Kaloí Limenes (42), Kamilari (44), Korakies (59), Koumasa (61), Lebena Papoura I/II (76), Lebena Yerokambos II/IIA (79), Lebena Zervou (82), Moni Odigitria (92), Platanos (112), Porti (124), Vorou (146), Sissi (288), Archanes Phourni (162), Gournia (324), Mochlos (348), Pseira (386), Messorachi Skopi (433), Petras (447) (Legarra Herrero 2014, Fig. 2).

As built, monumental tombs of large stones and mudbrick, the Prepalatial tombs’ construction and subsequent maintenance signify a substantial investment of time and labour, a concerted use of resources seemingly deployed in order to produce particular architectural arrangements. Indeed, both the circular chambers of the tholoi and the rectilinear house tombs often possess a number of rooms or antechambers. Naturally, there exists variation in layout and size between cemeteries and tombs, yet shared architectural characteristics such as undersized or undefined doorways, prepared floors and enclosure walls in the areas immediately outside of the structures are common features. The types of artefact deposited along with (or, potentially, at a period of time after) the deceased’s interment also reoccur between sites. These do not play a large part

in my discussion, but it is important to note that they include (but are not limited to) terracotta and stone figurines of human, animal and anthropomorphic forms, fragmentary gold diadems, engraved sealstones, bronze daggers, bronze and stone jewellery, and stone and ceramic vessels of varying size and function.

However, it is the skeletal remains of Prepalatial Crete that have attracted the most sustained application of anthropological models in their interpretation and consequently occupy a central role in our discussion of interdisciplinary approaches. They exist as an extremely partial and problematic dataset due to prolonged physical interaction with the bones in both antiquity and modern times, in addition to their treatment during Minoan funerary practice (Xanthoudides 1924:7; Blackman and Branigan 1982:1,49-50; Branigan 1987; Triantaphyllou 2010:230, 2012:19, 2018:141-2). In addition, as the Prepalatial tombs are sites which have been excavated since the 1920s (e.g. Xanthoudides 1924; Marinatos 1931; Stefani 1933), the methodological foci of earlier studies, in which skeletal remains were largely marginalised or overlooked, have inevitably negatively impacted on the availability of osteoarchaeological data. While the various contributory factors to the skeletal remains' 'disturbance' and the socio-culturally specific scholarly discussions of such activities is discussed in detail in Chapter 2, it is important to acknowledge here that osteological reports from Prepalatial contexts are beginning to form a significant part of the available information from the tomb sites, with their recent results undermining the application of entrenched anthropological models to the archaeological record (Chapter 4).

Therefore, throughout my discussion it will become apparent that recent and ongoing archaeological research necessitates a re-consideration of the anthropological models with which archaeologists have interpreted the evidence for Minoan funerary practice and subsequently, eschatological belief and worldview. Our discussion is thus a timely and important endeavour, as the application of anthropological theory – namely the models of Robert Hertz (2004[1960]), Arnold Van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1967,1977,1978,1987,1995) – is particularly influential in the archaeological interpretation of a multi-stage activity practiced at both the tholoi and house tombs, traditionally termed 'secondary burial' (e.g. Branigan 1987:50, 1993:122; Goodison 1989:26; Girella and Todaro 2016; Harrington 2016:51). As highlighted in Chapter 2, 'secondary burial' is not a practice confined to ancient societies, but is rather carried out as an integral part of certain modern funerary practices, such as in rural Greece. As 'secondary burial' is the term employed by anthropologists working in such contexts

(Alexiou 1974; Danforth 1982; Seremetakis 1991; Håland 2014), I have chosen to retain it in my discussion of these modern funerary practices, during which, after a period of burial and bodily decomposition, the body is exhumed from the grave and the disarticulated bone placed in another (i.e. 'secondary') location.

However, this is not to underestimate the sustained scholarly discussion of the term's suitability to archaeological discourse, a terminological issue which is debated amongst archaeologists and anthropologists alike, as exemplified in the prolonged discussion of its applicability at the recent interdisciplinary conference 'Gathered in Death', held in Louvain-la-Neuve in 2016. While the term 'burial' itself has been problematised for its ethnocentricity and ambiguity in describing archaeological deposits (Knüsel and Robb 2016:655; Schmitt and Déderix 2018:198), 'secondary burial' as an interpretative category has been similarly critiqued, in that its uncritical and imprecise application (in addition to its various iterations e.g. 'secondary treatment' etc.) has led to both disciplinary and interdisciplinary confusion (Knüsel 2014:47; Crevecoeur et al. 2015:285; Schoep et al. 2017:371). With the introduction of increasingly precise excavation techniques into Cretan archaeology – such as the implementation of archaeothanatology at the EM-MM cemetery at Sissi – scholars have attempted to define such terms, distinguishing between those which are descriptive and those which are interpretative (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:285-6; Schoep et al. 2017:371-2; Schmitt and Déderix 2018; Déderix et al. 2018). A 'primary deposit' is thus used to indicate a situation in which the body has remained in the location in which it was placed prior to decomposition. Consequently, the term 'secondary deposit' is used to describe the movement of partially or completely disarticulated skeletal remains from their original locus of deposition to another location through identifiably anthropogenic action (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:285; Schoep et al. 2017:371).

While some designations are site-specific,⁴ what these terminological definitions seek to combat is unfounded interpretations of Minoan intention, as seen in their restriction of the term 'secondary burial' to situations in which it can be proved that the manipulation of the de-fleshed body parts or skeletal remains had been planned from the start of the funerary cycle (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:285; Schoep et al. 2017:371). Therefore, following Schoep et al. (2017:371) and their warning that interpretations of 'primary burial' or 'secondary burial' in older publications should be treated with caution, the term

⁴ E.g. a primary deposit is referred to as a 'primary burial' at Sissi (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:285).

‘secondary depositional activity’ will be used throughout my discussion of Prepalatial funerary practice, to indicate the archaeological evidence for the movement of skeletal material from the location in which it was initially placed prior to decomposition. This is in acknowledgement of the fact that securely establishing intention in this context (i.e. without supporting ethnographic or textual sources) is problematic, and fortunately, unnecessary for the purpose of my inquiry. Nevertheless, while my discussion focuses on anthropologically-influenced *interpretations* of Minoan interactions with human remains rather than the difficult task of the *identification* of these interactions in the material record, it is important to consider that ‘secondary burial’ as an interpretative category is one with arguably anthropological origins, having been originally coined by Hertz (2004[1960]; Knüsel and Robb 2016:258).

Whereas the influence of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner’s anthropological models on the interpretation of Prepalatial funerary archaeology will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, the question presents itself as to why such interdisciplinary borrowing has become so prevalent in archaeological interpretation, and why anthropology in particular is such an attractive source of interpretative frameworks. As multiple commentators have pointed out (Parker Pearson 1999b:33; Déderix et al. 2018:30), archaeology and anthropology, in recent times at least, fundamentally differ in their interpretative foci, with archaeologists primarily concerned with establishing generalisations and regularities in the material record and anthropologists instead focusing on documenting cultural diversity. Yet it is this very diversity which is perhaps the most alluring aspect of the anthropological record, since, as highlighted by Chesson (2001:7), it offers a ‘a richly textured world of analogy from which archaeologists can interpret and reconstruct the past’.

These analogies take various forms and have been characterised as either ‘general’, ‘buckshot’, ‘spoiler’ or ‘laboratory’ in nature (Yellen 1977:2,6-12). While ‘general’ analogies are limited to universalising observations (e.g. all human societies employ symbolism) and ‘laboratory’ analogies rely solely on the results of experimental archaeology, it is ‘buckshot’ and ‘spoiler’ anthropological analogies which we find most frequently in the archaeological interpretation of Prepalatial Crete. As outlined by Parker Pearson (1999b:34), ‘buckshot’ analogies are hypotheses which have been developed within a particular ethnographic context and subsequently applied in a ‘scatter-gun fashion’ to an archaeological context which ‘might fit those specific circumstances’. As we shall see in the course of my discussion, it is arguably through ‘buckshot’ analogies that anthropological models have

influenced the interpretation of Prepalatial Crete, raising questions as to whether such a haphazard approach is appropriate or consistent with the particularities of the material record. However, particularly in my discussion of smell and colour symbolism in Chapter 4, it is so-called ‘spoiler’ analogies that will be consciously and critically employed during the course of this thesis, as a means of acknowledging our own socio-culturally specific interpretative biases and exploring alternate anthropological approaches to interpreting the evidence for Prepalatial funerary practices.

Yet, however attractive a methodology, it must be recognised that the application of anthropological analogy and theory to the archaeological record is not as straightforward a task as its ubiquity in the Prepalatial literature might suggest. Borić and Robb (2008:2) accurately summarise the difficulties that accompany this interdisciplinary approach, in that archaeologists face the ‘difficult task of tacking between, on the one hand, sophisticated theoretical nuances that various bodies of social theory and anthropology provide and, on the other hand, the plentitude of not easily decipherable material and textual data that are the core edifice of our discipline’.

As will become apparent throughout my discussion, it is this movement between theoretical models and the material record of Prepalatial Crete that has influenced scholarly interpretations of Minoan funerary practice, eschatological belief and worldview. It will be demonstrated that this ‘tacking between’ anthropological theory and archaeological data inevitably introduces inconsistencies, highlighting that the application of interpretative models to the material record necessitates a full consideration and integration of the conditions, limitations and presuppositions they bring with them. Thus, while Bintliff (1984:34) argues that archaeologists *must* employ models so as to ‘bridge that gap between what the data permit us to infer as strict scientists, and what we would like to be able to pronounce on as historians or “social analysts”’, the interpretative consequences of such an interdisciplinary approach will be shown to require continual consideration and evaluation.

This critical approach is particularly important when dealing with anthropological models that have become entrenched in both the archaeological and wider intellectual mindset. While their main tenets will be outlined in Chapter 2, it is in Chapter 3 in which the sustained and substantial influence of the models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner on the Prepalatial funerary record will become evident. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that the models’ impact is not confined to interpretations of Prepalatial Crete or even

archaeology as a discipline, with Laneri (2007:4) highlighting that Van Gennep's theory 'has strongly influenced Western thought in different forms', Weber (1995:526) emphasising the wider adoption of Turner's 'rich, evocative lexicon of compelling words and phrases' and Hertz's model having been examined, extended and 'validated' in relation to secondary burial practices elsewhere (Metcalf and Huntington 1991). In addition, it has been emphasised by Parker Pearson (1999b:21-22) that many influential case studies of funerary practices (e.g. Goody 1962; Douglass 1969; Bloch 1971; Danforth 1982; Metcalf 1982) took as their starting points these 'classic ideas' of Van Gennep and Hertz. Therefore, while it is clear that Prepalatial Crete is not the only archaeological or, indeed, scholarly context in which the models of Van Gennep, Hertz and Turner are influential, the extent of their application to the Prepalatial funerary record is substantial. Indeed, this widespread influence is alluded to in Branigan's introductory comments to his 1993 publication *Dancing with Death*:

The brilliant pioneering papers of Hertz and Van Gennep published in the first decade of the twentieth century and re-published in England translation in 1960 have to some extent *set the agenda for most, if not all, of the papers and books which have followed them...some human responses to death are remarkably widespread and essentially universal*. If we can attempt to summarise them here, it may help to inform our discussion of the way in which the Early Minoan communities of the Mesara incorporated death into life.

(Branigan 1993:119, my emphasis)

Branigan, one of the most prolific and established excavators of the Prepalatial funerary record, thus acknowledges the intellectual debt of scholars working on death-related topics to the anthropological models of Hertz and Van Gennep. In keeping with his subsequent discussion of their theories (Branigan 1993:121), he adopts a similar anthropological approach, characterising human responses to death across time and space as 'universal'. While the danger of universalising models of interpretation will be discussed in Chapter 2, it is important to acknowledge that these entrenched anthropological models are posited by Branigan as a means through which archaeologists may gain insight into Minoan funerary practice and worldview, an interpretative position which, as highlighted in Chapters 3 and 5, is continually and frequently uncritically echoed throughout the relevant archaeological literature. Thus, while Murphy (2011a:9) has argued that many Aegean scholars are incorporating newer theories into their work and that Cretan studies

is moving closer to a 'theoretically explicit and developed style of scholarship', I argue that there remains a considerable – often implicit – reliance on the established theories of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner, as perhaps alluded to by their description in the volume's introduction (Murphy 2011a:4-5).

This is an important point, as while there has been a substantial amount of scholarship on the intellectual underpinning of various other interpretative frameworks in Minoan archaeology, such as that on social complexity (e.g. McNeal 1973; Cherry 1983; MacEnroe 1995; Hamilakis 2002:13-5; Schoep and Tomkins 2011; Legarra Herrero 2014:6), Cretan cultural homogeneity (e.g. Legarra Herrero 2009:29,31-2, 2014:4; Hamilakis 2002:17; Relaki 2004:170) and religion (e.g. Goodison and Morris 1998; Eller 2012:92-3; Peatfield 2001:51-4; Peatfield and Morris 2012; Goodison 2019:134), the sustained influence of anthropological theory on the interpretation of Prepalatial funerary practices is yet to be examined in detail. It is therefore time to reflect upon the extensive employment of anthropological theories in this particular context; to evaluate the consistency of their application, the impact of their interpretative consequences and subsequently, the validity of their use in the study of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete.

It is in this way that this dissertation attempts to address what Leone (1972:16) has called a 'paradigm lag' between the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology, in that the former is 'consistently one stage behind' developments in anthropological theory. It is situations in which human responses to death are characterised as 'universal' in which we might begin to see the truth of such a statement, in addition to the application of similarly universalising models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner, without acknowledgement of the substantial critique such positions have faced in the field of anthropology (e.g. Bloch 1988; Handelman 1990:65-6; Metcalf and Huntington 1991:xii,10-1,85-97ff.; Rakita and Buikstra 2005; see Chapter 2). Thus, while Chapter 1 highlights the sustained dialogue between the disciplines of anthropology and Cretan archaeology in the past, our analysis of anthropological approaches to a specifically Cretan archaeological context provides an opportunity to reflect upon the current status, impact and, indeed, future of such an interdisciplinary exercise.

My discussion thus forms part of a wider effort in Cretan prehistory to 'fully integrate itself within mainstream archaeological and anthropological thinking' (Hamilakis 2002:13), with Chapter 4, in particular, offering alternate anthropological approaches to the interpretation of Prepalatial Crete, and Chapter 5 situating archaeological

interpretations of ancestorhood within wider anthropological definitions and debates. Similarly, it is through examining the sustained impact of our own socio-culturally specific perspectives on bodily decomposition (Chapter 2) and the application of entrenched anthropological models to the Prepalatial record (Chapter 3), that we may begin to explore the interpretative space *outside* of these interpretative frameworks, encouraging the development of more nuanced, flexible and contextually-specific perspectives.

I stress 'explore' here, as the complete escape of our own social, cultural, historical, disciplinary and personal backgrounds is neither an achievable or appealing objective. While Dumont (1977:27) has suggested that 'to isolate our ideology is a *sine qua non* for transcending it', I share in Herzfeld's (1987:4) apprehension of such a statement, in his argument that 'it is a strangely Utopian optimism, perhaps, that can seriously contemplate transcending "our own" ideology, because it is not clear who "we" are; that is the fundamental problematic'. However, while we may never truly recognise our own social, cultural, or ideological standpoints, I argue that we must, frustratingly or otherwise, continually attempt to do so. As highlighted by Herzfeld (1987:4), this is an important and necessary endeavour in any work which seeks to interpret the practices of societies other than our own, since only 'a restless effort along these lines can bring hitherto immanent principles of Eurocentrism into open comparison with other cultural ideologies'.

Therefore, considerations of our own sociocultural backgrounds offer us an opportunity, albeit a challenging one, to reflect upon our own understandings of death and bodily dissolution. This dissertation thus both adopts and advocates for an explicitly self-reflexive approach, in an acknowledgement that our interpretations of the Prepalatial funerary record are fundamentally influenced by our own attitudes towards death, individualised personhood, bodily decomposition and disarticulation. An ongoing and in-work exercise, this self-reflexive approach is most apparent in discussions of attitudes towards human remains port-mortem, but also finds expression in brief personal reflections on their excavation in the field. I argue that this self-reflexivity is a critical task, as it forces us to confront what Bernal (1987:9) has called 'archaeological positivism', defined as the 'belief that interpretations of archaeological evidence are as solid as the archaeological finds themselves'. In other words, the active acknowledgement of our own socio-culturally specific perspectives works to emphasise the fact that that dealing with objects does not make one objective.

This recognition has an impact on the ways in which we conceptualise archaeological practice and the constructed data on which it relies. In archaeological discourse more generally, there is a widespread distinction made between ‘primary sources’, such as archaeological artefacts or sites, and ‘secondary sources’, for example archaeological reports, datasets, and more discursive, wide-ranging syntheses. The former is undoubtedly valued interpretatively above the latter, with the literal primacy of ‘primary sources’ perhaps due to the misleading conception that material archaeological remains are somehow pre-interpretative and subsequently, objective. This view, however, ignores the many interpretative decisions that have influenced the discovery, excavation, collection, curation, examination, interpretation, and publication of archaeological remains. The secondary literature that is the focus of my discussion, then, is at least more transparent in its subjectivity, in that it represents named archaeologists’ discursive interpretations of the Prepalatial funerary record. While designated ‘secondary’ in archaeological canon, these scholarly interpretations exist as my ‘primary’ resource, revealing in their examination the extensive influence of anthropological models on understandings of the Prepalatial funerary record. However, although I argue throughout for more critical applications of anthropological theory, this is not to say that this inevitable ‘secondary’ subjectivity is criticised in and of itself. Rather, it is acknowledged as an inevitable, influential and insightful element of archaeological discourse, a subject which necessitates sustained investigation and discussion in its own right. It is in this focus that I am in agreement with Schoep and Tomkins (2011:1), who argue that the re-evaluation of the intellectual underpinning of Minoan archaeology ‘is not a fringe intellectual indulgence, but is essential to the future health of the discipline’.

My discussion of the influences of archaeological interpretations is thus made with the full awareness that we may never achieve an objective perspective on our own socio-culturally specific preconceptions. However, I would argue that a self-reflexive consideration of our particular perspectives, in addition to the consideration of alternate modes of thinking, promotes a more nuanced, conscientious approach to the interpretation of ancient practices. Therefore, while on the one hand entrenched anthropological models will be demonstrated to have encouraged static, formulaic, and frequently inconsistent interpretations of the Prepalatial funerary record, on the other, the cultural diversity that anthropology elucidates more generally will be referenced to

highlight that our conception of death, bodily dissolution, symbolism, and pollution is but one of many.

In acknowledgement of this diversity of viewpoints, it is important to state that where I refer to 'our' attitudes, preconceptions, tendencies, etc., I do so from a particular sociocultural, historical, disciplinary, even religious context. For example, in Chapter 2, my reflection upon the role of decomposition in modern funerary practice is focused on societies in western Europe, notably that of contemporary Britain. This discussion largely centres around Christian practices, in particular the inhumation of the body. In this focus I do not wish to ignore the wealth of contemporary funerary practices across the world which differ in process and underlying belief, but rather to reflect upon interactions with the body post-mortem which I, and many Prepalatial commentators, are most familiar. 'Our' is thus used to refer broadly to contemporary British Christian attitudes towards, and interactions with, the decomposing body, although they may be shared by societies elsewhere. This is not to construct a damaging and essentially colonialist narrative of 'us' versus 'them', which I emphatically reject, but rather an attempt to introduce self-reflexivity into scholarly discourse, continually questioning the sociocultural specificity of our archaeological interpretations. It is through this confrontation of our own expectations, preconceptions, and interpretative biases in the context of the Prepalatial tombs that we may begin to counteract what Goodison (2019:123) has identified as 'a culturally-specific hesitation on the part of western scholars to engage with death, mortality, or physicality at these sites, whether with the presence of grief or the treatment of the bones of the deceased'.

It is in this same self-reflexive vein that Chapter 1 examines the shared intellectual climate in which Cretan archaeology and sociocultural anthropology developed and the continued influence of this interdisciplinary relationship on the interpretation of Prepalatial Crete. Through the consideration of the connection between the anthropological theories and archaeological discoveries of prominent figures such as Sir Arthur Evans, Jane Ellen Harrison, E.B. Tylor and James Frazer, the longevity of the dialogue between the two interrelated disciplines is made apparent, ranging from their beginnings in the late-nineteenth century to the interpretations of the present day. Although it is demonstrated that anthropological theory has been influential in Cretan archaeology since Sir Arthur Evans began his excavations on the island, Evans, as a figure whose hypotheses have already attracted substantial analysis in terms of anthropological influence, does not exist

as the primary focus of discussion. Rather, this chapter focuses on concepts integral to sociocultural anthropological thought of the late-nineteenth century – those of socio-evolutionary theory, ‘Mother Goddess’ models and ‘survivals’ – and investigates the ways in which they continue to find expression in the interpretation of Prepalatial funerary archaeology, a context with which Evans was only marginally involved. This chapter thus reflects upon the sustained interdependence of sociocultural anthropology and Cretan archaeology, and outlines the interpretative consequences of such a relationship on our understanding of the Prepalatial tombs.

Our understanding, perception and description of funerary practices is similarly the topic of discussion in Chapter 2, albeit in the context of the role of bodily decomposition in modern deathways. Beginning with a reflection on (largely Christian) funerary practice in contemporary Britain and the general avoidance of experiences of decomposition, it continues to discuss the recent trends of natural burial and cryopreservation, in which decomposition is posited as the means through which the individualised ‘self’ breaks down. It also highlights the critical role bodily decomposition plays in funerary practice and eschatological belief elsewhere, discussing the processes of secondary burial in modern rural Greece. This discussion of contemporary funerary practices, in which ideas of the appropriate physical engagement with human remains loom large, provides a fitting background for a consideration of the fragmentary evidence for Prepalatial funerary practice and the ways in which it is described in scholarly discourse. While the turbulent history of the tomb is outlined both in reference to early excavation techniques and recent illicit digging at the sites, it is argued that scholarly discourse to date has equated the modern and Minoan removal of material with one another, with both activities being interpreted in a particularly negative light. Consequently, it is emphasised that the socio-culturally specific concepts and vocabulary of ‘looting’ or ‘interference’, defined as acts of ‘indignity’ or ‘disregard’, are inappropriate and interpretatively restrictive in discussions of Minoan funerary practice. It concludes with the introduction of the main tenets of the anthropological theories of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner and an overview of the critique to which they have been subject in anthropological discourse.

It is in Chapter 3 in which the substantial and sustained influence of these three theorists on the interpretation of the Prepalatial funerary record is made explicit. This chapter examines the conceptual frameworks within which archaeological interpretations of Prepalatial human remains and, subsequently, eschatological belief and worldview, have

been produced. As such, the extensive employment of the anthropological models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner in scholarly discussions of individualised identity and agency, transient personhood and the 'pollution' or 'fear' of the dead in Prepalatial Crete is explored. Through the analysis of the 'sweeping statements' frequently found in the archaeological literature, it is demonstrated that the use of these anthropological models is frequently inconsistent, undermined by archaeologists' distaste for prolonged, unsystematic interaction with skeletal matter in the Prepalatial period, for which there is ample evidence from the tomb sites.

Bearing the socio-cultural specificity of these negative attitudes in mind, Chapter 4 emphasises the potential of anthropological approaches in their capacity to highlight the existence of symbolisms, perspectives and sensory perceptions dissimilar to our own. Focusing on scholarly interpretations of smell, colour symbolism and symbolic cleansing at the Prepalatial tombs, it is illustrated that the incorporation of anthropological frameworks other than those of Van Gennep, Hertz and Turner may offer us alternate perspectives on Minoan funerary practice. It is argued that pollution behaviours are complex and culturally dependent, thus questioning interpretations of the decomposing Prepalatial dead as inherently pollutant and as necessitating subsequent practical or symbolic cleansing. Recent archaeological research suggestive of a Minoan interaction with decomposing human bodies and/or body parts is discussed in detail, as a growing body of evidence which undermines both the entrenched anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz and scholarly interpretations which posit bodily decomposition as an inherent source of pollution, revulsion and fear.

My final chapter, Chapter 5, fittingly examines the 'final stage' of the transitory models of Van Gennep and Hertz, in its discussion of scholarly interpretations of ancestorhood. By situating archaeological conceptions of ancestorhood within wider anthropological debate and definitions, this chapter emphasises the ambiguity of ancestorhood as a concept in the discussion of Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief. It is demonstrated that interpretations of ancestorhood in this particular archaeological context are fundamentally influenced by the models of Van Gennep and Hertz, either explicitly or through the use of archaeological analogy, namely that of the plastered skulls of Neolithic Jericho. Through reference to the evidence for the grouping of skulls and long bones, in addition to the increasing evidence for infant burial, it is illustrated that invocations of anthropologically-influenced models of ancestorhood

bring with them many questions, those of inclusivity/exclusivity, materiality/immateriality, fragmentation and manifestation. Despite their extensive application, it is argued that the staticity of Van Gennep and Hertz's models, in which ancestorhood is framed as an endpoint of an irreversible linear transition between physical and metaphysical domains, is not consistent with scholarly interpretations of the Prepalatial record, and discourages more nuanced understandings of ancestorhood as an interpretative category.

It is thus through the detailed discussion of anthropological approaches to the Prepalatial funerary archaeology of Crete that this dissertation makes three crucial contributions to both Cretan scholarship and the anthro-archaeological interdisciplinary enterprise more generally. Firstly, it highlights throughout the importance of recognising and evaluating the impact of our own socio-culturally specific perceptions when discussing and interpreting funerary practices dissimilar to our own. Secondly, it emphasises the extensive, and frequently interpretatively restrictive, influence of the anthropological models of Van Gennep, Hertz and Turner on the Prepalatial funerary record, in addition to the inconsistency with which they have been uncritically applied. Finally, it explores the potential of anthropology for illustrating the diversity of human approaches to death, encouraging us to ask new, and perhaps, more interesting and insightful questions of the archaeological record.

In essence, it is an interdisciplinary reflection on the very activity with which you are currently engaged: the subjective, complex and inherently interpretative act of *reading*.

Chapter 1: Disciplines in dialogue: anthropology and Minoan archaeology

1.1 Introduction

From their earliest beginnings, sociocultural anthropology and Minoan archaeology have essentially been connected, as fields of inquiry which simultaneously – and often symbiotically – sought to elucidate a shared object of study: that of humankind. However, upon a close examination of the humanities' histories, it becomes apparent that it is far more than their mutual interests that are intertwined, rather that multiple influential figures and concepts appear in the annals of both disciplines, many of which similarly emerge from the intellectual background of classical scholarship.

Fittingly, this first chapter in my discussion of anthropological approaches is primarily concerned with beginnings, focusing on the period around the turn of the twentieth century. It was during this time that the Minoan civilisation was first 'discovered' and the early concepts of sociocultural anthropology developed, those which still find expression in the archaeological interpretations of today. It will be demonstrated that while prehistoric archaeology as a discipline had great impact on both the development of anthropological ideas and, indeed, the general intellectual climate in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, some of the key concepts that characterise the start of sociocultural anthropology as a recognised discipline – those of socio-evolutionary theory, 'Mother Goddess' models and 'survivals' – continue to shape the ways in which the Prepalatial funerary archaeology of Crete is discussed in contemporary scholarship.

My discussion will thus work to emphasise the sustained discourse between the disciplines of sociocultural anthropology and Minoan archaeology, as well as the interpretative influences such an interdisciplinary relationship has encouraged. Through highlighting the shared sociocultural and historical background of both disciplines at a period during which they experienced significant theoretical development, my discussion will illustrate that the use of anthropological models in the interpretation of archaeological remains is by no means a recent methodological innovation, but rather has a long and complex history, most especially in the case of prehistoric Crete.

1.2 Beginning with background: the birth of the 'new sciences'

But the new facts, as they come in month by month, tell steadily in one direction. The more widely and deeply the study of ethnography and prehistoric archaeology is carried on, the stronger does the evidence become that the condition of mankind in the remote antiquity of the race is not unfairly represented by modern savage tribes.

(Tylor 1869:105)

'Month by month', writes E.B. Tylor (1832-1917), in his description of the frequency with which 'recent researches in prehistoric archaeology' were emerging and impacting upon theories of sociocultural evolution and the 'survival' of 'savage culture' in contemporary societies in 1869 (Tylor 1869:103-4). In this short passage, it is thus the so-called 'father of anthropology' makes clear the continual and critical influence of prehistoric archaeology on early anthropological thought, an investigation into the condition of humankind which came to be known as 'Mr. Tylor's Science' (MacEnroe 1995:4). Tylor frames archaeological discoveries not as interpretations, but as information: the 'facts' are new, accumulative and instructional; they are the material means through which more ambitious, abstract and over-arching conclusions about social and cultural development could safely be supported. In both senses of the word, archaeological data is thus posited as *directional*, framed as pointing to a specific conclusion, yet one which argues for the unilinear movement of mankind toward civilisation. This was the evolutionist archaeology that flourished in Britain in the 1860s and 1870s, an archaeology which saw in 'modern savages' an appropriate analogy for the ancient man, with both representing an earlier stage of sociocultural development.

Tylor, however, was certainly not alone in his employment of archaeological data to support a far grander scheme of the process through which man achieved civilisation. Indeed, the above passage was written in response to the 1869 publication of the second edition of Sir John Lubbock's (1834-1913, later Lord Avebury) *Prehistoric Times, as illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages*, in which prehistoric remains were used to support his evolutionist theory of social progress from savagery to civilisation. As highlighted by Barany (2014:240-8), this was arguably the first publication to explicitly argue for a link between contemporary 'savage culture' and the prehistoric condition, a methodology central to Victorian evolutionist archaeology through which scholars 'substituted their geographically distant contemporaries for their

temporally distant ancestors'. It is important to note the *use* of archaeology in this case, as the relationship between archaeology and early anthropological thought was not one of equilibrium but far more of utilisation, as argued by Dunnell (1980:71), who states that 'it is fair to characterise *Prehistoric Times* as an organization of archaeological data to support the notion of progress; it is not reasonable to construe the organization as derived from the notion of progress'.

However, it is important to consider that the employment of archaeological remains to support theoretical arguments of human development was not a methodology used exclusively by evolutionary archaeologists, but was also utilised by those who argued for earlier polygenist theories of human diversity. While Lubbock and other evolutionary archaeologists saw 'mankind as homogenous in nature, though placed in different grades of civilisation' (Tylor 1871:6) – a culture-focused interpretative framework which moved away from the questions of race and physical attributes that had previously dominated polygenist discussions of human diversity – Stocking (1987:67) has highlighted the longevity of the employment of archaeological remains in discussions of human development, in that they were similarly used to support polygenist arguments for racial determinism and conservatism.

To return to Tylor's passage then, in contrast to the paradigm lag which we are arguably currently experiencing in the application of anthropological theory to certain archaeological contexts (see Introduction), the phrase 'month by month' certainly suggests that this was a period in which the dialogue between the disciplines seemed almost immediate, with the archaeologist's trowel literally at the cutting-edge of early ethnological and anthropological thought. In fact, it has been suggested that Tylor's 'founding' of the discipline of anthropology was fundamentally influenced by his chance encounter with archaeologist and ethnologist Henry Christy, who he met on a bus in Havana in Spring 1856 and subsequently accompanied on his travels to Mexico,¹ where Christy planned to study the remains of the ancient Toltec culture (Astor Aguilera 2017:108; Soar 2017:144). The importance of archaeological material culture as support for Tylor's

¹ Despite the popular misconception of Tylor as an 'armchair anthropologist', Astor-Aguilera (2017:109-10) has highlighted that Tylor did engage in ethnographic research amongst the Ojibwa of Lake Huron, Canada and the United States Native American Southwest Pueblos, as well as time in Berlin and London conducting fieldwork in 'Deaf-and-Dumb Institutions' and amongst Spiritualists. However, these field investigations were not extensive, with Tylor's three-month stay in Mexico being the longest in duration.

ethnological claims is perhaps exemplified by his 'artefact collecting' during this period, an activity which would now almost certainly be considered looting, during which he illegally transported pre-Columbian objects out of Mexico, albeit repeatedly characterising Mexicans themselves as thieves (Astor-Aguilera 2017:122; Tylor 1861:55,170-1,246,264). As argued by Soar (2017:143), Tylor's substantial intellectual debt to archaeology is one which is implicitly traceable in his use of archaeological analogy and language, in addition to explicit statements made by him to that effect, asserting that 'the master key to the investigation of man's primeval condition is held by Prehistoric Archaeology' (Tylor 1871:52).

Multiple scholars have already extensively traced the intricate network of the (now) interdisciplinary connections between those emerging sciences of prehistoric archaeology and sociocultural anthropology in the mid- to late-nineteenth century and the contemporary geological and biologically evolutionist paradigms with which they interacted (Dunnell 1980; Stocking 1987:69-150ff; Marinatos 1993:8-9; MacEnroe 1995; Papadopoulos 2005:98-109; MacGregor 2008; Harlan 2011; Pettit and White 2011; Eller 2012; Barany 2014; Astor-Aguilera 2017; Soar 2017). We need not re-state these complex histories here, but for the purpose of our future discussion of unilinear, progressive models of social development, it is important to acknowledge the role of prehistoric archaeology in one of the major developments of the period: the revolution in human time.

To first clarify our own conceptual chronology, both Dunnell (1980:39,67ff) and MacEnroe (1995:4) have argued that evolutionism in archaeology was not solely a product of Darwinian thought, but rather had a long history before the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Dunnell (1980:39-40, see also Stocking 1987:129,145), in particular, argues that the term 'evolution' was already established by the time of Darwin's *Origins* in the mid-nineteenth century, as a concept particularly associated with the social philosophy of Herbert Spencer, stating that 'cultural evolution is a direct descendant of the Spencerian philosophical position and not the scientific paradigm associated with Darwin'.

However, while evolutionary archaeology arguably did not rely upon the advent of the biological evolutionary models, archaeology had an important part to play in the development of Darwinian thought. In effect, the discoveries and methodological foci of prehistoric archaeology undermined the biblical chronology with which Darwinism was incompatible, in which the history of mankind was limited to the historical period and to 'civilised' man. As highlighted by Stocking (1987:70), this conceptualisation of time not only

relied on the invocation of supernatural causes (i.e. God) for the development of cultural phenomena but also on the *shallowness* of the archaeological record. Thus, archaeological discoveries such as those at Brixham Cave and Boucher de Perthe's excavations in the Somme (see Dunnell 1980:68-73; Owen 2008:210) afforded the Darwinian model of biological evolution the depth of time it required to become a credible theory of human development; it was through reference to the material, prehistoric record that the chronology of humankind was so extensively expanded and that man acquired a new antiquity.²

Although scholars have alluded to the attraction of positing the advent of Darwinism – a watershed moment in the western intellectual tradition – as the impetus behind models of socio-evolutionary theory in archaeological thought (e.g. Dunnell 1980:35; Stocking 1987:145), it is clear that models of development in archaeology existed before *On the Origin of the Species*, those which similarly shaped conceptions of time and continue to influence how we perceive and interpret the ancient past to this day. Indeed, as early as 1819 Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788-1865) had formulated the Three Age System, a framework which posited three primary stages of technological development: the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age (Gräslund 1987:17-30). Despite the longevity of its influence in chronological categorisation, the initial formulation of the system was largely a curatorial enterprise, with Thomsen, faced with the task of organising the wealth of artefacts held by the Museum of Northern Antiquities in Copenhagen, arranging the (largely cutting) tools into groups on the basis of their material (McNeal 1973:208; Gräslund 1987:17-30).³ Working upon the assumption that technological development proceeded from stone to metal, with iron as a later introduction, Thomsen thus defined the 'Ages' through technological classification, a division of prehistoric time which was fundamentally based on the typological sequencing of material objects, rather than any over-arching argument for sociocultural evolution or 'progress'.

As evident from the chronological focus of this dissertation, these Three Ages of prehistory are constructed periods of archaeological time that remain in use in

² Stocking (1987:147) notes that even this truly revolutionary expansion of human chronology was not enough to accommodate the length of time required for Darwinian models, stating that 'there were in fact pressures generated by Darwinism itself to make this chronology much longer than that indicated by Brixham Cave'.

³ Gräslund (1987:18) highlights that while Thomsen's model had multiple predecessors, he was the first to 'formulate and define in a clear and unambiguous manner' the Three Age System and was the first to publish it, although it existed in exhibition form ten years before its appearance in print.

contemporary discourse, influencing archaeological methodologies, specialities and terminology, as seen in the employment of the term ‘Minoan’ to refer to the specifically *Bronze Age* Cretan population (see Introduction). However, as discussed in section 1.3, their structure has been further modified, with advances in typological sequencing (and, arguably, absolute dating techniques) encouraging the division of the prehistoric periods into smaller and smaller segments which often gain their own nomenclature,⁴ a process of refinement which may be seen to have introduced sociocultural evolutionist narratives that were not present in the initial formulation of the Three Age System.

Although from our perspective the Three Age System may appear to have much in common with models of social progress or biological evolution in that it implies a trajectory of change over time, it has been argued that it fundamentally relied upon neither. Rather, as Dunnell (1980:67) highlights, archaeology’s theoretical basis at this time was fundamentally geological:⁵ the past was not divided into accumulative evolutionary stages but *periods*, characterised by the identification of specific assemblages of artefacts (i.e. those of stone, bronze and iron). Arguably, its appearance as ‘evolutionary’ to us in the twenty-first century perhaps has more to do with the definition (or lack thereof) of the term or concept of ‘evolution’ in archaeological discourse, in which it is employed indeterminately and often misguidedly associated with more general models of change and/or the notion of ‘progress’:

Archaeologists have spoken of ‘the evolution of Minoan society’, using the word in a loose metaphorical sense to refer simply to gradual, incremental change from simple to complex conditions: evolution, that is, as a sort of systematic history rather than as the process of development itself.

(Cherry 1983:36)

Referring to Minoan archaeology specifically, Cherry’s argument raises important issues regarding the influence of early anthropological thought on the conceptualisation of Cretan prehistory. Indeed, I would agree that ‘evolution’ – in Cretan archaeology at least – has

⁴ While absolute dating techniques may be more prominent in other archaeological contexts, the chronology of Minoan Crete is largely based on ceramic typologies.

⁵ Barany (2014:248) highlights that this influence of geology continues into later nineteenth century archaeologists’ work, with Lubbock (1865:334) stating that, in order to describe the early condition of man, ‘the archaeologist can only follow the methods which have been so successfully pursued in geology’.

clearly acquired a colloquialism that has encouraged its conflation with more general ideas of change and transformation over time, as exemplified in its appearance in the title of Caloi's (2012) article 'Changes and Evolution in Funerary and Non-Funerary Rituals...', in which it is seemingly employed as a synonym for change, due to the lack of any explicit definition or discussion of evolutionary frameworks of interpretation.

Thus, when we speak of the introduction of 'socio-evolutionary' models of development into the interpretation of Prepalatial Crete, we must be aware that they are born from Spencerian philosophical evolutionary approaches rather than those of Darwin's biological models. Due to natural selection, biological evolution does not view change as transformative or as inherently progressive, rather it is 'adaptive and wholly opportunistic'; cultural evolution, however, has as its impetus internal mechanisms, in which 'human perception and intention, either as individual or collective attributes, drive the process of change' (Dunnell 1980:42,50). This is an important acknowledgement, as while Darwinian biological evolution might dominate the modern use and perception of the concept, the socio-evolutionary models applied to the archaeological record of Crete are recognisably those of a philosophical, cultural nature; they are gradualist, progressive, transformative and rely upon certain presuppositions about the past and its interpretation:

the social philosophical approach...seeing evolution as a particular history and evolutionary 'theory' as a set of abstractions about that history rather than a set of laws and units which produced that and other histories.

(Dunnell 1980:46)

The interpretative consequences of such an approach's application are discussed in the subsequent section (1.3), but this entanglement of terms, concepts and parameters reminds us of the difficulty in discussing, however briefly, theories which continue to shape our perception of the world and humankind's place within it over 150 years since their initial publication. Yet, what is important to acknowledge is that this intertwining of ideas characterised, and contributed to, the dynamic intellectual climate of the period. Prominent figures both shaped and shifted between interconnected fields of study, at a time during which interpersonal relationships were particularly formative. So intellectually linked were the proponents of sociocultural anthropology, prehistoric archaeology and the natural sciences in mid- to late-nineteenth century Britain that Barany (2014:253) has

highlighted the difficulty of discerning explicit citations in the works of this period, due to the culture of implicit referencing born from the shared recognition of an established scholarly imagination. Indeed, arguing that the founding of the 'X-Club' in 1864 heralded 'one of the clearest contemporary examples of deliberate networking',⁶ Pettit and White (2011:32) highlight the importance and interpretative influence of the intellectual milieu from which sociocultural anthropology emerged, in that 'connections between the individuals who defined prehistoric archaeology and the natural sciences provided the complex web out of which arose the establishment of human antiquity and the development of notions of the primitive mind'. As Papadopoulos (2005:104) highlights, this was 'a well-oiled and very active "old boys network"', yet, as we shall observe, one which would come to link the emergent disciplines of sociocultural anthropology and Minoan archaeology from the early twentieth century to the present day.

One example of the ways in which these interpersonal, even *familial*, relationships may be seen to have had lasting effect on both the beginnings of sociocultural anthropology and Minoan archaeology in particular is the influence of Sir John Evans (1823-1908). A close friend of influential archaeologist Sir John Lubbock and a primary proponent of evolutionist archaeology, Evans was professionally involved in the paper milling industry, yet occupied a prominent place in the fields of archaeology, geology, antiquarianism and numismatics (MacGregor 2008).⁷ In April 1860, Lubbock accompanied Evans on a visit to Boucher de Perthe's excavations on the gravel terraces of the River Somme that lent substantial credence to the revolution in human time (Owen 2008:211). From the 1850s to the 1870s, both Lubbock and Evans were active members in multiple scholarly societies and were 'pivotal members of an informal grouping of people eager to encourage change within traditional archaeological establishment', an influential cohort which has since been dubbed the 'Evans-Lubbock network' (Owen 2008:220).⁸

⁶ The 'X-Club' was established by Thomas Henry Huxley, a prominent biologist, in November 1864. It was a closed-membership club comprised of prominent figures in archaeology and the natural sciences, a 'scientific elite' including John Lubbock, John Tyndall, George Busk, Herbert Spencer, Thomas Hirst and Edward Frankland. Meeting on the first Thursday of every month, members would meet to dine together, before travelling to the meeting of the Royal Society, where they would attempt to influence council proceedings, arguably to their own advantage. See Owen (2008:218-21) for a discussion of the 'X-Club', in addition to its relationship with John Evans and John Lubbock.

⁷ See Owen (2008) for a detailed discussion of John Lubbock and John Evans' personal and intellectual connections.

⁸ These societies included the Geological Society, the Ethnological Society, the Royal Society, the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Society of Antiquaries. Both John Evans and John Lubbock

Indeed, Alfred Tylor – E.B. Tylor’s brother – was also involved in the verification of Boucher de Perthes’ excavations in the Somme and was a member of the Geological Society at the same time as John Evans (Soar 2017:154). It was through this familial relationship that Soar (2017:154) suggests E.B. Tylor became acquainted with both John Evans and the wider archaeological and geological intellectual community in the mid-nineteenth century, a connection exemplified in a letter written by John Evans to E.B. Tylor, thanking him for a gift of Tylor’s *Primitive Culture*. However, as argued by Marinatos (2014:4), these familial links were more complex, as E.B. Tylor possessed multiple ties to the Evans family, namely through John’s brother, the anthropologist Sebastian Evans. Yet it is clear that E.B. Tylor developed a personal and intellectual relationship with John Evans, travelling with him to dolmens and other sites of archaeological interest, and becoming what Marinatos (2014:14) identifies as a ‘mentor figure’ to his son Arthur Evans (1851-1941).⁹

As Soar (2017:157) has highlighted, Arthur Evans and E.B. Tylor were in direct communication with one another, with Arthur writing to Tylor from Crete in 1901, telling him of the excavations of the ‘palace’ and the discovery of what would later be interpreted as the Priest King fresco. Arthur was the first child of Sir John Evans and shared in his archaeological interests, an enthusiasm for the ancient which would go on to influence the popular imagination of early twentieth century Britain and beyond with his highly publicised excavations at the site of Knossos on Crete. Although archaeological investigations at the Kephala hill at Knossos began with Kalokairinos (1878-79) and Halbherr (1885), Arthur Evans’ full-scale excavations at the site began on the 23rd March 1900, acquiring the necessary land in 1899 after Heinrich Schliemann (the excavator of Troy) had previously failed to do so (Brown 1986:37-8; Panagiotaki 2004:514,521; Morris 2007:120-1).¹⁰ While Evans’ first preliminary report from Knossos was published in the

also served on the senate of the University of London and as trustees for the British Museum (Owen 2008:211).

⁹ Marinatos (2014:14) notes that when Arthur Evans’ portrait was presented to the Chancellor of Oxford University after the success of his excavations at Knossos, Tylor was among the distinguished attendees at the ceremony.

¹⁰ See Brown (1986:42-3) for an overview of archaeological interest in Knossos before Evans, including a discussion of the trial excavations of Kalokairinos, who was forced to abandon work in 1879 by a general edict of the then Ottoman government. Similarly, Panagiotaki (2004:521) emphasises that Evans’ purchase of the land was under different political circumstances than the previous attempts by Heinrich Schliemann, highlighting that Evans only acquired the land after the Cretan government passed legislation in 1899 decreeing that ancient remains belonged not to land proprietors but the Cretan government and, by extension, people as a whole. Both Brown (1983:22-30, 1987:44) and Morris (2007:120-1) highlight that Evans had to negotiate for access to Knossos,

Annual for the British School at Athens that same year (1900), accounts of significant finds were sensationally and urgently relayed to British newspapers, largely in an attempt to secure an attentive audience (and subsequently, further funding) for the ongoing excavations (MacGillivray 2000:182).

Thus, the dissemination of early results from Knossos was a process that immediately and purposefully appealed to the general public in both Britain and further afield; they need not read the lengthy *The Palace of Minos* (Evans 1921) to engage with Knossian archaeological research and its results, although its volumes would perhaps not in themselves be regarded as appropriately ‘academic’ publications by modern standards (Sherratt 2009).¹¹ Indeed, Evans’ discoveries at Knossos and their dissemination did not capture peoples’ imaginations as much as liberate them – inspiring poetry, novels and art – a sensation that even resulted in the mythical-bull-painting Pablo Picasso providing the first cover for the journal ‘Minotaure’ in 1933 (Cadogan 2004:542-3, see also Momigliano and Farnoux 2017).

Although Evans’ excavations and interpretations continue to influence the archaeology of, and public interest in, Bronze Age Crete to this day, it is important to consider the particular point in time at which these literally ground-breaking discoveries were made and subsequently almost immediately communicated to both the scholarly community and the general public alike (Sherratt 2009).¹² They did not only capture the imaginations of the masses but also those of contemporary anthropologists, especially that of Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928), a member of the ‘Cambridge Ritualists’, who was interested in identifying earlier, pre-classical strata of Greek religion.¹³ Travelling to Knossos in 1901,¹⁴ Harrison spent three days there in the company of Evans, who was in the process of collecting evidence in support of his hypothesis of Minoan aniconism (Gere 2009:89; Eller 2012:92).¹⁵

appealing to J.D. Bouchier to intercede with Prince George of Crete on his behalf (Morris 2007:121).

¹¹ As Sherratt (2009) has demonstrated, representations of Knossos were published in both the American and Continental press, as well as in Britain.

¹² Karetsou (2004:549) highlights the continued popularity of Knossos as a touristic site, with visitors exceeding one million in 2004.

¹³ For a description and discussion of the development of the Cambridge Ritualists, see Ackerman (1991).

¹⁴ See Robinson (2002:133,136-7) for an itinerary of Harrison’s travels in Crete in 1901 (see also Beard 2000:131).

¹⁵ Marinatos (2014:16-17) argues that Evans’ focus and discussion on animism was fundamentally influenced by E.B. Tylor, an intellectual debt which is acknowledged in his statement that ‘for the



Figure 2: Drawing of an impression of the 'Mountain Mother' seal (Evans 1900:29, fig.9)

Harrison, however, interpreted the iconography differently, describing in her autobiographical *Reminiscences* the moment in which she encountered a clay sealing which, from her perspective, supported her theory of a matriarchal model of early Greek religion:

Somewhere around the turn of the century there had come to light in the palace of Cnossos a clay sealing which was a veritable little manual of primitive Cretan faith and ritual. I shall never forget the moment when Mr Arthur Evans first showed it me. It seemed too good to be true. It represented the Great Mother standing on her own mountain with her attendant lions, and before her a worshipper in ecstasy. At her side, a shrine with "horns of consecration".

(Harrison 1965[1925]:338)

While the influence of Harrison on the development and longevity of 'mother-goddess' models in the interpretation of prehistoric Crete is discussed in Section 1.4, it is important to highlight here that this was not a once-off interaction between Evans and Harrison, but rather there existed an ongoing dialogue between the two prominent figures in Cretan archaeology and sociocultural anthropology. Eller (2012:92-3), in particular,

ideas underlying the widespread primitive cult I need refer only to Tylor' (Evans 1901:105, footnote 5).

suggests that Evans' early interpretations of Minoan religion were influenced by Harrison's ideas of a 'Great Goddess', albeit before their replacement by an 'all-out embrace of the Frazerian trope of the Mother Goddess and her rising and dying son' in the 1921 publication of *The Palace of Minos*. However, other scholars have outlined the much longer history of the 'Mother Goddess/Great Goddess' model in contemporary thought, highlighting the 'complex network of intellectual ideas and ideologies' which could have contributed to Evans' reading of the past, including 'socio-evolutionary theory, imperialism, and orientalism, the ideology of 'separate spheres' of male-public/female-private and medical and psychological constructs of both body and mind' (Morris 2006:70; see also Hutton 1997, 1998:93-6; Lapatin 2002:66-70; Morris 2010; Goodison and Morris 2013:267-71).

Although the direct influence of Harrison on Evans thus remains a point of debate, the continued use of archaeological material from Bronze Age Crete to support contemporary anthropological hypotheses is made explicit in a footnote in Harrison's (1908[1903]) second edition of her most influential book, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, in which she states:

Since the above was written Mr Evans has discovered at Cnossos the figure of a goddess with a snake in either hand and a snake or snakes coiled about her head. She may prove to be the prototype of Athene, of the Erinys and of many other form of Earth-goddess.

(Harrison 1908[1903]:306, footnote 2)

Harrison thus not only acknowledges the recent discoveries from Knossos, but actively incorporates them within her updated discussion of pre-classical Greek religion, using the newly-unearthed figurative material to support her argument for its characterisation as essentially goddess-worshipping and matriarchal. This ongoing dialogue between Harrison and Evans is further referred to in the *Prolegomena*, with Harrison acknowledging that her knowledge of the newly-unearthed archaeological material was dependent on what 'Mr Arthur Evans kindly tells me' (1908[1903]:266, footnote 1). Elsewhere, she similarly emphasises the immediacy of the archaeological material from Knossos, describing the 'idols of the *recently discovered* shrine at Cnossos', the 'figures *recently discovered* in the Mycenaean shrine at Cnossos' and the 'Mycenaean shrine *recently discovered* by Mr Arthur Evans' (1908[1903]:264,266,308, my emphasis).

As highlighted by Schlieser (1991:214), her reaction to the excavations of Evans on Crete was thus one of both enthusiasm and utilisation, with Harrison belonging ‘from the beginning to that school of archaeologists...who see in the works of art independent “commentaries” or “variants” of myths’.¹⁶ Yet Harrison herself acknowledged the centrality of Crete and Evans’ ‘discovery’ of the Minoan civilisation to her own works. ‘Crete..’, she writes, ‘...I visited again and again, and to Crete I owe the impulse of my two most serious books’ (1965[1925]:338). Elsewhere in her reflective commentary, she recognises the almost instantaneous transmission of information from Knossos back to Britain, describing Evans as having ‘telegraphed news of the Minotaur from his own labyrinth’ during his excavations at the Bronze Age site, an exploration she characterises as ‘a serious matter’ (1965[1925]:343).

For Harrison, then, Arthur Evans’ ‘Minoans’ were thus at once a civilisation both appropriately ancient and – in the context of the ongoing excavation of archaeological material – conveniently ‘new’, providing the material means through which to forward arguments for the development of Greek religion. The importance of this materiality to Harrison is exemplified in her discussion of the circumstances in which she encountered the ‘Mountain Mother’ sealing, a reconstruction of which was originally published by Evans (1900) but subsequently reproduced (and enlarged) by Harrison in her *Prolegomena* (Fig. 2). She states that although she was initially apprehensive about the accuracy of the reconstruction, it was only after Arthur Evans allowed her to personally examine clay fragments of the seal impression that she was willing to accept its authenticity:

When I first saw the drawing of the seal I was inclined to think it was ‘too good to be true’, but by Mr Evans’ kindness I was allowed while at Cnossos to examine the original fragments and am satisfied that the reconstruction is correct. We owe the most important monument of Mycenaean religion to the highly trained eye and extraordinary acute perception of the excavator.

(Harrison 1908[1903]:496, footnote 2)

While traditionally shrouded in myth, prehistoric sites were thus beginning to become grounded in the material, with Harrison seeing in the simultaneous emergence of the

¹⁶ Harrison (1965[1925]:343) does not include herself within the category of ‘archaeologist’, stating rather that archaeology and anthropology were fields in which she ‘dabbled...for both were very needful for my real subject – religion’.

disciplines of Minoan archaeology and sociocultural anthropology the dawn of an intellectual awakening:

We Hellenists were, in truth, at that time a “people who sat in darkness” but we were soon to see a great light, two great lights – archaeology, anthropology. Classics were turning in their long sleep. Old men began to see visions, young men to dream dreams.

(Harrison 1965[1925]:343)

This enlightenment, however, is described by Harrison as beginning before the time at which ‘Arthur Evans set sail for his new Atlantis’ (Harrison 1965[1925]:343), although it is evident that his discoveries at Knossos were considered by her to be a contributory factor. This is an important point, as whilst Starr (1984:9) emphasises that the Minoan civilisation ‘is the only great civilisation created in the twentieth century’, this is not to say that the sociocultural anthropological ideas of the mid- to late-nineteenth century had been left behind, but rather continued to interact and become intertwined with the similarly emergent discipline of Minoan archaeology. After all, centennial divisions are but chronological constructions. Multiple figures, anthropological ideas and, arguably, archaeological explorations at Knossos bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a time during which the ‘new sciences’ of prehistoric archaeology and anthropology were beginning to become institutionally established (MacEnroe 1995:8-10, Beard 1999).¹⁷

One such figure was J.G. Frazer (1854-1941), an anthropologist and contemporary of both Arthur Evans and Jane Ellen Harrison, whose 1890 publication *The Golden Bough* would come to shape Evans’ (and subsequently, current) interpretations of the archaeology of Bronze Age Crete.¹⁸ For Harrison at least, it is clear that the light which gave clarity and credence to Hellenic research at this time was indeed ‘*Golden*’, as seen in her emphasis on the intellectual impact of Frazer’s comparative anthropology and its chronological proximity to the Knossian excavations:

¹⁷ MacEnroe (1995:8) highlights that prehistoric archaeology entered university curricula in association with the discipline of anthropology, as seen in the introduction of a graduate diploma in anthropology (which included archaeological aspects) at Oxford in 1905. Both prehistoric archaeology and anthropology benefited from the establishment of discipline-specific institutes in the early twentieth century, with the 1904 foundation of both the Institute of Archaeology at Liverpool and the Board of Anthropological Studies at Cambridge.

¹⁸ The first version of *The Golden Bough* was published in 1890 in two volumes. In a 1900 edition a third volume was added before the release of a twelve-volume edition between 1906 and 1915. A final supplement was added to the twelve-volume version in 1936.

we classical deaf-adders stopped our ears and closed our eyes; but at the mere sound of the magical words 'Golden Bough' the scales fell – we heard and understood. Then Arthur Evans set sail for his new Atlantis

(Harrison 1965[1925]:343)

Although the influence of Frazerian models on the interpretation of Minoan archaeology and the Prepalatial tombs in particular is discussed in Section 1.4, Eller (2012:92) suggests that it was through Harrison that Arthur Evans became familiar with the work of Frazer, who characterised her intellectual debt to him as 'immeasurable' (Harrison 1962[1921]:548). Certainly, Harrison and Frazer's interpretations have much in common, with Frazer using the succession rite of the Nemi priesthood to frame his cross-cultural and cross-temporal comparative exploration into the evolution of human thought and civilization. The evolution of religion, for Frazer, had as its origin a Mother Goddess and her son/consort, who would episodically die and be reborn. This goddess was the ultimate ancestor, a representation of fertility and the vegetative cycle in particular. Although known by many different names, she was 'the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature' (Frazer 1994[1890]:314).

This characterisation, and its sustained impact, will be discussed in relation to 'mother-goddess' interpretations of Prepalatial site use shortly, but it remains to highlight here what Eller (2012:91) calls the 'intellectual kinship' between the figures of Frazer and Evans and the contributing factors to such a conceptual closeness. Indeed, she highlights their similar ages, educational background in classical scholarship and shared membership in British scholarly institutions such as the British School at Athens and the Folklore Society (Eller 2012:91; Goodison and Morris 1998:208, footnote 1). Morris (2006:71) argues that although Evans only occasionally cited Frazer, he was 'clearly influenced' by Frazer's 'Great Mother' figure, an influence reflective of a 'cross-fertilization' of ideas between Evans and the Cambridge Ritualists more generally (*contra* Marinatos 2014:3).¹⁹ Similarly, Goodison and Morris (1998:113) point out that Evans explicitly cites Frazer in his 1921 *Palace of Minos*, and Eller (2012:91) acknowledges a 'passing reference' to *The Golden Bough* in

¹⁹ In keeping with her characterisation of Evans as 'an original mind and not a follower of trends' Marinatos (2014:35-36, 58) argues against Frazer as a major influence on Evans. See Section 1.4 for discussion.

Evans' 1901 *Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult*,²⁰ despite rejecting Peatfield's (2000:140) suggestion that the title of Evans' article could be a 'deliberate evocation of *The Golden Bough*'.

The rarity with which Frazer is explicitly cited in Evans' work in relation to the clear influences of his models is significant, as it speaks to the environment in which the 'enlightening' disciplines of Minoan archaeology and anthropology were simultaneously developing, and the mechanisms through which they interacted. Similarly to Barany's (2014:253 and above) characterisation of the inherent interconnectedness of the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century, Eller (2012:91) writes:

Evans's audience would have found his use of Frazer's thesis completely transparent, requiring no citation or explanation. Evans was referring to things people *knew*, to scientific matters Frazer had proven, not to theories Frazer had *proposed*... Evans had no need or obligation to cite Frazer when he noted that the Minoans worshipped a Great Mother Goddess and her Divine Child.

(Eller 2012:91)

This acknowledgement of the shared intellectual background of both sociocultural anthropology and Minoan archaeology is crucial, as Evans' archaeology was that of the 'spirit of his era' (Karetsou 2004:547), with the Bronze Age 'palace' of Knossos exemplifying for him 'at once the starting-point and the earliest stage in the highway of European civilization' (Evans 1921:24, see also Hamilakis and Momigliano 2006; Morris 2010). Like the evolutionist archaeologies which preceded him and the sociocultural anthropologists that surrounded him, Evans was thus concerned with origins, seeing in the Minoans a distinctly European form of prehistory, 'with all of its assumption of priority and antiquity' (Papadopoulos 2005:109).

Yet, although the 'birth' of Minoan archaeology has been much discussed in relation to the influence of the prominent sociocultural models of anthropologists such as Tylor and Frazer on the 'palatial' material from Knossos, little scholarly attention has been paid to the continued impact of such models on archaeological contexts with which Arthur Evans

²⁰ Harlan (2011:224) highlights that Evans did acknowledge (albeit briefly) the anthropological theories on which his interpretations were based, both in unpublished lectures and in his publications, for example referencing the influence of Tylor on his 1901 paper *Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations* (Evans 1901:105, footnote 5).

was not, or only partially, involved.²¹ That is to say that while much ink has been spilt on identifying the impact of socio-evolutionary theory, ‘Mother Goddess’ models and ‘survivals’ in the interpretations of Arthur Evans specifically, the wider, less explicit influence of these early anthropological models on the interpretation of prehistoric Crete has yet to be examined.

The Prepalatial tombs of Crete offer us such an opportunity to investigate the wider impact of these early anthropological theories, through examining the consequences of their expression in a range of archaeological interpretations. Therefore, although my discussion has highlighted the particular interconnectedness of Minoan archaeology and sociocultural anthropology at the turn of the twentieth century, we must not underestimate the longevity of such an interdisciplinary connection and the continued influence of early anthropological theory on the interpretations of today. Thus, while Marinatos (2007:274) urges readers to be conscientious in their criticism of Arthur Evans and his employment of Victorian models born from contemporary anthropological theory (see also Marinatos 2009:22,24, 2014:42), we must heed her warning of rejecting Evans’ interpretative frameworks ‘as though we have progressed beyond this stage ourselves’. In other words, while the disciplines of Minoan archaeology and sociocultural anthropology were both born with and borne by one another in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, it is evident that their dialogue continues to this day.

1.3 The problem with ‘Pre’: socio-evolutionary theory in tomb interpretation

From the title page to its concluding remarks, the discussion contained in this dissertation is situated within a specific interpretative framework, one which may be seen to introduce socio-evolutionary narratives into the analysis of Bronze Age archaeological remains on Crete. It is that of the ‘Prepalatial’: a term used to describe the time between chronological periods of a different kind, namely between the Early Minoan I (EM I) to Middle Minoan IA (MM IA), or alternatively, approximately 3200-1900 B.C. It is a chronological schema purposefully chosen, not only to provide the necessary parameters within which our discussion of anthropological approaches could take place, but in order to reflect upon the

²¹ While Legarra Herrero (2011:52) highlights that Evans published a probable tholos tomb at Hagios Onouphrios in 1895, Evans’ discussion of Prepalatial funerary contexts is largely restricted to the preface to Xanthoudides’ (1924) *The Vaulted Tombs of Mesara*, the content of which is clearly based on Xanthoudides’ main text (Evans 1924).

interpretative baggage it brings with it; to acknowledge and assess the continued impact of early anthropological models of development on understandings of the ancient past.

Yet, despite my purposeful choice of the 'Prepalatial', it is important to consider that it is an unavoidable one. We, as archaeologists, must employ some form of accepted chronology with which to structure our discussion or, in the case of primary material, classify the material remains with which we are faced. Thus, although the focus of our discussion is far from the critical, meticulous task of artefact classification or sequencing, it will be chronological in its exploration of the implications of the 'Prepalatial' and the wider situation of the tombs from this period within a progressive, unilinear trajectory of social and cultural development.

As outlined in the preceding section, sustained systematic excavation of Bronze Age archaeology in Crete began with the unearthing of a large, multi-period monumental complex by Arthur Evans at Knossos, a structure (or structures) which he was to interpret as a 'palace'. While the longevity of other architectural designations used by Evans at Knossos (e.g. 'Piano Nobile', 'Throne Room' etc.) has been highlighted by Papadopoulos (2005:105) – the re-use of which he sees as 'Evans's imagination...constantly enshrined and perpetuated' – the term 'palace' is not one which has escaped scholarly criticism. Schoep and Tomkins (2011:10-11), for example, highlight the reasons for scholarly distrust of the term in its 'undemonstrated association with palaces in the conventional sense of the term and in the specific set of understandings that have accrued to it during the first century of Minoan archaeology'. Following Driessen (2002:1) in his suggestion of the term 'court compound', they instead propose more neutral alternatives such as 'Court Building' or 'Court Complex' and choose to capitalise 'Palace' in order to denote its use in a specifically Minoanist context (*contra* Branigan 2010b:30).²² Interestingly, this is an editorial means of expressing scholarly wariness of certain value-laden terms which we later see echoed in Hamilakis' (2018:319) use of inverted commas in his discussion of the "'pre-palatial'" period.

²² Driessen (2002:13) argues that traditional terminology (such as 'palace') acts as an 'interpretative strait jacket' on archaeological discourse. However, Branigan (2010b:30) is dismissive of the enterprise of problematising 'palatial' terminology, stating 'sterile and negative debate about finding other terms to describe the monumental buildings...is ill-directed. It will absorb time and energy which could be better used trying to understand the events and processes which led to their creation'.

However, the designation 'Prepalatial' derives not from Evans, although it may be seen to be based on – or, rather, running in parallel to – the chronology he proposed for Minoan Crete. In fact, 'Prepalatial' is a designation originally postulated by Platon (1956), in his reworking of Evans' (1906) division of the Cretan Bronze Age (Early, Middle, Late) into Pre-, Proto-, Neo- and Post-Palatial periods, a framework based on the development of palatial society rather than the identification of ceramic typologies. Yet, it is important to acknowledge the existence of previous chronological frameworks before Evans and Platon, with the Göttingen school producing 'detailed suggestions about the chronology of Cretan Prehistory' as early as the 1820s, which similarly included 'pre-' periods, such as Neumann's 'pre-Minos's' and Hoeck's *vorminoisch* or 'pre-Minoan' (Karadimas 2015:6). Evans and Platon's chronologies, however, relied on the archaeological material of later excavations and while Evans' chronology was largely based on the identification of pottery styles, both chronologies posit the emergence of the palaces as a time of particular significance.

Multiple scholars have highlighted that this approach – in which the palace is posited as the zenith of Minoan social and cultural complexity – is fundamentally influenced by prominent anthropological theories of the nineteenth century (e.g. McNeal 1973; Marinatos 1993; MacEnroe 1995; Legarra Herrero 2014:11). McNeal (1973:208-10), in particular, argues that Evans' chronology had as its impetus the developmental model of early anthropologist E.B. Tylor, who divided human history into three general stages: savagery, barbarism and civilisation.²³ Evan's subsequent subdivision of Tylor's three stages into shorter periods of three, however, may be seen to have been influenced by the North American anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan, who proposed a seven-stage framework for social evolution, based on technological and economic criteria (McNeal 1973:208-9).²⁴ Dividing each stage (e.g. Early Minoan) into sub-stages of three (e.g. EM I, EM II, EM III), Evans' chronology is not one of seven periods, but nine; a triple-tripartite framework which was almost reflected in the name of his largest work, with *The Palace of Minos* having been entitled *Nine Minoan Periods* prior to publication (McNeal 1973:209). Evans' framework has since been adapted to accommodate archaeological evidence which necessitates a

²³ McNeal (1973:207) highlights that Tylor was not the first to produce such a division, with Sven Nilsson (1868) previously classifying prehistoric man into four stages (savagery, nomadic and herding, agriculture and civilization). The transmission of Nilsson's evolutionist ideas in Britain was aided by John Lubbock, who translated a part of Nilsson's second edition in 1868.

²⁴ For instance, the first stage in Morgan's (1877) framework is 'Savagery: Lower', defined as ranging from the 'emergence of man to the discovery of fire', whereas the last stage – 'Civilization' – is characterised as spanning from the dawn of literacy onwards.

more refined chronology (e.g. the addition of alphabetical subdivisions such as EM IIA, MM IIB etc.), but it is important to acknowledge the continued use of Evans's stages in the interpretations of today, even in those which opt to employ an alternative chronology such as that of the 'Prepalatial'.

Evans' (1906) characterisation of Minoan social and cultural development as a gradual and continuous evolution, and the intellectual debt of such a perspective to Tylorian models has been commented on extensively by multiple scholars and needs not be repeated here (McNeal 1973:210-216; MacEnroe 1995:4-5). However, it is of note that it is not an interpretation which is accepted by all. Stressing Evans' 'originality and reaction against linear evolutionism' in that he 'had an unusual and sophisticated notion of historical progress and conceded the possibility of regression' (Marinatos 2014:12), Marinatos (2009:22) argues that Evans' chronology was constructed so as to match the division of Egyptian history into Old, Middle and New Kingdoms rather than 'outdated Victorian developmental views about the growth of culture from infancy to maturity'. While Evans' influences are clearly debated then, my discussion will focus on the socio-evolutionist underpinning of the alternate chronological framework, that of the 'Prepalatial', a period from which funerary archaeological remains exist as the primary source of information.

Platon's scheme, however, is arguably even more recognisably evolutionist than that of Evans.²⁵ It progresses along a linear, progressive trajectory, with the names of its stages referring explicitly to the emergence of the 'palaces'. These palaces thus exist as the centre point – the climax of Minoan social and cultural development – around which the other, seemingly lesser periods pivot. In the case of the Prepalatial tombs, centuries of the construction, continued use, maintenance, modification, and eventual abandonment of the cemetery sites are thus reduced to a prefix. The interpretative shadow of the later palaces looms large and despite the funerary remains shining substantial light onto the multifarious practices of the early Bronze Age Cretans, seen within such a culture of comparison they never truly match up to the perceived brilliance of the subsequent Protopalatial period.

Therefore, while the nomenclature of the 'Protopalatial' betrays its status as the era in which Bronze Age Crete saw the construction of the first monumental court

²⁵ Miller Bonney (2016:17) has stressed the intellectual debt of Platon's (1956) designations (e.g. Prepalatial, Protopalatial, etc.) to Evans, stating that they inherently reflect 'the persistence of Evans's vision of Crete as the cradle of European civilisation'.

complexes or ‘palaces’, I would argue that the Prepalatial tombs are also interpretatively designated as ‘proto’ in their frequent characterisation as *prototypes* of ‘palatial’ features, both social and structural. This is a characterisation which is not only found implicitly in discussions of tomb architecture and function, but also explicitly in (arguably, neo-evolutionist) statements as to the interpretative potential of the Prepalatial archaeological record. Indeed, Legarra Herrero (2011:54, my emphasis) argues that the Prepalatial cemeteries are particularly interpretatively useful as ‘they can be used to understand Minoan society, particularly because they are placed *within a stage of the social evolutionary spectrum*’, with Tsipopoulou similarly stating that:

The excavation of the Pre- and Proto-palatial cemetery of Petras, Sitia...offers an exceptional opportunity to investigate and understand the burial practices and their modifications over a period of many centuries, as well as *the social differentiations and evolutions, especially those connected with the establishment of palatial societies in Crete*.

(Tsipopoulou 2017b:57, my emphasis)

This is one of the problems with ‘Pre’: it is a model which is inherently reductionist, a developmental framework which, due to the centrality of ‘palatial’ society, essentially posits earlier periods as embryonic, defined by their expression (or lack thereof) of the ‘origins’ of later ‘palatial’ features. It is thus teleological, encouraging a discussion of the early Bronze Age which continually refers to the social structure, architecture, beliefs, and practices characteristic of another point in time. To return to the focus of this chapter, I argue that the archaeological remains dating to the Prepalatial period are continually posited as ‘beginnings’ rather than entities unto themselves.

This is a point which has been raised by Hamilakis (2002:5-15), yet one which has interestingly generated some recent scholarly backlash, with Warren (2018:2) characterising Hamilakis as having ‘attacked evolutionists such as Renfrew, Warren and Branigan on the grounds that such an approach, in highlighting the acme of a civilisation, fails to do justice to the pre-acme periods’.²⁶ Warren’s (2018:2) comments were largely

²⁶ While I would suggest that the use of the verb ‘attacked’ is misguided, the tone of Warren’s (2018) argument should be considered within the context of its initial audience and delivery, despite its later publication in a scholarly volume. In notes to the conclusion, Warren emphasises that ‘the printed text is close to and deliberately retains the tone of that given as an Introduction at the Round Table. The primary aim of this historiographic summary... was for Keith [Branigan]...to enjoy it’ (Warren 2018:8).

made in defence of both himself, Branigan (to whom the article and volume was dedicated), and Arthur Evans, stating that Evans (1906) was 'fully aware that the fundamental position was one of continuity and thus of the importance of each period in its own terms'. It is clear, then, that the characterisation of palace-centric approaches to Bronze Age Crete as inherently de-valuing earlier periods is not one which is universally accepted. Thus, while I would agree with the argument of Papadatos (1999:6, see also Tomkins and Schoep 2010:66; Karacic 2015:168) that the Prepalatial period is 'not approached in its own right, but in relation to what comes after', it is clear that statements regarding terminological connotation are not enough, rather we must investigate the ways in which this palace-centric approach finds expression in scholarly interpretation and the potential influence of socio-evolutionary theory on its production and perpetuation.

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that the Prepalatial era is frequently constructed in opposition to the supposed social 'complexity' of palatial society, resulting in an interpretative framework which constantly seeks to identify markers of social and cultural progression or 'evolution'. I specify 'supposed' here as this opposition – that between a 'simple' social structure and one which is designated as 'complex' – is one which has been justifiably questioned, with particular reference to the case of Bronze Age Crete. Legarra Herrero (2014:6) makes a convincing and compelling argument in his assertion that the concept of social 'complexity' is meaningless, as 'every single human group should be considered to be "complex" regardless of its particular social organisation'. Emphasising the ineffectiveness of designations such as 'non-hierarchical' and 'egalitarian', Legarra Herrero (2014:7) makes the important point that horizontal social relationships (i.e. equality between individuals with a similar social position) does not necessarily indicate social equality. Rather, inequality exists in every society (e.g. along lines of age, gender etc.) and subsequently, social inequality or 'stratification' should not be exclusively interpreted from the identification of vertical relationships, or, in the case of Bronze Age Crete, the emergence of palatial society (see also Hamilakis 2002:13-5; Driessen 2015:10; Mina 2015:181-2). Indeed, the 'social complexity' model has been characterised as simply a reiteration of nineteenth-century evolutionist paradigms, in that designations such as 'simple' and 'complex' are analogous to those of 'savage' and 'civilized' (Cherry 1983:36; Metcalf and Huntington 1991:16; Parker Pearson 1999b:32).

However, while this simple/complex binary opposition is problematic, it is important to consider how it has been constructed and perpetuated in scholarly discussion.

One way in which it has found continued expression is in the traditional characterisation of the Prepalatial period as a conceptual ‘calm before the storm’; a time of egalitarianism, peace and island-wide homogeneity. Although Bintliff (1984:36) described the depiction of the time ‘before the palaces’ in 1960s scholarship as a ‘vision of completely egalitarian communities...[a] romantic and idealistic vision of an innocent, strifeless, fair society’ and looked forward to a more nuanced perspective of early Bronze Age in the archaeological interpretations of the future, this perception of the Prepalatial may be seen to survive in more recent scholarly discussions of the funerary archaeology of the period. Indeed, in keeping with her (1998) argument for the Mesara tholoi as ancestral markers, Murphy (2003:ii-iii) refers to an ‘egalitarian pre-palatial society dependent on its religion and ancestry for resources’, with Soar (2010:146) characterising the EM I period in particular as ‘egalitarian and homogenous’ in her discussion of external areas at Prepalatial tomb sites. In a similar vein, Miller Bonney (2016:10, my emphasis) has posited the tombs as the main source of evidence for the progression from a supposedly egalitarian community to a socially stratified palatial society:

Until recently Prepalatial settlements, other than the major sites of Knossos and Phaistos, were sparse so the tholoi and their contents provided most of the information for the process by which the Cretan landscape, once dotted with *egalitarian hamlets and villages*, came to be dominated by *hierarchically ordered sites*.

(Miller Bonney 2016:10, my emphasis)

Although emphasising differences in the archaeological evidence from the two Prepalatial tomb groups of Mochlos and Lebena, Murphy (2011b:28,35) retains the vocabulary and invocation of egalitarianism in her description of the latter as representing ‘a more egalitarian ideology where the community as a whole was the most important social unit’, with the pair of Lebena tombs creating ‘an image of equality among the social groups using them’. Similarly, Branigan (1984:30, my emphasis, see also Branigan 1970b:30) – citing evidence from the Ayifarango survey, Megali Skinoi IIIA and IIIB, the Lebena tholoi, and Ayia Kyriaki – suggests that ‘the picture of *an unranked egalitarian society* is probably a correct one for the EBA in the Asterousia mountains’, although he highlights the evidence for social stratification from the similarly early Bronze Age tombs at Platanos, Koumasa and Ayia Triadha. This region-specific, more nuanced conclusion is in

contrast to his earlier characterisation of ‘the cultural and historical background to the Mesara tholoi’ as ‘the story of a *thousand years of peace, prosperity and progress*’ (Branigan 1970b:24, my emphasis).

This portrait of the Prepalatial – as a time of freedom, advancement and plenty – is undoubtedly romantic, but it is also powerful, as exemplified in Soles’ (2001:235, my emphasis) extension of it to encompass the entire Bronze Age in his comparison of the evidence for Mycenaean and Minoan ancestor worship, stating that ‘Minoan Crete is likely to have enjoyed *a more egalitarian society*, therefore, in which the small farms and country villas and town houses...are evidence for the existence of a large middle class of *free*, land-owning people’. However, Murphy and Branigan’s description of the funerary evidence for egalitarianism *alongside* arguments for the emergence of social stratification reminds us of Hamilakis’ (2013:130) comments on the intellectual ‘playground’ of Bronze Age Crete, upon which ‘all sorts of scholarly and popular fantasies’ have been projected. Indeed, I would argue that the tension inherent in characterisations of the Prepalatial era as simultaneously both egalitarian and the evolutionary origin of social inequality is representative of what Hamilakis (2018:130) identifies as an unfortunate interpretative staticity in Minoan archaeology:

We are thus left to choose between the western European escapist desire for a liberal, free-love utopia, and the neo-evolutionist fantasy and desire for social and sensorial order, hierarchy, and administration.

(Hamilakis 2018:130)

Thus, while scholarly discussion of individual tomb groups might emphasise the archaeological evidence for the emergence of social stratification (e.g. Soles 1992:255-8; Murphy 2011b:28), we find repeated in the literature a characterisation of the Prepalatial period of Crete as an era of egalitarianism and social equality. I would argue that this perception of the Prepalatial is *relative*, encouraged by its continual comparison to the subsequent chronological period and its situation within a framework of unilinear social and cultural progression. Indeed, the structure of unilinear trajectories of socio-cultural evolution necessitates such a construction of binary oppositions. In essence, drawing a singular line or trajectory first requires the identification of two distinct points (e.g. point A and point B). They cannot overlap, be unclear or change, but must rather exist as absolute

entities, the one-way movement between which is designated as positive and progressive.²⁷ These two points must thus suitably contrast with one another, creating conceptual distance between them, space enough for an 'evolution' to take place. Within these unilinear models of progressive, transformative change then, the Prepalatial era will, and always will be, a 'beginning' – the point 'A' of socio-cultural development in Bronze Age Crete – a state which I would argue, *contra* Warren (2018:2 and above), is inescapably and inherently posited as comparatively inferior. It is a bias which is in-built and structural; it is through its location within unilinear socio-evolutionary models that the Prepalatial era is constructed not just as a chronological period but as an (early) evolutionary stage towards the more supposedly 'complex', stratified society of the palaces.

Branigan (1970b:24), speaking of the change in settlement patterns, the development of villages and small towns, certainly hints at an egalitarian, peaceful, 'simple' perception of the Prepalatial in his interpretation of an emphasis on collective action during the period, stating that 'with the beginning of the Early Bronze Age...we find the Cretan devoted to a communal existence'. Yet Branigan's reference to the 'Cretan' brings us once again to a 'beginning': the very title of this dissertation and its reference to Prepalatial *Crete*. This is a necessary starting-point, as it is important to acknowledge the geographical focus of our discussion and the underlying preconceptions of social and cultural development such a parameter both betrays and, arguably, perpetuates. That is to say that the 'Crete' of which we speak must be recognised as *our* Crete; a land mass which we both define and characterise on the basis of its existence as an island, surrounded by sea on all sides and at a considerable distance from other terrains.

This is a significant acknowledgement, as Rainbird (2007:3) has warned against the frequent pitfalls of such a characterisation in archaeological interpretations, in that it is often postulated, whether implicitly or explicitly, that 'islands equal isolation'.²⁸ Indeed, this perception of water as a barrier, rather than a conduit, to contact with people(s) elsewhere, is a contributory factor to what might be called the 'island laboratory' concept, whose

²⁷ Suggesting that archaeological interpretations of Aegean societies are influenced by modern capitalist thought, Legarra Herrero (2013:245-6) highlights that 'whilst most of Anglo-American archaeological academia interpret the appearance of complex socio-political systems as a necessary and positive change, such change can be alternatively interpreted as having provided very restricted benefits for the majority of the population'.

²⁸ He argues that it is due to this conception of 'isolated islands' that they were attractive to anthropologists in the early stages of the discipline's development (Rainbird 2007:18). See Kuklick (1996) for a discussion of the 'island model' in anthropological thought.

adoption in archaeology Broodbank (1999:236) attributes to ‘the contemporary paradigm of societies as largely autonomous systems’ or ‘analytical islands’. While this overtly scientific vocabulary might seem out of place in discussions of archaeological interpretations, we must recognise that it finds expression in relation to constructions of history more generally, with Legarra Herrero (2013:247) stating that ‘the past may provide a useful laboratory for the study of human nature’.

Our discussion of Crete, in the Prepalatial era or otherwise, must thus include an acknowledgement of the danger of conceptualising the island as early anthropologists did, that is as a site of isolation and experimentation; a homogenous, static and bounded entity within which the uninterrupted mechanisms of social and cultural evolution could be traced (Kuklick 1996). Simultaneously, we must remain aware of not going too far in the other direction and taking the interconnectedness of islands in prehistory for granted. As highlighted by Erlandson and Fitzpatrick (2006:7), this is an important endeavour, as numerous studies ‘have deconstructed the notion that all islands are simple and isolated laboratories of cultural evolution, as well as the alternate view that most island societies were constantly interacting’.

However, Rainbird’s (2007:19) warning – that the conception of the monolithic island is ‘key to biogeography, but is at odds with human social uses of such places’ – is echoed by those concerned with the interpretation of Bronze Age Crete specifically, with Hamilakis (2002:17-9) arguing for a ‘de-insularisation’ of interpretative approaches to the material record. As a designation used to describe the Bronze Age inhabitants of Crete, Legarra Herrero (2009:29,31-2, 2014:4; see also Hamilakis 2002:17) has argued that the term ‘Minoan’ itself encourages the assumption that these people(s) possessed ‘a more or less homogenous culture’, emphasising that island-wide interpretative frameworks work to obscure the reality and indeed *diversity* of the archaeological record (*contra* Warren 2018:3).²⁹ In the same vein, Relaki (2004:170) has highlighted that our definitions of a ‘region’ has interpretative impact on the ways in which we identify and understand social change in the archaeological record. For both Legarra Herrero and Relaki, however, it is the Prepalatial funerary record that offers an opportunity for archaeologists to move beyond such macro-scale, monolithic approaches and instead begin to acknowledge communities

²⁹ In defence of Evans, Warren (2018:3) has characterised similar scholarly endeavours to problematise the term ‘Minoan’ as ‘attempted questioning’, making the somewhat dismissive statement that the ‘rejection of supposedly ethnic labels is currently very p.c.’.

which may have differed in social, cultural, economic and ideological structure. The result of such an approach is evident in Relaki's (2004:175-82) focus on the Mesara – an area frequently characterised and subsequently, interpreted as one homogenous 'region'³⁰ – in which she identifies two discrete 'sub-regions' of tombs in the EM I period (the Asterousia mountains and the plain), within which different aspects of the funerary process took precedence. It is important to acknowledge, however, that while regional approaches might combat the concept of the homogenous 'island laboratory' so conducive to evolutionist paradigms, they may still be explicitly situated within a socio-evolutionist framework, as highlighted in Vavouranakis' (2017:385-6) discussion of regional differences in funerary practice:

As the processes of the regional integration of these communities escalated during the late Prepalatial period, investment in the funerary field peaked...The Old Palace period saw *the culmination of these processes* with the establishment of institutionalized social life that largely revolved around the formation of the first palaces and urban centres on the island...This narrative has always been better suited for central Crete than east Crete... and renders necessary both a *separate examination of Middle Minoan east Cretan burials and a distinct narrative about sociocultural evolution* during the Early Minoan and the Middle Minoan periods for the area east of the Lasithi massif.

(Vavouranakis 2017:385-6, my emphasis)

This regional, even micro-scale, approach is arguably one which will progress into the future, but as our discussion focusses on the *past* interpretations of the Prepalatial tombs, our scope of interpretation will inevitably follow those which have already come to pass and will largely encompass (our perception of) Crete as a whole.

For instance, Miller Bonney (2009:33) refers to a monolithic 'Cretan society before the palaces', in her argument that 'the architecture of the tomb and the kinds of grave goods reflects the ideological, economic and social underpinnings' of the Prepalatial period. Scholarly discussions of tomb architecture, however, is one sphere in which evolutionist models may be seen to have been particularly influential, with features of the Prepalatial funerary record having been interpreted as either architectural prototypes of

³⁰ For an example, one only needs to consider the titles and methodological focus of the two most influential books on Prepalatial funerary archaeology: Xanthoudides' (1924) *The Vaulted Tombs of Mesara* and Branigan's (1970b) *The Tombs of Mesara*.

later 'palatial' structures or as formalised adaptations of earlier 'organic architecture'.³¹ Soles (1992:202-5, my emphasis), in particular, makes this point in his discussion of the house tombs of Mochlos and Gournia, stating that they 'illustrate *important stages in the evolution* of Minoan architecture', with the incorporation of natural rock clefts within their structures indicating their existence as 'a *formative stage* when men are still experimenting with built architecture'.³²

This interpretation – of the incorporation of natural features as indicative of an early stage in the 'evolution' of tomb architecture – has much in common with Branigan's (1993:38) suggestion that circular tholoi in the Mesara plain were built to emulate caves, which are scarce in the region but were used elsewhere for burial in the early Bronze Age. Indeed, Branigan (1970b:147-9, my emphasis) refers to caves as 'communal tombs' and to built tombs as 'artificial caves', interpreting the small tomb at Chrystomos – which incorporates a rock overhang as part of its circuit wall – as one example of '*truly transitional* tombs incorporating the structures and the concepts of both the rock shelter and the built tomb'. Evans (1924:xi) makes a similar association between the Mesara tholoi and 'primitive' architectural forms of other periods, in his view that they present analogies with 'certain primitive graves of which the 'pit cave' of Knossos supply later examples'.

It is clear then that Prepalatial tombs – especially those which exhibit 'organic architecture' – have been posited as representative of an evolutionary development from the use of natural structures for burial to the construction of built tombs in the Prepalatial period. Yet, this argument for the *emulation* of earlier burial places is not as sustained as scholarly interpretations of the Prepalatial tombs' expression of the *origins* of later, 'palatial' features, particularly those related to the construction and function of external areas. In his discussion of the open (often paved) areas outside Prepalatial tomb sites such as Ayia Kyriaki, Koumasa, Platanos, Apesokari B, Chrysolakkos I, Myrtos, and Mochlos III, IV, V and VI, Soles (1992:223) speaks from a particularly palace-centric perspective, interpreting them as embryonic forms of later architectural features:

³¹ 'Organic architecture' is a term popularised by Soles (1992:210), to refer to situations in which natural features (e.g. caves, rock outcrops, clefts, natural chasms) were used as sites of activity and/or incorporated into built structures.

³² Scholars disagree as to whether the rectilinear 'house tombs' developed from domestic architecture or whether the architectural tradition has its origins elsewhere (see Evans 1924:xii; Soles 1992:224-5, Branigan 1970b:154).

While the open areas at these early tombs are an integral part of the tomb, they are not yet a structural part. Only in the Old Palace and New Palace periods are they integrated structurally in such a way that the tomb and the open area form a single architectural unit.

(Soles 1992:223)

Although but a small word in a short paragraph, we must acknowledge that Soles' 'yet' carries with it significant interpretative baggage, placing the architectural features of the Prepalatial tombs within a progressive, transformative framework, in which the later Proto- and Neopalatial forms are framed as the evolutionary 'end-point'. 'Yet' is back-projecting and palace-centric, placing Prepalatial features within a particular progressive trajectory, rather than a consideration of them in their own right. Indeed, this is an interpretative perspective which is arguably repeated in his description of the different colours and types of stone used in the construction of the external 'pavements' at Mochlos IV, V and VI, which he characterises as 'early examples of the Minoan interest in decorative floor patterns *that was to lead* to many variations in the New Palace period' (Soles 1992:223-4, my emphasis).

Branigan (1970b:135, my emphasis) makes this interpretation of an inherent evolutionary trajectory more explicit still in his statement that 'these pavements are surely to be seen as the *precursors to the central and western courts in the palaces*; that is, as the situation of ritual dancing'. Similarly, in her discussion of 'transition spaces' at Mesara-type tomb sites, Goodison (2019:128) has suggested that the annex structures at multiple tomb sites should be considered as 'antecedents of the transition spaces...characteristic of later Minoan architecture'. Although we shall discuss archaeological interpretations of the potential ritual functions of the external areas in the subsequent section, it is important to consider that other, internal Prepalatial features have been described in relation to their supposed expression in later architecture, as seen in Soles' (2001:234) discussion of the site of Myrtos in the context of the function of later cult:

of all the Minoan shrines, the pillar crypt is the most closely associated with the tombs. It *has its origin* in tombs at the end of the Prepalatial and continues to be associated with tombs and burials *even in the Later Bronze Age*...The house tomb at Myrtos, Pyrgos, demonstrates the way the pillar crypt worked.

(Soles 2001:234, my emphasis)

Whether tholos or house tomb, then, the funerary architecture of the Prepalatial era has been discussed in particularly evolutionary terms, in that its features are interpreted as ‘formative’, ‘transitional’, ‘primitive’, ‘origins’, ‘antecedents’ and ‘precursors’ to later elements of Proto- or Neopalatial structures. One might argue that this characterisation is unsurprising, as archaeology inherently seeks to identify patterns in the material record with which to construct a narrative of development over time. Yet, what is important to consider in the case of Prepalatial Crete is that the development or ‘evolution’ of these architectural features is explicitly interpreted as linked to *social* and *cultural* evolution.

This may be observed in Miller Bonney’s (2016:11) association between architectural elaboration in the Prepalatial and the emergence of social ‘complexity’ in her assertion that ‘the increasingly complex floor plans alluded to social stratification and control of access’, in addition to Soar’s (2010:146) argument that it was the ‘socio-political developments in EM II that led to changes in the infrastructure and social organisation of society’. Similarly, in reference to the ‘corridors’ between house tombs at Petras, Tsipopoulou (2017b:69) states that the ‘sophisticated spatial arrangement suggests a high degree of social organization and consensus’. This is a point echoed by Soles (1992:225) in his correlation of vertical relationships and social ‘complexity’, and his suggestion that social stratification was not only echoed in the contemporary architecture but necessitated it:

At the beginning of the EM II phase, if not before, Minoan society was being organised along increasingly hierarchical lines...*a more complex society*, one that made such distinctions and *required built tombs* for its most highly ranked individuals.

(Soles 1992:225, my emphasis)

The nature of this built space is also interpreted as reflecting this sociocultural evolutionary trajectory toward social stratification, with Murphy (2003:273) suggesting that the construction/addition of annex rooms to the south-central tholoi of Crete was enacted so as to limit the number of people able to engage in (potentially ritual) activities within their confines, an architecturally-imposed exclusivity that she interprets as suggesting ‘a reorganisation of religion and social hierarchy in the society’.³³ Indeed, the ‘origin’ of later,

³³ It is interesting that (Murphy 2003:223) refers to the ‘crowded conditions’ in tholoi anterooms during the enactment of ritual activities there. It is true that each annex room would have had a finite capacity but as Goodison (2019:129) has recently highlighted, we must consider the influence

palatial activities that similarly operated as a 'means of both exercising and proclaiming power' are posited by as having 'begun in the late Prepalatial cemeteries' (Branigan 2010b:29). Branigan is, in this case, referring to large-scale feasting, an act of communal consumption that Hamilakis (2008:10) highlights is shaped both sensorially and socially by the 'affordance or restrictions that architecture creates', a structural variable which 'may imply a complex protocol of entitlement'. It is in this way that archaeologically-discernible architectural developments at the Prepalatial cemeteries are posited in the scholarly literature as representative of the movement towards a more stratified, 'complex' society; a progression which is characterised as gradual, progressive and fundamentally evolutionist.

The interpretation of the Prepalatial tombs thus has much in common with the evolutionist models of development of the late-nineteenth century, in which societies are postulated as progressing from 'primitive' states to that of 'civilisation'. They also betray similar concerns – those of social stratification, control and power – an interpretative tendency in the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete that has been questioned by Goodison (2019:125, see also Mina 2015), who agrees with Tarlow (1999:23) in that such an approach cannot explain 'the complex understandings and concepts which structure our relationships with other groups and individuals'. However, while evolutionist and neo-evolutionist models in Minoan archaeology have been recently criticised (e.g. Cherry 1983; Hamilakis 2002; Legarra Herrero 2014:3-9), it is clear that they persist in the ways in which Prepalatial tombs' architectural features and subsequent potential functions are discussed. Therefore, it is not enough to problematise 'Prepalatial' as a chronological term, but rather necessary to consider the wider repercussions of the Prepalatial as an evolutionist framework, within which the cemeteries – the primary archaeological evidence for the period – are continually conceptualised and perceived of as a 'beginning'.

One might argue that archaeological interpretations, as in any constructed narrative, must include a beginning, a middle and an end; that a 'pre-' and a 'post-' will always exist, whether in reference to the emergence of palatial society or otherwise.³⁴ Yet this perspective is arguably based on a modernist perception of time, in its characterisation

of proxemics (the study of how close people come to each other's bodies) on such an embodied experience and its cultural and historical specificity.

³⁴ Lucas (2005:117) argues that although the structure of linear narratives is inherently tied to chronological time, we must 'ensure this linearity remains open to the possibility of temporal disruptions and dislocations so the story does not have the appearance of inevitability'.

as 'linear and successive, accumulative and irreversible', a perspective that encourages 'the modernist idea of progress as a linear process of advancing forward' (Hamilakis 2013:122).³⁵ Yet, it is important to consider that this advancement is often conceptualised as constant and occurring almost independently from internal or external mechanisms. Despite scholarly recognition that 'progress is an observation about the record of change...it is not a force or mechanism' (Dunnell 1980:42), this is a perception that arguably endures and is emphasised in the discussion of the development of Bronze Age Crete:

Crete moved forward at an increasing tempo towards the brilliant civilisation of the palatial age. Five hundred years of palatial splendour were preceded by a thousand years of prosperous and peaceful development

(Branigan 1970b:27, my emphasis)

Progress is thus characterised as force of advancement, at once accelerating and seemingly independent from other mechanisms of change. It is also pre-determined and inevitable, moving along a specific unilinear trajectory toward a 'civilised' conclusion, with the Prepalatial and Protopalatial periods sharply juxtaposed with their respective description as developmental and advanced.

The question thus presents itself: is the only way to truly abandon the evolutionist and neo-evolutionist underpinnings of the Prepalatial to similarly move away from the unilinear trajectories of progression born from the anthropological models of the nineteenth century? How might this be achieved, working within a discipline so used to the (often literal) linear categorisation, classification and interpretation of archaeological material within a framework of chronological and chronometric time? (Lucas 2005)³⁶ It is certainly not an easy endeavour, but one which we must acknowledge has been both attempted and argued for by archaeologists and anthropologists alike. Tringham (2014), in particular, has experimented with the construction of an explicitly non-linear history, moving 'towards an agent-centred microhistorical approach and away from a more evolutionary, essentializing standpoint that we are often seduced into by the nature of

³⁵ Ingold (2007:2) warns against an anthropological characterisation of perceptions of linear time as *exclusive* to modern Western societies, bemoaning 'that any attempt to find linearity in the lives of non-Western people is liable to be dismissed as mildly ethnocentric at best'.

³⁶ Although Lucas (2005:115ff) highlights that the 'very constitution of archaeological data is entangled with chronological time', he emphasises that chronology is but one conceptualisation of time and that there are many others.

prehistoric objects' (Tringham 2014:162). Through presenting 'fragments' of both archaeological observations and imagined narratives in an unconventional manner, she emphasises the non-linearity of her history by deconstructing the linearity of reading the text, rejecting pre-determined or progressive paths of understanding and inviting readers to 'jump and pivot' between fragments and subsequently, periods of time.

However, the linearity of time is not abandoned wholesale by Ingold (2007:3) but rather embraced, albeit in an alternate form altogether.³⁷ Referring to evolutionary processes (that of Darwin in particular), he muses on the interpretative potential of conceiving of life not as a fan of dotted lines but as 'a manifold woven from the countless threads spun by beings of all sorts', stating that from this perspective 'our entire understanding of evolution would be irrevocably altered'. If we contemplate this reconsideration of linear, evolutionary models for a moment, we may begin to recognise that there do exist alternate ways of thinking about development and the mechanisms through which it takes place.

Certainly the Minoans would not have conceived of themselves as 'Prepalatial' or 'pre-' anything for that matter, just as we cannot situate ourselves on a unilinear trajectory in relation to events which are yet to occur. It is interesting that Schoep and Tomkins (2011:6) highlight that problematising the concept of homogeneity in the 'changing mosaic' of Early and Middle Minoan Crete leads to a situation in which 'our original goal of contributing to a single grand narrative...has now become swamped by the multitude of overlapping or contradicting narratives driven by the diversity now recognised in the data'. Yet, I would argue that this overlap, this undermining and intertwining, need not be viewed negatively, but could instead be conceptualised as a productive mesh, de-centring 'progress' as a unilinear and external force and instead recognising the agency and interactions of the many entities within it. Such a multi-linear, enmeshed approach could, as suggested by Ingold (2007:3):

lead us to an open-ended view of the evolutionary process, and of our own history within that process, as one in which inhabitants, through their own activities, continually forge the conditions for their own and each other's lives.

(Ingold 2007:3)

³⁷ Ingold's (2007) publication is entitled *Lines: A Brief History*.

This movement towards multi-strand models of development brings us to similar arguments for the rejection of unilinear, modernist perceptions of time and archaeological time specifically. Indeed, Hamilakis (2013:202ff) – in his argument for the power of sensorial and mnemonic processes – has highlighted that recognising the ‘ability of matter and the material things to activate various times simultaneously’ undermines unilinear, modernist conceptions of time. In essence, Hamilakis’ (2013) ‘archaeology of the senses’ is a multi-temporal one, one which reminds us that the past is not ‘behind us’, a contained point on a singular trajectory, but both part and parcel of the immediate present.

Therefore, although it is clear that the funerary archaeology of the Prepalatial has been traditionally used to support both generalisations about the period and its place within a discernibly unilinear, socio-evolutionist framework, different modes of thinking about evolution, time and progress are beginning to offer us alternate interpretative models. Nevertheless, I would argue that the problem of ‘Pre’ cannot be solved merely by the acknowledgement of influential models on our interpretations of the period, whether they be new or dating to the nineteenth century. Neither will terminological adaptation or replacement, however welcome, make more than a superficial impact on the production and perpetuation of socio-evolutionist paradigms. Rather, as we have done in relation to funerary archaeology specifically, we must consider *how* we discuss and interpret material remains, working to recognise the ways in which we frame the Prepalatial as a ‘beginning’, rather than an entanglement of divergent beginnings, ends and continuations.

Yet, while it is evident that the Prepalatial tombs of Crete are frequently interpreted from the perspective of determining socio-cultural development, this is not the only ‘beginning’ with which they are frequently associated. Rather, in keeping with a primary focus of early anthropological thought, they are continually posited as sites that display the early markers of Minoan religion.

1.4 Dancing and deities: ‘mother-goddess’ models and the Prepalatial tombs of Crete

it was in the EBA tholos cemeteries that several of the key elements of palatial religion were first brought together...The evidence from Platanos and Koumasa argues strongly that in the EBA the cemeteries there were already the focus of public, communal ritual.

(Branigan 1984:35)

Citing the ‘tight-knit complex’ of tholoi at Koumasa and Platanos and the paved areas and traces of enclosure walls at both sites, Branigan’s above statement expresses three elements that are commonly found in the scholarly discussion of activity at the Prepalatial cemetery sites of Crete. Firstly, the archaeological evidence from the tombs is fundamentally framed in terms of later, explicitly palatial developments. Secondly, these ‘key elements’ are characterised as ‘religious’, and thirdly, these same features are interpreted as indicative of public, communal ritual. In light of our previous discussion of socio-evolutionary trajectories, it is unsurprising that certain aspects of the Prepalatial archaeological record are posited as the ‘origins’ of later palatial features, but it is the latter two points – the evidence for ‘religion’ and communal ritual – on which we shall largely focus here, interpretations which may be seen to continue to be influenced by early anthropological models. Although it is important to acknowledge that there exists archaeological evidence for other forms of communal activities at the Prepalatial cemeteries,³⁸ my discussion will focus on these (often artificially surfaced) open areas within the cemetery sites, as architectural features which are frequently interpreted as having been used for religious veneration and/or the maintenance of social cohesion.

As noted in the preceding section, the paved areas present at multiple tomb sites have been interpreted as embryonic forms of later *palatial* features, a back-projecting perspective which is influenced by the placement of the ‘Prepalatial’ on socio-evolutionist trajectories of development. However, interpretations of the ritual *function* of such areas are no different, in that their use is framed in the context of the supposed use of space within the monumental complexes of later periods. Soles (1992:224), in particular, makes an explicit association between the access routes and open areas of Mochlos IV, V and VI (e.g. the ascending ramp, raised terrace for spectators and corner stand) and the architectural elements of the Theatral Area at Knossos. This idea of the Prepalatial tombs serving as a rudimentary site of ritual activity before being ‘*elevated* to a palatial setting’ (Branigan 1969:38, my emphasis) is expressed elsewhere, most notably in their characterisation as a kind of pre-monumental make-shift space for the veneration of a deity who saw ‘the cemetery as the situation of her rituals, particularly in pre-palatial society when the palaces could not provide an alternative location’ (Branigan 1970b:137). It must thus be considered that discussions of Minoan ‘religious’ activity at the Prepalatial tomb

³⁸ For the consumption of food and drink in particular see Hamilakis 1998, 2008; Hamilakis and Sherratt 2012.

sites are frequently a consequence of scholarly attempts to trace the origins of later iconography, architecture and ritual activity, in addition to establishing their continuity over time.

Therefore, even in publications which relate specifically to early Bronze Age settlements and their associated artefacts, we can identify a particular interest in determining the 'earliest instances' of religious iconography, with Warren (1972:210,266, my emphasis) characterising the so-called 'Myrtos goddess' as 'particularly important evidence for continuity in Minoan religion from the Early Bronze Age onwards', later stating that 'the domestic side of Minoan religion is *firmly rooted* in the Early Minoan period and *continued on unbroken* into the age of the Palaces'. I would also argue that statements like that of Papadatos (1999:52, my emphasis), who suggests that 'the *religious and ritual importance of the cemeteries* for the living society is reinforced also by the fact that the ritual implements and symbols used in the Prepalatial cemeteries *can be also seen* several centuries later in the religious iconography and practice' are examples of a scholarly back-projection of 'importance', an evaluation of the significance of Prepalatial features in reference to their expression (or lack thereof) in subsequent periods, rather than in their own right. It is thus that discussions of supposed religious activity at the Prepalatial cemeteries – like tomb architecture and indeed the Prepalatial period in and of itself – are immediately concerned with the tracing of development towards later practices and their archaeological manifestation in the 'palaces'.

However, with her elongated neck, prominent breasts and emphasised pubic triangle, the 'Myrtos Goddess' vessel brings us to the second point in our discussion: the interpretation of the Prepalatial cemeteries as sites of the *religious* veneration of a female deity. Interpreting its find-spot in a domestic context as a shrine (see Fig.3), Warren (1972:210, 1973) sees the vessel as representative of a goddess, that of the 'Minoan household goddess' specifically, with Gesell (1983:94) associating the representation of secondary sexual characteristics and the figure's bell-shape as associated with fertility.



Figure 3: The 'Myrtos Goddess', held at the Archaeological Museum of Agios Nikolaos. (Wikimedia Commons). Accessed at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goddess_of_Myrtos,_Phournou_Koryphi,_2500-2300_BC,_AM_Ag._Nikolaos,_0501221.jpg

Despite its domestic context, the 'Myrtos goddess' has been linked to similar figurines from Prepalatial funerary contexts, such as the EM II female figure 4137 from Koumasa, who has been interpreted as holding a striped snake, leading to her identification as 'the earliest example of the snake goddess' (Gesell 1983:94, see also Branigan 1969:33-4; Morris 2017). This interpretation – that of the representation (and existence) of a Minoan goddess – is one which may be seen to have enjoyed particular longevity, with Xanthoudides (1924:23) stating in reference to the nude Koumasa figurines that 'the simplest and perhaps the most probable hypothesis sees in them the Mother Goddess worshipped in Crete and the Aegean.' However, this link has been questioned on the basis of its partiality, with Goodison and Morris (1998:117, see also Goodison and Morris 2013; Morris 2017) stressing that the scholarly emphasis on female vessels overlooks non-female or non-anthropomorphic material,³⁹ which could equally be perceived as divine. Stating that the artefacts from Koumasa do not 'indicate an overriding concern with a female deity' at all, the interpretative position of the contemporary archaeologist is problematised, in that 'the twentieth century's preoccupation with human and emotional affairs may have

³⁹ Goodison and Morris (1998:123) highlight the prominence of plants in iconography, and elsewhere Goodison (1989:9-10) suggests stones and triangles as other non-personified forms of divinity.

overfed the search for anthropomorphic divinity' (Goodison and Morris 1998:117-9, see also Goodison and Morris 2013:282).

It is clear that the search for early archaeological evidence for a personified deity is not shared by all scholars, with Parker Pearson (1999b:162) similarly warning against a simplistic preconception of prehistoric religions as reliant essentially upon anthropomorphic divinities and Peatfield (2001:51-2) highlighting that the religious backgrounds of Aegean archaeologists are predominantly monotheistic, contributing to what he terms a 'theistic obsession' in their interpretations. This is a point emphasised by Goodison (2019:134), highlighting that the activities that archaeologists have associated with Minoan religion are those found in Christianity, such as worship and supplication (prayer).⁴⁰ Indeed, despite the term 'religion' being employed consistently in scholarly discussions of ritual activity at the Prepalatial cemeteries, we must bear in mind the interpretative consequences of such a designation, in its ability to pre-determine both the questions we ask of the archaeological record and the answers we are prepared to accept:

A definition of religion...defines how we perceive the function and structure of what we study and the questions we ask of it. Because theistic approaches define the critical feature of religion as belief in supernatural beings, those beliefs are taken to be prior to ritual expression and action...The difficulty of western scholars to think of religion in terms of anything other than belief in deities is a genuine concern in cross-cultural analysis.

(Peatfield 2001:51-2)

Peatfield's point is a straight-forward but important one, emphasising the motivations of archaeologists and their subsequent interpretative repercussions or, as in his words, arguing that 'if you assume that religion is primarily about gods, then you are forced to go looking for them' (Peatfield 2001:54). However, it must be acknowledged that this pursuit is one which has occupied scholars for decades and much ink has been spilt on the archaeological evidence (or lack thereof) for a Minoan religion centred around the veneration of a female deity or 'goddess' (e.g. Nilsson 1950; Branigan 1969; Hood 1971:131; Gesell 1983; Muhly 1990; Marinatos 1993, 2009:24, 2013; Dickinson 1994; Goodison and Morris 1998; Peatfield 2001:53; Morris 2006, 2010). These arguments need not be repeated here, but it remains for us to acknowledge both the sustained influence of

⁴⁰ See Peatfield and Morris (2012:228) for a discussion of the semantics of worship and supplication.

early anthropological models on such models of religion and their expression in relation to the interpretation of the Prepalatial cemeteries specifically. This is an important endeavour, as while it may be argued that traditional models of Minoan 'goddess'-centric religion have been extensively interrogated, it is evident that they continue to exist as a dominant mode of interpretation in relation to activities carried out at the Prepalatial tomb sites, despite more recent attempts at their displacement (e.g. Goodison 1989; Goodison and Morris 1998, 2013; Goodison 2019).

Although it should be acknowledged that the 'mother-goddess' model was debated and developed outside of Cretan archaeology,⁴¹ its introduction into the study of Minoan religion is probably the most conspicuous way in which early anthropological models have influenced the interpretation of the archaeological record of Bronze Age Crete. As outlined in section 1.2, Arthur Evans was personally acquainted and in direct communication with Jane Ellen Harrison and at the very least intellectually familiar with the anthropological theories of her contemporary James Frazer, both prominent anthropologists who argued for models of 'primitive' religion which had at their core the worship of a female deity associated with regeneration. As highlighted by Carpentier (1994:14-16), however, while Frazer stressed the relationship between myth and folk customs and the seasonal rituals associated with fertility characteristic of a 'primitive' existence, Harrison went further, in her argument for 'the priority of the original Greek matriarchal "chthonic" goddesses and gods over the later patriarchal "anthropomorphic" Olympians'.

In her attempt to track Evans' development of a Minoan goddess model, Eller (2012) suggests that it was his exposure to Frazer's theories that fundamentally encouraged Evans' conception of a 'Great Minoan Goddess', an interpretative stance that was not immediately adopted but rather representative of a shift in the 1920s/30s from earlier arguments for a 'Cretan Zeus', aniconism and a sacred pair.⁴²

⁴¹ See Morris 2006:70; Hutton 1997, 1998:93-6; Lapatin 2002:66-70; Morris 2010; Goodison and Morris 2013:267-71.

⁴² Marinatos (2010:86) has suggested that Evans was influenced by E.B. Tylor's concept of animism. As highlighted by Eller (2012:78, 80, 87ff.), although Evans alludes on multiple occasions to 'the leading part played by Goddesses and female votaries in the cult-scenes' and speculates about a prehistoric Cretan goddess (Evans 1901), his earlier publications offer alternate models of interpretation. For instance, the report from the first season of excavation of Knossos suggests that a 'Cretan Zeus' was associated with (and presenced through) double-axe imagery (Evans 1900) and his 1901 publication *The Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations* suggests the aniconic worship of a divine pair.

Coming to *The Palace of Minos* already familiar with Frazer's *Golden Bough*, there can be no doubt that by the time Evans began writing his tome, he was quite determinedly making Minoan religion an exemplum of Frazer's theory about the Mother Goddess and the rising and dying God, her son. Not only does Evans declare that the Goddess is Minoan Crete's foremost deity, but her son is demoted from his early days as 'Cretan Zeus' and becomes instead Minos the King.

(Eller 2012:91)

However, this interpretation is not shared by Marinatos (2014:26-36), who, in keeping with her characterisation of Evans as an 'original mind and not a follower of trends', argues that there existed substantial differences in Evans' and Frazer's conceptualisation of the goddess Kybele (to whom Evans assimilates the Minoan goddess), stating that they followed 'quite distinctive interpretative paths and that whereas the former [Frazer] was interested in the savagery of the past – the early stages of human thought and ritual – the latter [Evans] was interested in its most brilliant achievements'. Instead, she argues that the perception of Evans' ideas about Minoan goddesses has been coloured by their conflation with those of the Cambridge Ritualists, in addition to those of Nilsson (1950[1927]) and Persson (1942), both commentators who suggested that Minoan religion had as its basis vegetation cults and cycles of nature (Marinatos 68-73; see also Warren 1988).

Yet it is this conflation – the intertwining of anthropological and archaeological ideas to the extent that they become almost indiscernible in wider scholarship – that has had a lasting impact on the discipline of Minoan archaeology and subsequently, the interpretation of the Prepalatial tombs. Indeed, Goodison (2004:77) has argued that the ubiquity and scholarly reliance on Frazerian 'nature-myths' has prevented archaeologists from exploring alternative interpretations of the Bronze Age Cretan archaeological record, namely the potential importance of the sun in Minoan ritual practice and belief. Her argument for the sustained influence of early anthropological models is made with explicit reference to the Prepalatial tholos tombs, whose entrances Goodison (2004, 2019) demonstrates align with the sun at particular times of the year.

Yet while Goodison (1989:31) interprets an emphasis on circular forms at the Mesara tholoi as 'a concern for the circular movements of the sun' and associates the paved areas outside of the tombs with those shown in association with possible sun 'adoration' on seals, these external areas have been elsewhere interpreted as the location

for the veneration of a Frazerian goddess, a deity (following Persson (1942)) intimately associated with fertility, and the seasonal and vegetational cycle:⁴³

I suggest that a plausible case exists for recognising the cemetery areas of the Mesara tholoi as the location of rituals and ceremonies which were concerned with the vegetational cycle and fertility. Such ceremonies would inevitably be linked also with the cycle of life and death and therefore be entirely appropriate to their location. The rituals performed would have honoured Ariadne (whatever her name at this time) and would have included, as later, a measure of music and dancing’.

(Branigan 1993:135-6)

Upon reflection, it might be unsurprising that cemeteries – fundamentally (but not exclusively) places of burial – have come to be associated with the veneration of a goddess moulded by Frazer’s model of early religion. Indeed, as highlighted by Bloch and Parry (1982:1), the theme of death is suitable (and, arguably, inherently necessary) for a Frazerian approach, in that death facilitates cycles of regeneration and continuity. Yet this anthropological approach has arguably been combined with that of Persson (1942), in that the goddess is associated with seasonal and vegetational cycles. This is a conflation apparent in Branigan’s interpretation of the Prepalatial tholos tombs specifically, in his assertion that:

the association of *the agricultural and vegetational cycles* with the human cycle of life and death was common. It is entirely reasonable to suggest that in Early Bronze Age Crete such an association was contrived, and that *the rituals and worship accorded to the vernal goddess* in whom the concept was embodied, were practised on *the pavements of the cemetery areas*.

(Branigan 1970b:137, my emphasis)

Papadatos (1999:53) similarly interprets religious activity as associated with Frazerian/Persson-like themes, stating that ‘it seems clear that the rituals held in the

⁴³ Marinatos (2014:72) states that Evan’s original view of a Minoan goddess was ‘distorted by the subsequent works of Nilsson and Persson, both of whom combined Frazer’s approach with the pre-Evans notion that Minoan religion was the primitive stage of Greek religion’. She argues that this is the model – of a Minoan goddess associated with fertility and vegetational cycles – that has persisted in Minoan archaeology.

Prepalatial cemeteries were related to fertility and the vegetation cycle', despite acknowledging that their enactment in honour of 'Ariadne', the 'Snake Goddess' or a 'chthonic goddess' remains hypothetical.

However, these rituals carried out 'in honour of a goddess whom we can probably identify with the Ariadne of later Greek tradition' (Branigan 1998:22) are envisioned as taking a particular form, namely that of communal dance:

There are however one or two indications that the cemeteries may have been the situation of dancing rituals and one or two pointers as to the deity or deities for which they were performed.

(Branigan 1970b:135)

The interpretation of the pavements as sites for ritual dance is supported by both Branigan (1970b:136; 1993:130; 1998:21) and Soar (2015:288) through reference to a later model excavated from the Kamilari A tholos, which they identify as a representation of four dancers, arms linked to form a circle and standing within a circular enclosure (Fig. 4).⁴⁴



Figure 4: Clay figurine of four figures 'dancing' from Kamilari, dated to approx. 1500-1450 B.C. Currently held at the Heraklion Archaeological Museum.

While Branigan's interpretation of ritual dancing at the Prepalatial tholoi is influenced by later literary and archaeological sources, his loyalty to which is exemplified

⁴⁴ See Murphy (2015:311-4) for an overview of interpretations of dance in Minoan iconography.

in the title of his 1993 publication *Dancing with Death*, it is worth pausing on one element of his interpretation – that of congregation and communality – as it is one which has found more sustained expression in the wider archaeological literature and brings us to our final point of discussion. Indeed, scholars have interpreted the areas outside both the house and tholos tombs as indicative of the gathering of people for the enactment of *communal* religious activities (e.g. Peatfield 1987:90; Branigan 1993; Papadatos 1999:52). Gesell (1983:98), in particular, emphasises the suitability of the cemeteries as places of communal worship of a goddess, in her characterisation of them as public areas which were freely accessible to all. Similarly, Murphy (2003:228) has interpreted the architectural layout of the tholos cemeteries as inherently inclusive, in her suggestion that ‘the location of the pavements between the tombs suggests that the pavement was a common area that belonged to all the tombs in the cemetery rather than just to one’.

In the context of their location adjacent to burial structures, it is perhaps unsurprising that these open areas have been interpreted as a place where people gathered to pay reverence to the dead, with Xanthoudides (1924:34) stating in reference to the bluish slate pavement at the Koumasa cemetery that ‘the people may have congregated there for the burial rites, or subsequently for some kind of memorial service’. This funerary function is also suggested by Soles (1992:223-4) in relation to the paved areas at Chrysolakkos I, Archanes 6 and Mochlos IV, V and VI, in his assertion that ‘the areas in front of the tombs must also have been regarded as sacred areas reserved for ceremonies linked to funerary rites’ and by Tsipopoulou (2017c:112) who, in the context of Ceremonial Area 1 at Petras, states that ‘in most – if not all – burial complexes of Pre- and Proto-palatial Crete there were open spaces for the commemoration ceremonies in honor of the dead’. However, despite Goodison and Morris (1998:120) emphasising that broader evidence at the cemeteries (citing paved areas in particular) may represent ‘interests more diverse than the focus on a monotheistic, anthropomorphic deity’, it is important to acknowledge that even in interpretations that suggest communal gathering at the Prepalatial tomb sites as associated with the veneration of the dead specifically, they are still made within a framework of goddess veneration that echoes those of Frazer and Harrison:

Ancestor worship...probably also included very different concepts of Potnia who may have been one Great Mother Goddess to the Minoans.

(Soles 2001:235)

However, to ‘circle’ back to our discussion of communal gathering and ritual dance, it is important to consider that, as highlighted by Warren (2018:5, my emphasis), ‘the *non-funerary* role of paved and open areas beside tombs is still an open question’, although he expresses reluctance in interpreting them as ‘purely secular’. Indeed, multiple scholars have interpreted the evidence for communal gathering and activities from the perspective of both producing and maintaining the social order, characterising participation as ‘a multifaceted and multileveled communal experience’ (Tsipopoulou 2017c:112).

In contrast to Hood’s (1971:137, my emphasis) characterisation of processions and dances as ‘attractive aspects of Minoan *religion*’, Soar (2010, 2015) does not discuss circular dance performances at the tholos cemeteries of south-central Crete in terms of religious practice, but rather emphasises their potential function as activities which worked to strengthen social bonds.⁴⁵ Stressing the circularity of the hypothesised dancing scenes, Soar (2010:151) interprets the open areas at the tombs as spaces within which social structure was briefly re-negotiated through communal performance:

These circular dancing scenes thus express an ideology of equality between all members of community...in the artistic depictions and architectural features which depict circular dancing in the Aegean during these periods, we can perceive ideology reflected in performance and ritual which reverses the social processes which were occurring.

(Soar 2010:151).

The circularity of the dance is thus emphasised, the performances of which ‘reflected a cosmological order which celebrated the group over the individual’ (Soar 2015:292). Although the similarities will become apparent in our discussion of prominent anthropological theories in Section 2.5, it is an interpretation which reminds us of Turner’s (1995:137ff) concept of *communitas*, an anti-structural social state during which social hierarchies are fleetingly dissolved in favour of an egalitarian embodied experience. Like the performance of a circular dance, however, *communitas* does not negate social inequality permanently, but rather works to provide a brief period during which social

⁴⁵ Soar (2010:138,146) acknowledges that dance performances could have occurred before the addition of the paved areas to the cemetery complexes (in EM II at Platanos, EM II at Ayia Kyriaki, and in MM I at Apesokari), but states that it is with their construction that ‘dance develops permanence, recorded forever in the artistic and architectural record, and therefore attaining an importance not hitherto considered’.

bonds are strengthened, subsequently ensuring the continuity of a hierarchically-ordered community.

Yet while it is clear the mother-goddess models of the Cambridge Ritualists find continued expression in the interpretation of the function of the Prepalatial cemeteries of Crete, it is both this characterisation of the tombs as sites intrinsically associated with the local community and of *continuity* that brings us to another aspect of the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete, one which has also been influenced by early anthropological models of development. Indeed, it is in scholarly analogies between two populations of Crete – the modern and the Minoan – that we see the expression of the Tylorian concept of ‘survivals’.

1.5 ‘Survivals’: anthropological analogies between modern and Minoan Crete

In contrast to the centrality of Greece in the early anthropological theories of Harrison, Herzfeld (1987:1) has argued that the discipline of anthropology has found ‘disproportionately little use for the Greece of today’. However, while Herzfeld (1987:5) highlights that modern Greece rarely appears in surveys of anthropological theory, this is not to say that it is not used by archaeologists as a source of anthropological analogy through which to support or narrativise their conclusions. Indeed, archaeological interpretations of Prepalatial funerary archaeology may be seen to continually reference local modern populations in their discussion of ancient people(s), leading to the suggestion of cultural continuity between communities millennia apart and inadvertently characterising modern Cretan practices as ‘survivals’ of ancient activities.

The anthropological concept of ‘survivals’ was posited by E.B. Tylor, who interpreted, from an almost geological perspective, irrational customs and beliefs as vestiges of ancient practices in modern society:

Among evidence aiding us to trace the course which the civilization of the world has actually followed, is that great class of facts to denote which I have found it convenient to introduce the term “survivals”. These are processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved.

(Tylor 1871:15)

Peasant superstitions were an example of 'survivals' identified by Tylor, and the prominent place of the peasantry in such wide-ranging comparative studies has been highlighted by Herzfeld (1987:10), who argues that they were used by early anthropologists such as Tylor and Frazer as evidence for the validity of their evolutionist hypotheses and that of 'survivals' in particular:

European peasants appeared to validate the survivalist thesis in two complementary ways: first, by demonstrating the persistence of traits from the childhood of the human race even in the most civilized countries; and second, by showing that only the intellectual independence of the educated classes could achieve final escape from the burden of superstition and ignorance. This created a double hierarchy: the European intellectual emerged as the peasant's superior; but the European peasant claimed pride of place over all exotic peoples.

(Herzfeld 1987:10, my emphasis)

In this evolutionist framework, the peasantry were thus posited as analogous to ancient peoples and practices, providing a window into the past through their preservation of archaic customs and beliefs. However, despite its early anthropological origins, I would argue that this is a perspective which has endured and is particularly expressed in the scholarly discussion of Prepalatial funerary practices and their relation to modern Cretan populations. In addition, it will become clear that the users of the early Bronze Age tombs are frequently characterised – as in Herzfeld's 'double hierarchy' – as intellectually and socially inferior to the inhabitants of later 'urban' palatial centres, a portrayal which is echoed in scholarly descriptions of modern local communities' interactions with the tomb sites.

Discussing the lack of writing on the seals excavated from the Mesara deposits, Evans (1924:ix) certainly makes such a comparison, in his argument that the 'rustic communities' who built the communal tombs 'were illiterate in comparison with the dwellers in the more important urban and palatial centres'. Certainly an 'othering' of the tomb users in terms of provinciality and traditional practices is suggested in his later reference to 'these Mesara folk' (Evans 1924:x) and the modern local communities are similarly defined by their socio-economic and rural status in their description as 'peasants' (Evans 1924:v). While scholarly judgements of the removal of material from tomb sites will

be discussed in detail in Section 2.4, it is important to note that both groups, both modern and Minoan, are negatively implicated in such an activity, with Evans (1924:ix) discussing the 'ossuary of Kalathaniá, which seems to have been robbed of considerable treasure in recent times' and the ancient 'rustic communities...and [their] perpetual robbery'.

Xanthoudides (1924:1), in particular, highlights the ongoing presence of the local 'village people' at the tomb sites, highlighting not only their previous digging at the tholoi but their assistance, knowledge and co-operation in the location and excavation of the tholoi. This continuity between the modern and Minoan inhabitants of rural Crete is not only emphasised in terms of presence but also cultural practice, with Xanthoudides (1924:27, my emphasis) interpreting the daggers excavated from Koumasa, Aghia Triagha and Platanos as having been 'worn at the waist *as it is worn to-day* in the more mountainous parts of the island in spite of police prohibitions'.

However, continuity of cultural practice and the subsequent suggestion of the modern 'survival' of ancient customs is most explicitly suggested in the scholarly discussion of funerary practices at the Prepalatial tombs of Crete. Anthropological analogy is employed as a means of elucidating the evidence for Prepalatial secondary depositional activity at the tomb sites, during which the skeletal remains of the dead were physically interacted with. Although the secondary burial practices of rural modern Greece will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, it is important to note that they are explicitly invoked in association with Minoan funerary activity. Branigan (1998:25, my emphasis), in his musing on 'how such bones were removed from the tomb' during the Prepalatial period, looks to modern Greece for an analogy, 'where similar manipulation is *still practised today* in some areas'. Similarly, in his discussion of the evidence for secondary depositional activity at Moni Odigitria, he states that 'other forms of manipulation, *practised into modern times in Greece...* could have been performed but would leave no archaeological trace' (Branigan 2010a:257, my emphasis). This is an association of modern practices in rural Greece and those of the Prepalatial Minoans that is echoed in Murphy's (1998:34, my emphasis) discussion of potential funerary practices at the Prepalatial tholoi in her statement that 'this practice of cleaning the bones...*is still carried out in Greece today*'.

It is thus that the modern population of rural Greece, through their use as an anthropological analogy for potential Minoan practices, have been framed as 'survivals' of ancient customs and beliefs. Despite the passing of millennia, funerary practices are conceptualised as possessing continuity between modern and Minoan times, with the rural

peasantry – discussed in terms of their ‘robbery’ and illegality (see also discussions of ‘looting’ in Chapter 2) – being characterised as uncivilised in comparison with the urban populations of both Protopalatial and twentieth-century Crete. Although I would argue that it is in this characterisation that we might recognise vestiges of Tylor’s model of ‘survivals’, we must bear in mind that such an interpretation of cultural continuity is problematic, a point highlighted by Alexiou (1974:36, my emphasis), interestingly from within a seemingly survivalist framework,⁴⁶ who argues that ‘the mere existence of ritual beliefs and practices in Greece today does not prove continuity of development from antiquity, since *similar survivals* can be found in most of the Balkan countries’.

Once again then, the Prepalatial tombs of Crete and the practices that occurred there are conceptualised as the basis – or the ‘beginning’ – of funerary activities that occur today, an interpretation influenced by the theories that characterised early anthropological thought. Therefore, while it is clear that the interpretative impact of the anthropological leanings of the prominent figure of Arthur Evans have been extensively discussed by scholars to date, we must recognise that current scholarship continues to be influenced by those same socio-evolutionist and religious frameworks. It is thus important to acknowledge the development of this interdisciplinary dialogue and the inclusion of more recent anthropological models in the archaeological interpretation of Prepalatial funerary practices, eschatological belief and worldview. It is with this in mind that we must turn not to the ‘birth’ with which we have hitherto been concerned, but to death; contemplating our own understandings of the cessation of bodily function, integrity and propriety.

⁴⁶ Alexiou’s (1974) focus here is the ritual lament in Greek tradition, often occurring as part of the funerary process. Interestingly, she is more explicit in her invocation of Tylorian models in the heading of the subsequent section, entitled ‘Modern Survivals’.

Chapter 2: Divergent deathways

2.1 Introduction

Bodies littered the floor, silent and unmoving in the oppressive darkness. The title of the audio work was ‘Afterlife Woodland’, a meditative, immersive experience which promised participants a ‘gentle confrontation of mortality’ through inviting them to imagine the breakdown of their own body after death (French and Mottershead 2015). And so, we lay there – archaeologists, anthropologists and sociologists alike – and listened.

Our bodies lie lifeless in a remote forest. We are dead, but our bodies full of life; as time passes, we stiffen, bloat and blister, our flesh falls away, the smell of decomposition attracting a plethora of insect and animal life who create in our corpses a centre of fervent activity. Our bones are eventually made bare, bleached and buried by the relentless elements. Then we awake, the lights turn on and we return to our breathing, seemingly bounded bodies,¹ and I find that I am oddly relaxed, strangely soothed in the knowledge of the inevitable destruction of my physical form. Yet, for others, this ‘confrontation’ has not been gentle, but violently visceral, an alarming acknowledgement of the material consequences of their own mortality.

Such a work that aims to place the partial, putrescent body at the centre of contemplations of death is thus met with a distinct element of unease. We are wholly unaccustomed to such frank engagement with bodily dissolution, disarticulation and eventual destruction, with former participants describing their experience of the narrative as ‘quite disturbing’, in that certain aspects, such as the episodic infestation of maggots, felt ‘like a violation of the self’ (French and Mottershead n.d.).²

The first section of this chapter will thus work to emphasise that this concept of the individualised ‘self’ – as that associated solely with the whole, bounded and animate physical body – is not one which we share with all societies. Indeed, just like the reactions of Woodland’s participants, our attitudes towards death and the dead body (and the archaeological interpretations they inevitably influence) must be considered in the context

¹ Although our experience of the audio work was within a darkened room, the Afterlife series has been created as four distinct site-based sound art pieces. As such, ‘Woodland’ is usually experienced outdoors during daytime in woodland areas, during which listeners access the work through a mobile device and are invited to lie down on the forest floor. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of sensory archaeology and a critique of bodily ‘boundedness’.

² This participant feedback was collected, collated and published by the creators.

of our own collective and personal sociocultural backgrounds and subsequently, require an often challenging level of self-reflexivity. While a full discussion of death in the modern world would conceivably necessitate multiple volumes and, indeed, a life's work, this brief reflection on current cultural understandings and experiences of death (largely in contemporary Britain) will offer a starting point from which we might begin to consider our modern perception of prehistoric funerary activities markedly disparate from our own. Through focusing on relatively recent developments in post-mortem practices and the role of the process of decomposition within them, the following sections will acknowledge the diversity in the nature and intensity of engagements with the body after death, referencing in particular the secondary burial rites of modern rural Greece.

Although my choice of examples from the 'western' world might invite claims of eurocentricism, it is purposeful: these are the ideological schema with which the majority of commentators on the tombs would have been familiar, as is evident from the frequent mention of the secondary rites of modern rural Greece throughout the associated literature, whether in passing or as a more substantial anthropological analogy.³ While avoiding any suggestion of unchallenged cultural continuity,⁴ it is through their consideration here in contrast to contemporary attitudes to the processes of death that we might begin to discern distinct differences in perspective, ideological underpinning and anthropological engagement between funerary processes that involve secondary interaction with the body and those that do not.

It should be noted that my discussion of human remains and modern perceptions of the body after death will largely centre on the processes related to inhumation. Although cremation is popular in contemporary Britain and the U.S. (most especially in light of rising concerns about the availability of space in already overcrowded cemeteries), I have focussed on inhumation as it is the primary method of interment at the Cretan tombs, and thus the technique whose variants have been interpreted by archaeologists through the application of anthropological models. In addition, it is also the burial technique with which I am personally most familiar and, as I shall argue, such a critical reflection upon one's experiences with death is of integral importance to any project which analyses the

³ It is important to note that this concept of the 'western' world has been challenged, as in Kwame Anthony Appiah's article 'There is no such thing as western civilisation' (The Guardian online, 9th November 2016), which, interestingly, had as its lead image a photograph of the Athenian acropolis.

⁴ See Section 1.5 for a discussion of modern 'survivals' and cultural continuity between the Bronze Age and modern inhabitants of Crete.

interpretative perceptions of others. The fourth section of this chapter will thus begin to highlight the importance of such a self-reflexive endeavour, as it will be illustrated that socio-culturally specific perceptions of property and propriety have influenced the ways in which the history of the Prepalatial tomb sites has been discussed in scholarly discourse, particularly in reference to the ‘looting’ of grave goods and secondary depositional activities. Finally, the anthropological models which have been used to interpret the Prepalatial record will be introduced and outlined, so that their extensive influence on the archaeological imagination may become apparent.

2.2 Death and decomposition in contemporary practice

Death is inevitable, ubiquitous, universal. It is a process through which we must all undergo, a corporeal certainty that shapes our lived experience, lending to our lives a sense of immediacy through its very immanency. This biological breakdown means that, on some level, we must all encounter ‘death’ in the physical sense of the word,⁵ but this is not to say that perceptions of such a bodily transition are uniform across all societies, or even – as evident in the varying reactions to ‘Woodland’ – from one individual to another. Indeed, human responses to death are as diverse as they are vast and as such, have been a primary focus of enquiry for archaeologists and anthropologists alike, who interpret in them reflections of social structure, ideology and eschatological belief.

However, while this acknowledgement might appear straightforward, it is ultimately necessary, as concepts of ‘universal’ attitudes to death and the dead still loom large in the relevant archaeological literature.⁶ Indeed, Parker Pearson (1999b:21) has stressed that in order for archaeologists to make any significant interpretations about the material record, they must first consider this diversity of human conceptions of death, so as to avoid ‘ethnocentric presuppositions’. Following Parker Pearson (1999b:41-4) and his brief comments on the funerary practices of Britain and the U.S., this section will similarly work to elucidate the ‘ethnoarchaeology of us’, in that it will attempt to highlight briefly the underlying assumptions about death in contemporary Britain, so as to enable self-reflexivity and advocate caution in the application of theoretical models to the ancient

⁵ I.e. the cessation of vital bodily function and (without intervention) the breakdown of corporeal form.

⁶ See Section 3.6 for a discussion of arguments for a universal ‘fear of the dead’ and their effect on interpretations of Prepalatial human remains from Crete.

material past. Through focusing on one element in particular – modern perceptions of bodily decomposition – this discussion will thus provide a background for the interpretation of such processes at the Prepalatial tomb sites of Crete.

The invisible inevitable: modern discomfort with decomposition

It is important to acknowledge that, in modern Britain, inevitability does not necessitate visibility. Death in the contemporary age is largely a concealed, obscure and managed process, largely confined to the remits of hospitals, care homes and funeral parlours.⁷ Upon death, it is the norm in western European society for the deceased to be physically removed from the world of the living, most immediately through their transfer to designated institutions who intervene in the preservation and/or preparation of the corpse for subsequent action.⁸ Indeed, Barraud et al. (1994:112; see also Humphreys 1981:265) point out that modern ideology itself teaches us to almost immediately separate the living and the dead both physically and conceptually, as seen in the sharp distinction between life and death from both medical and legal standpoints. However, while they state that on point of death ‘a living subject becomes a dead object, a corpse’ (Barraud et al. 1994:112), Robb (2007:287-9) has contrastingly argued that a dead human body is categorically distinct from other living beings and objects, in that its disposal is often highly prescribed and culturally informed.

Thus, while scholars have commented on the tendency of our ‘life-affirming culture’ to leave ‘little room mentally as well as physically for the dead’ (Parker Pearson 1999b:125), others have viewed the techniques used during the funerary process (such as embalmment, the clothing of the corpse, its containment within a funerary receptacle) as representative of actions that counteract the continued agency of the human physical form. Indeed, as Williams (2006:85) has highlighted, the corpse is rarely inert; as post-mortem biochemical changes commence, cadavers emit smells, noises and even movement, with Robb (2007:289, my emphasis) emphasising its agency in that ‘even the mere *presence* of a dead body, by virtue of what we think it is, triggers and structures often intricate and extended chains of action’.

⁷ Parker Pearson (1982:111) highlights that at the time of his study of British mortuary practices, approx. 60% of deaths occurred within healthcare institutions such as hospitals or nursing homes.

⁸ For a discussion of the treatment of the body in modern deathways, see Robb 2007:288-90.

While we might accept these arguments for the continued agency (and thus consideration) of the human body after death, we must concede that, from a modern perspective, the appropriate treatment, transformation, and disposal of the corpse are actions largely motivated by concerns related to the maintenance of individualism, hygiene and environment. The technological procedures argued to negate somewhat the dead body's agency are essentially those used to obscure and conceal decomposition and the natural breakdown of the human physical form. It is commonplace in contemporary Britain to embalm bodies through the replacement of bodily fluids with preservative solutions,⁹ to apply cosmetics to mask pallor or signs of illness, or to conceal the body entirely through the use of a closed coffin. We are thus almost entirely unused to the processes of bodily decomposition in the modern day, indeed to allow it to occur without some kind of official intervention is literally illegal.¹⁰ Therefore, our exposure to the transformations that occur to the body after death are largely restricted to sensationalist descriptions in the media surrounding criminal cases, their (often debated) depiction on fictional forensic science television dramas and only very occasionally, and seldom voluntarily, through personal experience.¹¹

The processes of bodily transformation after death are thus almost conceived of as an affront to individualism, to the memory, or 'self' of the deceased, as often seen in mourners' reluctance to engage with (even the relatively intact) remains of their loved ones, instead preferring to 'remember them as they were'. While one could argue that feelings of discomfort or even disgust toward the idea of others' biological breakdown might well find their source in an ontological unwillingness to confront our own eventual demise, I would argue that perceptions of bodily decomposition are fundamentally influenced by the associated processes' relative absence in the everyday experiences of modern world. It is thus the very invisibility of the inevitable – the management,

⁹ The rate of embalment may be seen to vary geographically, even within the same nation state, as highlighted by Parker Pearson (1982:110) in relation to Britain.

¹⁰ Preventing the lawful and decent burial of a body is a punishable offence in the majority of western European countries. 'Official intervention' here would include the registration of the death so as to facilitate a coroner's report, the disposal and/or appropriate storage of the body through legally permitted and documented means etc.

¹¹ In opposition to the novelist J.G. Ballard's suggestion (The Guardian online, 25th June 2005) that the appeal of programmes such as C.S.I. (Crime Scene Investigation) lay in the audience's inherent identification with the featured human remains, scholars have more recently argued for the objectification – rather than the abjection – of the cadaver as a central component (Glynn and Jeongmee, forthcoming).

concealment and almost self-imposed ignorance of bodily disintegration after death – that provokes such marked responses to artworks such as Woodland and even, as shall become apparent in subsequent discussion, ancient archaeological remains.

Still, it remains of importance to acknowledge that this has not always been the case. For an alternative perspective (in Britain at least), one only has to look to the early medieval period, during which interactions with the dead body would have been a ‘commonplace, visible and somatic experience’ (Williams 2006:84). Bloch and Parry (1982:26), in particular, highlight that bodily decomposition was not always a process that provoked feelings of revulsion, rather it ‘seems to have held a particular fascination’ in late medieval western Europe, with funerary monuments depicting the putrescent corpse wriggling with worms and maggots. Indeed, as highlighted in the following section (2.3), contemporary societies across the world may be seen to have very different perceptions of, and interactions with, the physical human body after death. Admittedly, the body still remains as the focus for bereavement in the modern era (as seen in its central position in funerary rites), yet it does so as a controlled and contained entity, carefully maintained through the use of preservation and concealment techniques so as to prevent the emission of any signs of bodily disintegration into the environment of the living, whether they be visual, audial or olfactory.

Parker Pearson (1999b:125) has highlighted this development in that the physical dead have become ‘increasingly invisible...in British society’, in his identification of a trend ranging from the end of the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, during which the dead have been conceptually distanced from both binary oppositions of body/soul and the natural processes of bodily decomposition:

Death was no longer a duality between the body’s transformation into food for the worms and the soul’s eternal spiritual life, but a sunset, a voyage over the sea, or a harvest, followed by the meeting of loved ones in the hereafter

(Parker Pearson 1999b:47)

In Parker Pearson’s view then, death in modern Britain is generally perceived of as a journey – a liminal passage to a benevolent afterlife – albeit one in which the biological breakdown of physical form no longer plays a central role. While this statement still largely holds true, it is important to acknowledge that, as is in their very nature, trends tend to

change. Indeed, since the writing of the preceding passage in the late-twentieth century, multiple small-scale developments in modern post-mortem practices have occurred,¹² within which the processes of decomposition, or lack thereof, are integral. The following section will thus address two distinct examples which have grown in both popularity and profile in the past ten years, so as to highlight the prominent role perceptions of decomposition may come to play in broader understandings of post-mortem individuality, agency and ‘afterlife’.

Trees or freeze: recent developments in decomposition

Walt Whitman, in his 1855 poem *Song of Myself*, wrote: ‘I bequeathe myself to the dirt, to grow from the grass I love;/If you want me again, look for me under your boot-soles.’ In his contemplation of the cyclical transience of life and inevitable transcendence of the human form, Whitman, in his wish to ‘effuse my flesh in eddies’, essentially foreshadowed the doctrine central to the funerary practices of the modern ecopolitical or ‘green’ movement, who similarly envision a life after death through a material return to nature.

‘Green’ or ‘natural’ burial involves the interment of human remains in a manner that does not inhibit the natural processes of decomposition from taking place. Advocates emphasise the environmental impact of conventional burial techniques, in that the production of wooden coffins, the clearing of land for cemetery space and the use of toxic chemicals for embalmment have severe and sustained negative effects on natural resources, in addition (especially in relation to the use of formaldehyde) to the respiratory health of embalmers. With the rise of environmentalism, a variety of natural burial techniques have subsequently become available, heralding a distinct shift in the perception of decomposition as part of the funerary process.

During natural burial the body is not embalmed, clothed in artificial materials or interred in non-biodegradable containers. While some might opt for individual memorialisation through the installation of a plaque or marker, the majority of natural burials are not commemorated at the exact place of interment, but rather remembered through the placement of a bench or tree somewhere within the grounds of the cemetery, or, alternatively, left completely unmarked. Indeed, recent expansion in the green burial

¹² ‘Post-mortem’ refers here and throughout to practices and/or processes relating to or occurring in the time after medical death.

industry has seen the development of 'biopods' by the Capsula Mundi project,¹³ into which the untreated human body is folded into a foetal position and interred in the ground, from which emerges a fledgling tree (Fig. 5).



Figure 5: Representation of the life cycle of the Capsula Mundi burial pods
(Capsula Mundi Project, <http://www.capsulamundi.it/en/project/>)

In 'natural burial' then, we may acknowledge a change in the conceptual trend earlier postulated by Parker Pearson (1999b:47 and above). To use his words, the human body *has* literally become – and is ideologically celebrated as – 'food for the worms', in that its unhindered decomposition and the subsequent return of nutrients into the soil exists as a premeditated and desired outcome. Decomposition thus exists as a central and celebrated part of the funerary process; bodily disintegration is perceived of as positive, natural and, in the context of the support of plant life, ultimately nurturing.

Therefore, the natural burial movement do not perceive of their death in terms of a journey unto a conceptual harvest like that mentioned by Parker Pearson (1999b:47 and above), but rather a literal one: they, echoing Whitman, genuinely foreseeing themselves in the eventual fruits of the nutrient soil. In the context of the transfer of nutrients, whether

¹³ As of March 2017, the interment biopods are still in the developmental stages and their use in the project's native Italy is still prohibited due to restrictions on accepted coffin materials. However, Capsula Mundi biopod urns (for use with cremated remains) are available for pre-order.

this perceived transformation may be termed truly transcendental remains a matter of debate, but what natural burial does posit is a fundamental shift in embodiment, in that the processes of decomposition mark a conceptual change during which human remains become another distinct entity or entities.

In addition, the rise in popularity of natural cemetery sites in Britain, usually situated in pre-existing woodland areas, may be interpreted as a rejection of individualism as associated with the post-mortem physical body.¹⁴ As mentioned above, although alternative options exist, the memory of the deceased is often not associated with one static, architecturally-defined *space* within which their remains are contained, but rather situated more broadly within the collective woodland: an experience of *place*. Although one could argue that posing the question ‘what tree would you like to become?’ (Capsula Mundi Project n.d.) implies an inherent association of a single tree with one deceased individual, to come to such a conclusion is to overlook the diversity and reproductive capacity of the natural world and to deny the effects of cross-pollination, whereby one individual tree both becomes and brings into being part of a forest, defined by its very collectivity.

Indeed, with slogans including ‘life is forever’ and ‘trees instead of tombstones’ (Capsula Mundi Project n.d.), the natural burial movement perceives their existence after the disintegration of the human body not as situated in an *after*-life, but rather as a continuation of it, envisioning their journey not as one toward a conceptual hereafter, but one which is firmly ‘grounded’ in the literal, material present. While connotations of rebirth are rife throughout the accompanying literature and imagery, most especially in the foetal positioning of the biopod bodies, it is evident from the above discussion that it is the associated dissolution of bodily integrity, individuality, and identity that exists as the process central to the natural burial ideology. In this context, the decomposition of the human body is perceived of as a process that is inherently knowable, natural and necessary.

In direct opposition to the natural burial movement, another relatively recent development in modern post-mortem practice involves the prevention of bodily disintegration through the employment of a variety of scientifically-aggressive means. Cryogenic freezing – the almost immediate cooling of the body after death to sustained temperatures below 190 degrees Celsius – is a method developed so as to ensure bodily

¹⁴ The rise in popularity of natural burial cemeteries may also be associated with the rise of secularism, although religious and/or spiritual ceremonies may be carried out within their confines.

preservation and thus potential reanimation of the deceased in the future. The procedure has risen in profile and relative popularity in recent years, as a process which regularly provokes substantial debate in both the media and law courts.¹⁵ Although some opt only for the preservation of the head, in freezing their bodies users essentially trust in the advancement of modern science, which they believe will enable (especially in the case of those who died from terminal illness) their bodily restoration and subsequent reanimation at some point in the future.

It is interesting that this process effectively exists in direct opposition to the values of the green movement, as the suspension of both the physical body and decomposition process through the use of liquid nitrogen is both an environmentally and financially costly method, in addition to raising important questions as to sustainability.¹⁶ Cryogenic freezing essentially maintains bodily integrity and subsequently, perceptions of sustained individual identity. The only shift in embodiment envisioned by users is in terms of improvement of their current physical form, whether through the future curing of terminal illnesses or, in the case of neurocryopreservation (the freezing of the head), the production of a new appendage to accompany their reanimated 'self', perceived of in this instance as situated in the head/brain. It is of note that I refer here to cryogenics as *post-mortem* practice, instead of funerary practice, as for the majority of users, medical death does not herald the complete cessation of bodily autonomy, function or form, but rather ensures it in the future: their individualised identity is intimately associated with their physical body, with both being quite literally frozen in time.

In essence, however, both recent trends in post-mortem practice envisage a return to the world of the living, albeit in very different physical forms. The difference in eschatological belief might essentially be perceived as a case of capitalisation. For the green movement, the natural, uninhibited breakdown of the human body is vital to their return *into* the constant *earth*, while those who opt for cryogenics actively avoid it. For them, it exists as a process in direct opposition to the maintenance of their body's individual

¹⁵ As seen in the case of JS, an unidentified British teenager who died of terminal cancer in October 2016, who won landmark case in the High Court to have her body cryogenically frozen, despite the initial objections of one of her parents.

¹⁶ As it is so far unknown at what point in the future – if indeed at all – their bodies may be reanimated, critics have highlighted that the potential viability of the cadavers is wholly dependent on the long-term stability and sustainability of the freezing facilities within which they are contained.

integrity and identity and subsequently, its potential reawakening *on* a more advanced, optimistic *Earth*.

From the above discussion then, it is evident that in both cases decomposition (or lack thereof) plays a central role in such recent developments in post-mortem practice. In juxtaposition with one another, the disparate methods exhibit the close association between the physical body and the notion of 'self', with decomposition essentially perceived of as the means by which our individual identity practically and conceptually breaks down. Yet, it remains the case that natural burial and cryogenic freezing are not examples in the truest sense of the word, but exceptions: the majority of conventional funerary practices in contemporary Britain do not reflect this simultaneous dissolution of material and social personhood, but instead require that human remains, whatever their (seldom observed) state of decomposition, retain their initial individualised importance and thus necessitate a similar level of reverential care. While familial members might share a cemetery plot, a tombstone or (often in tragic cases) a funerary ceremony, their physical remains are kept distinctly separate through the use of individual coffins or cremation urns. Certainly, to unofficially disturb or interfere with human remains post-interment is a serious offence, with the exhumation of cadavers occurring largely in relation to criminal cases or archaeological excavation.

Thus, neither recent trends nor conventional burial practices involve a process whereby the human remains of the deceased are physically engaged with after a period of initial interment.¹⁷ As such, the following section will include a brief discussion of secondary burial in modern rural Greece, where the perceptions – and indeed, *expectations* – of bodily decomposition play a central role in the funerary process, religious doctrine and eschatological belief.

¹⁷ While this could theoretically be argued for cryogenics, the freezing process is more of a storage solution than that of 'interment'. In addition, even if it was termed as such, no human remains have been officially physically engaged with post-interment (i.e. purposefully thawed) to date.

2.3 Secondary burial in modern rural Greece

Κάμε τὰ χέρια σου τσαπιά, τὴν πλάκα παραμέρα,
καὶ τράβα τὸ μαντήλι μου ἀπὸ τὸ πρόσωπό μου,
κι ἂν μ' εὗρης ἀσπροκόκκινον, σκύψε κι ἀγλάλιασέ με,
κι ἂν μ' εὗρης μαῦρον κι ἀραχνόν, τράβα καὶ σκέπασέ με.
Στὶς τρεῖς πῆρα κι ἀράχνιασα, εἰς τὶς ἑννιά μυρίζω,
κι ἀπ' τὶς σαράντα κι ὕστερα ἀρμούς ἀρμούς χωρίζω.

*Make your arms into pickaxes, heave aside the tombstone,
and draw the kerchief from my face,
If you find me pink and white, bend down and embrace me,
and if you find me mouldering black, cover me once more.
On the third day I began to moulder, on the ninth I smell,
and from the fortieth my limbs fall one by one.*

(Giankas 885.4-9, as cited in Alexiou 1974:48)

In the words of the ritual lament from Epiros, the deceased speaks directly to the living, compelling them to exhume, evaluate and embrace his or her decomposing body. The instructions essentially follow those related to the practice of secondary burial in Greece, directly illustrating in its request to practitioners a shared understanding of, and physical engagement with, the various stages of bodily dissolution.¹⁸

Ritual lamentation has not survived in all parts of Greece, but where it is practiced, it constitutes a ritual that is considered a collective social duty, a part of the shared responsibility of the entire community to ensure the proper treatment and care of the deceased's remains (Alexiou 1974:48; Håland 2014:195). It is in this way that secondary burial – that is, the engagement with human remains after a period of initial (i.e. primary) interment – is not merely a matter of physical interaction with the dead, but also encompasses that of a visual and vocal nature. It is thus important to recognise secondary burial in Greece as a prolonged, multi-stage process, which may be often seen to vary

¹⁸ I refer to 'secondary burial' in this section as it is the term widely used in the anthropological literature on funerary practices in modern rural Greece. See Introduction for a discussion of terminology in the interpretation of archaeological contexts (i.e. 'secondary burial' versus 'secondary depositional activity', etc.).

considerably both between regions and, indeed, one deceased individual to another. Although my discussion here will focus on the secondary rites (especially those related to the acknowledgement of bodily dissolution), it is imperative to acknowledge that they only exist as the final stages of a substantially longer sequence of meaningful funerary practices, summarised in part here by Danforth (1982:39-42) in his description of the pseudonymous village of 'Potamia', observed during fieldwork in July 1979:

After death the body is washed and then dressed in new clothes, which many elderly villagers have ready in anticipation of their death. The corpse is laid out on a bed in the formal reception room (*saloni*) of the house. The feet are tied together, the lower jaw is bound shut, and the eyes are closed. The deceased is then covered up to the waist with a white shroud...From the time of death until the funeral, which takes place between twelve and twenty-four hours later, the body is watched over by relatives, neighbors, and fellow villagers in ever increasing numbers...After the funeral service the body is taken to the graveyard, where the hands, feet, and the lower jaw of the deceased are untied. Then the open coffin is lowered into the grave

(Danforth 1982:39-42)

While I will discuss the accompanying laments and Orthodox prayers in relation to the perceived purity of the corpse in due course, the covering of coffin in earth and the filling of the grave is not, as one might be accustomed to, a final farewell to the deceased, nor an acknowledgement of the cessation of the physical, emotional and spiritual communication between the living and the dead. The conclusion of the funeral marks not the end, but the *beginning* of a fundamental stage in the burial process, during which the buried body is understood to transform both conceptually and physically. The end of this period of primary interment is marked by the rites of exhumation, which occur after an established amount of time, whether after one, three, or seven years (Alexiou 1974:47) or a period of five, as in 'Potamia' (Danforth 1982:43). In light of the present discussion, it is the practices that are undertaken after this period of initial interment that are of most relevance, as the conceptualisation of decomposition as a necessary and inherently transformative process exists at their very core.

On the process of exhumation, I very much doubt that anyone has been entirely successful in expressing on paper the true intensity of such an experience. The uncovering of the now near-skeletal human remains is perceived by the bereaved as a final chance to

place their eyes, their hands, even their kisses on the bodies of their loved ones, an intense physical and emotional engagement into which we gain a glimpse with Danforth's inclusion of a photo essay by Alexander Tsiaras in his 1982 publication (Fig. 6).



Figure 6: A woman prepares to kiss the skull after lifting it from the grave and wrapping it in a white kerchief in 'Potamia' (Danforth and Tsiaras 1982: Plate 31)

The exhumation is also an opportunity for the bereaved to acknowledge and evaluate the process of bodily decomposition since the primary interment, the outcome of which often exists as a source of anxiety for the immediate kin of the deceased and the community in general. This focus on decomposition as an expected and essential process is bound up with underlying eschatological beliefs, which equate the dissolution of the body and uncovering of clean, dry bone at the time of exhumation with the forgiveness of sins and the journey of the soul to paradise (Danforth 1982:49). Consequently, the survival of flesh, hair or clothing is indicative of residual sin, and potentially the deceased's dreaded transformation into a categorically dangerous βρυκόλακας or revenant, who, in colloquial

terms – ‘καίγεται στὰ Τάρταρα’ – ‘is burning in Tartara’ (Alexiou 1974:48, see also Serematakis 1991:64,70).

This anxiety, stemming from the conceptual association between the dry, white bones of the body and the purity (and subsequent ascension) of the soul, is still experienced in moments of intense mourning and even in cases whereby the deceased – in this case a young, unmarried woman named here as ‘Eleni’ – is perceived as virtuous and beyond reproach:

When the widow uncovered the skull, she crossed herself and bent down to pick it up...The widow *tried to wipe what looked like hair off the back of the skull* before she wrapped it in a white kerchief. She crossed herself again and placed some paper money on the skull outside the kerchief. Then she kissed the skull and handed it to Irini. Irini cradled her daughter’s skull in her arms, crying and sobbing uncontrollably. The women behind her tried to take it from her but she would not let go. She held Eleni’s skull to her cheek, embracing it as much as she would have embraced Eleni were she still alive

(Danforth 1982:19-20, my emphasis)

In this case, despite the expectation that Eleni’s remains would physically reflect the perceived purity of her soul, the five year interment period had not guaranteed full decomposition and further intervention was necessary, as seen in the widow’s immediate attempt to clean the skull of residual soft tissue. Indeed, the importance of complete bodily dissolution is highlighted in other cases, such as that of ‘Kostas’, a man with many enemies, whose family were so anxious that his sins in life would prevent the decomposition of his body that they waited two additional years after the customary five to exhume his remains (Danforth 1982:Plate 26). However, the causes, and subsequent ideological implications, of partial decomposition are, to a certain extent, subject to debate, with many of the younger villagers, men in particular, citing more practical reasons for residual human tissue, such as differential soil conditions, synthetic clothing and pre-mortem consumption of medication (Danforth 1982:22, 50).

It is also interesting to note the involvement of the Orthodox Church in exhumation practices, which may be seen to have demonstrably pagan origins. Alexiou (1974:48) notes that the priest in the village of Mani is generally happy to preside over (or perhaps profit from) the rites of secondary burial, who is paid for delivering a special liturgy for the soul upon the frequent discovery of something amiss with the remains of the deceased. It is of

note that the association of the colour white with the cleanliness and purity of both the deceased's skeleton and soul is echoed in words spoken during the funeral service as the priest pours wine over the open coffin:

You shall sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

You shall wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

(Vaporis 1977, as cited in Danforth 1982:Plate 12)

It is important to acknowledge, however, that this conceptual association of whiteness with the achievement of complete and idealised bodily transformation and consequently, absolution and acceptance – as seen in the introductory lament's appeal 'If you find me pink and white, bend down and embrace me' – is ultimately culturally constructed. Although we might share in the identification of the colour white with ideas of cleanliness, purity and virtue, it is not a concept inherent to all contemporary societies, let alone those of the ancient past. While this cultural construction, and thus interpretation, of colour is an aspect to which I will return in later discussion concerning interpretations of symbolic cleansing at the Prepalatial tombs,¹⁹ it is worth noting here that it is one which is continually and uncritically perpetuated in the archaeological literature related to the evidence for secondary depositional activity at the prehistoric funerary sites.

Thus, the processes of bodily decomposition, their recognition and, often in cases of partial disintegration, *discussion* by the community are central to the secondary burial rites performed in many areas of Greece. This importance attached to ideas of dissolution – the loosening of the flesh from the skeleton and thus the deceased from his/her once living body – might also be interpreted in customs related to the avoidance of knots on the clothing worn by the dead. Håland (2014:196) highlights that in modern Mani, the body must be laid out in clothing without any ties and the coat unbuttoned, as knotting and buttons are inherently antithetical to the process of physical loosening, the conceptual process by which the soul will be able to ascend to heaven. This is highlighted in the narratives collected by Seremetakis (1991:66-7) in Inner Mani, in which explicit reference is made to purposefully leaving clothing untied, as seen in one woman's description of her mother's death: "...her beautiful apron (I didn't tie it)...". Likewise, we might begin to

¹⁹ See Section 4.4 for a sustained discussion of the colour white in scholarly discussion of Prepalatial funerary practice.

interpret similar concerns in the activities of the villagers of 'Potamia', in their untying of the bonds that secure the hands, feet and lower jaw of the deceased prior to burial (Danforth 1982:42 and above, see also Seremataki 1991:67).

What is crucial to stress here though, is the intensity of physical engagement with human remains involved in the secondary rites, which – as we have seen in the widow's wiping of hair – is not wholly dependent on the full decomposition of the body. As portrayed by Eleni's mother Irini's immediate and enduring embrace of the skull of her daughter, the reaction to essentially skeletal matter during exhumation is not that of revulsion, but devotion. Post-decomposition, the remains of the deceased (usually the skull) are handed from one villager to another, who greet it as they would a traveller returning from a long journey (Danforth 1982: Plate 31). After the retrieval of all of the bones from the grave and their washing in wine, the physical remains of the deceased are perceived to have reached final and permanent form and are subsequently placed in the village ossuary, 'the collective home of the village dead, where they will rest for eternity' (Danforth 1982:Plate 31).

As representative of the main body of anthropological fieldwork in this area, I have referred to Danforth's 1982 publication *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* throughout the present discussion, yet it is worth quoting the following passage in full, as it exemplifies both a moment of self-reflexivity in the face of unfamiliar burial practices and the differentiated maintenance of bodily individuality in the ossuary of 'Potamia':

Although I knew what I would find inside, *I was still not fully prepared* for the sight that confronted me when I opened the door. Beyond a small floor-space a ladder led down to a dark, musty-smelling area filled with the bones of many generations of villagers. Near the top of a huge pile the remains of each person were bound up separately in a white cloth. Toward the bottom of the pile the bones – skulls, pelvises, ribs, the long bones of countless arms and legs – *lay in tangled disarray, having lost all trace of belonging to distinct individuals with the disintegration of the cloth wrappings*. Stacked in one corner of the building were metal boxes and small suitcases with names, dates, and photographs identifying whose bones lay securely within

(Danforth 1982: 10-11, my emphasis)

To consider Danforth's self-reflexivity, and self-confessed shock, for a moment, it is significant that, despite his prior knowledge as to the burial practices of the village, he was

still taken aback by the unfamiliar and somewhat overwhelming experience of entering the ossuary. The acknowledgement of such a reaction forces both anthropologist and reader to confront the fact that whilst we might understand and indeed, *expect* funerary practices markedly disparate from our own, ultimately our experience, and subsequent interpretation, of them is fundamentally shaped by our own personal preconceptions. Danforth, as anthropologist, expresses this: for him, just like an archaeologist excavating the skeletal material within a Prepalatial tomb, the confrontation with the somewhat chaotic collectivity of bones contained within the ossuary was one which was essentially anticipated, albeit completely alien and subsequently, affecting.

To contemplate this briefly in terms of archaeology, this contextual awareness, heralded as fundamental to any responsible interpretation, inherently necessitates a self-imposed, self-reflexive approach. Indeed, how can one be an advocate for self-reflexivity and not practice it oneself? In truth, relatively easily. Despite such an approach having been shown to have real narrative and interpretative effect, peppering your publications with contemplations of a personal nature is hardly common academic practice, and it may be met with unease by more conservative scholars, a possible outcome which only works to exacerbate any feelings of vulnerability or hesitancy the author might experience in its pursuit.²⁰ However, I would argue that it is not an element more appropriate as part of one's introduction or acknowledgements, but rather an invaluable in-work and ongoing exercise, albeit one which will likely never yield objective, dispassionate results.

Still, it is evident that attitudes towards and experiences of death are rarely dispassionate; they are invariably emotionally-charged and socially and historically constructed. Danforth is essentially taken aback by both the sheer volume of skeletal remains contained within the ossuary and the differentiated manner in which they are preserved. It is clear that placement of the deceased's bones post-exhumation does not guarantee bodily individuality indefinitely, rather that there usually occurs a kind of secondary 'loosening', in that as the fabric wrapping dissolves with time, so too does its skeletal contents' ties to any one identifiable individual. It does not necessarily represent a lack of respect or reverence, but rather parallels the gradual loss of the memory of the

²⁰ Hamilakis' (2013) *Archaeology and the Senses: Human Experience, Memory and Affect* is one such publication which uses personal narratives and experiences to both creatively frame and further explore theoretical issues.

associated individual in the community as time progresses. Indeed, the only remains which might perhaps not eventually enter into the collective, confused pile are those contained within individualised metal boxes, which categorically assert the identity of the remains within with the attachment of personalised details and imagery.

I have attempted thus far to provide a largely descriptive account of the centrality of the processes of decomposition in the secondary burial rites of Greece, but this is not to disregard the substantial application of anthropological theory to the overall sequence of funerary rites. Danforth (1982:35-69) has made explicit use of anthropological theory in his examination of the secondary burial practices of Potamia, drawing directly in his analysis from the models of Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1987) in his identification of death as a tripartite rite of passage which includes an inherently pollutant, dangerous 'liminal period'.²¹ Similarly, following Hertz (2004:[1960]:41ff), decomposition is interpreted by Danforth as the fundamental process through which the deceased transcends the liminal period and is eventually reincorporated into the world of the living, albeit in an altered embodied state. However, while Danforth (1982:48-50) postulates that this association of complete decomposition with the end of the liminal period explains why many villagers might be anxious that the process may not occur, it is from accounts such as that of Irini embracing and kissing the still tissue-clad skull of her daughter that we may observe that partial decomposition does often not inhibit subsequent ritual action or strong emotional and physical responses.

Therefore, although secondary burial in Greece has been continually referenced in relation to the evidence for potentially similar practices in prehistoric Crete,²² we must remain ever critical of accounts which equate the ideological underpinning of one set of funerary practices with that of another. This is important, as wide-ranging studies illustrate that worldwide variation in secondary disposal is considerable and what might appear a shared cross-cultural attribute may be, in actuality, inherently different (Shroeder 2001:89).²³ Following Shroeder (2001:89) then, in her statement that 'continued treatment of secondary disposal as a unitary behaviour will constrain our understanding', I would further extend such an argument to the analysis and interpretation of the evidence for the

²¹ See Section 2.5 for a discussion of the models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner.

²² See Section 1.5.

²³ In this instance, Shroeder (2001) examined 186 societies from the 'Standard Cross-Cultural Sample'.

funerary practices of the ancient Cretan past, data to which anthropological models have been applied for nearly a century of archaeological interpretation.

2.4 The bare bones: the contexts and concepts of Prepalatial skeletal remains

The turbulent, episodic, and often problematic history of the tomb sites both in antiquity and the modern day is one aspect of the Prepalatial archaeological record that is deserving of substantial attention and consideration. Rightly cited in nearly every introductory paragraph related to tomb material, the diverse range of activities that have seemingly taken place at these sites has inevitably affected the survival of skeletal remains, material which is continually referenced in anthropologically-informed arguments concerning the ancient conceptualisation of personhood, pollution, and individual identity. This section will thus not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the evidence for Minoan secondary engagement with human remains, but will instead offer a brief outline of postulated practices, while working to acknowledge the influence of excavation processes of the more recent past, both sanctioned and illicit, on interpretative discussion of skeletal material.

Archaeological excavation and subsequent interpretation in Prepalatial funerary contexts in Crete has spanned nearly a century, from Xanthoudides' seminal 1924 publication *The Vaulted Tombs of Mesara* to the ongoing projects at sites such as Koumasa (Lange, Katsaveli and Kiorpe, 2017), Petras (Tsipopoulou 2017) and Sissi (Driessen et al. 2018). It follows that the excavation, documentation and discussion of skeletal remains from the tombs has been subject to a variety of archaeological standards, techniques, and interpretative foci, resulting in the differentiated collection, curation and publication of the Prepalatial material. While the evidence for Minoan engagement with skeletal remains after initial interment (i.e. secondary depositional activity) had been noted by early excavators, their systematic collection was very limited and the published archaeological data from such excavations is not of the standard which we might expect from modern projects (Triantaphyllou 2012:19). Indeed, little is mentioned in terms of the physical anthropology, condition, orientation, posture or even number of burials represented by the skeletal material, with early scholars focussing instead on architecture and the presence of manufactured artefacts, with human remains becoming lost, both literally and

figuratively, in the interpretative process.²⁴ Although new archaeological and osteological techniques are being used to an increasing extent to analyse the human remains from recently excavated Prepalatial tomb sites,²⁵ the number of published skeletal remains from Cretan contexts is still ‘astonishingly small’, with osteoarchaeologists active in the region emphasising the limited attention traditionally paid to the treatment of the dead (Triantaphyllou 2018:141-2). Certainly, we are left with more than the ‘bare bones’, especially in light of ongoing excavation and analysis, but any discussion of the evidence for secondary depositional activity must inevitably acknowledge the substantial effect continued engagement in both antiquity and more recent times has had on the archaeological context and character of Prepalatial human remains. However, while it might be easy to criticise such early approaches to the *recovery* of archaeological data from tombs, it is important to keep in mind that we still share, over a hundred years of disciplinary development later, in a time of *discovery* in relation to these sites, as illustrated by ongoing excavations and the fact that a number of sites remain unexcavated or frustratingly under-studied (Goodison and Guarita 2005).

From the very outset of early excavations in the Mesara tholoi, however, it became apparent that skeletal material had been interacted with after its initial primary interment, with Xanthoudides (1924:7) stating in reference to Tholos B at Koumasa that bones had ‘obviously been disturbed and mixed up, perhaps moved and heaped together in various parts of the chamber to give space for later burials’ and Evans (1924:vi) referring to the tombs in his preface to the volume as ‘early ossuaries...[in which]...the bones were liable at certain intervals of time to be swept on one side, the skulls sometimes being placed together in heaps’. While I will discuss the archaeological evidence for secondary engagement with skeletal remains shortly, what is of importance here is to acknowledge that both of these quotes continue – not only *physically* in written form on the page, in Xanthoudides’ following (1924:7) statement that the bones were ‘thrown about when rifled of their valuables’ or Evans’ (1924:v) comment that ‘at the time of these disturbances, moreover, most of the relics that had originally lain beside the skeletons were filched,

²⁴ As the skeletal remains from early excavations were not retained permanently or published to a diagnostic standard, it is perhaps fortunate for archaeologists when they have been ‘lost’ in institutional storage facilities and subsequently recovered, as occurred in the case of human remains and clay burial containers from the 1942 excavation of Apesokari A, which were traced in the storeroom of the Heraklion Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities in 2010 (Flouda 2012:111)

²⁵ See Section 4.5 for a discussion of recent evidence from the tomb sites.

without any apparent scruple’ – but also *conceptually* in the interpretative discussions of the modern day.

Both quotes are essentially representative of an effort to contextualise the disturbance of the skeletal remains in relation to the perceived removal, and subsequent archaeological absence, of prestigious funerary goods from the tombs in ancient times. Yet both statements – in their use of language such as ‘rifled of their valuables’, ‘filched, without...scruple’ and later, ‘perpetual robbery’ (Evans 1924:ix), ‘picking over of the bones’ (Evans 1924:x), and ‘constant plundering’ (Xanthoudides 1924:8, 27) – betray an underlying negative scholarly attitude to Minoan engagement with skeletal remains and their associated artefacts post-interment. However, while it might be expected that this relatively uncritical and essentially culturally-constructed outlook would be restricted to such early interpretations, I argue that in other scholars’ comments – in which they similarly attempt to contextualise the problematic and partial dataset the tomb material represents – there exists an unacknowledged interpretative bias derived from pre-existing conceptions of the appropriate treatment of the dead. Foreshadowing my later discussion of anthropologically-informed attitudes towards engagement with skeletal remains, one particular bias comes to the fore most prominently here in discussions of ‘looting’, in which there seems little, or often contradictory, distinction between the motivations, ideological underpinning or social acceptance of the removal of artefacts from the tombs by those in antiquity and those in modern times.

‘Looting’ is, in an archaeological context, essentially a product of contested ownership of material remains of the past, during which individuals may be motivated by demand from the antiquities market to illicitly remove artefacts from known sites. Although anthropologists and archaeologists alike have recently commented on and engaged with the complexity and sensitivity of such situations (Follow the Pots Project n.d.),²⁶ in which local populations might feel genuinely dispossessed of the material legacy and subsequent potential financial advantages afforded them by their perceived ancestors, where archaeological excavation is regulated by some form of official body, looting is

²⁶ Based on the Early Bronze Age cemeteries of Fifa, Bab adh-Dhra and en-Naqa/es Safi in Jordan, the ongoing Follow the Pots research program combines both archaeological and ethnographical methods so as to investigate the many meaningful interactions of people – including the looters, local population and antiquities dealers of the Southern Ghor area – with artefacts illicitly removed from tombs.

essentially an illegal act of theft and one to which the Prepalatial tombs of Crete have been particularly susceptible. Indeed, although there have been no recent reported incidents that equal that of archaeologist Yannis Sakellarakis in 1965 when he was shot at by looters as he approached the tomb of Ayia Kyriaki (Branigan 1993:17), the GPS coordinates of many tombs (especially those that remain unexcavated) are not widely available in catalogues and even today, one must remain continually aware of potential confrontations when visiting the largely rural sites.

As built tombs visible within the landscape, it is thus not difficult to ascertain why the Prepalatial tombs of Crete have not escaped attention in the modern era; as illustrated in Alexiou and Warren's (2004:11) acknowledgement of the cooperation of the local villagers in the discovery of the sites at Lebena and Xanthoudides' (1924:1) recognition of the help and knowledge of the local population, despite their previous involvement in unofficial digging. Indeed, even though local inhabitants are involved in the repurposing of tomb material (i.e. stone) to this day, they may be seen to also engage in more casual interactions with the tomb sites, as evidenced by various categories of residual debris, including shotgun shells, dead goats and soft drink containers (Miller Bonney 2016:19).²⁷ However, extensive looting at many of the cemetery sites in recent times, the tholoi in particular, has inevitably affected both the integrity of the archaeological record and, interestingly, subsequent disciplinary technique and impetus.²⁸ For example, the skeletal remains at Moni Odigitria A and B were largely recovered from the systematic collection and sieving of disturbed deposits created by the repeated looting of the site (Triantaphyllou 2010:230) and the excavators of Ayia Kyriaki took into close consideration looters' methodologies so as to shed light on the remaining evidence and, indeed, justify immediate excavation (Blackman and Branigan 1982:1,49-50).

Thus, while recent looting may be seen to have influenced the state of preservation and the method of excavation of skeletal material, I would argue that it has also worked to perpetuate a particularly unfavourable perspective on the removal of manufactured artefacts during so-called 'clearing' operations at many tomb sites during the Bronze Age, an essentially negative outlook which is further echoed in archaeologists' underlying

²⁷ At Archanes-Phourni, Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis (1997:158) even describe the architectural adaptation of Tholos A by local villagers through the addition of dry stone walling to create a 'hut'.

²⁸ The sites marked as 'robbed' or 'partially robbed' in Goodison and Guarita's (2005) catalogue of the Mesara-type tombs make up approximately 74% of the total catalogue.

attitudes to the evidence for secondary depositional activity. Therefore, while scholars acknowledge, and are forced to adapt to, the extent of modern looting, the vocabulary referring to illicit digging at the Prepalatial cemeteries in modernity is largely interchangeable with that related to the Minoan removal of manufactured material as part of the funerary process. Indeed, Xanthoudides (1924:8) refers to the Minoan 'clearing' activities as an act of desecration, describing the remaining artefacts as the 'little [that] had been left to the dead...perhaps only what had escaped the looter's eye', in addition to Branigan's (1970b:109) argument that 'there is no doubt ... that looting of grave-goods was practised by some of the inhabitants of the Mesara during the Early Bronze Age'. In reference to material removed from Tholos A at Archanes-Phourni, Sakellakaris and Sapouna-Sakelleraki (1997:164) similarly invoke concepts of illegality in their suggestion that 'the robbery took place as early as Minoan times'.

This implicit and misguided, albeit potentially unintentional, analogy between recent looting practices and the Minoan procedure of removing material during secondary depositional activity may be seen to have enjoyed surprising longevity in the archaeological literature. Branigan, in his seminal 1970 publication *The Tombs of Mesara*, states that 'the periodic cleaning...gave both the opportunity and the excuse for looting' in the Minoan era (1970b:11), in addition to referring extensively throughout to evidence indicative of 'systematic plundering', 'attractive plunder' and the 'looting of personal belongings' in antiquity, or items that were 'too personalised to be of much value to the Minoan looter' (1970b:13,90,107,117). Certainly, Branigan's initial description of ancient activity at the sites asserts the continued rightful ownership of items by particular individuals and their subsequent 'theft', in his urge to the reader to 'envisage a situation where people were burying their dead with *personal belongings*, often including valuable weapons, tools or jewellery, which they knew would be *stolen* at a later date' (1970b:110, my emphasis).

Here then, we see a shared set of vocabulary, conceptual values and subsequently, archaeological attitudes applied to both modern looting and the removal of material during the ongoing use of the tomb sites in antiquity. It might thus be useful to consider the later argument of Wells (1990:126-7) in relation to relatively similar interpretations of evidence for Mycenaean secondary treatment, in which she questions the use of the term 'looting' and the associated negative connotations of desecration, theft and legitimate ownership:

We consider looting an act of theft to satisfy the greed of the perpetrator. But how do we know that the removal of burial gifts was considered an evil act by the Mycenaean community at any point? We do not...If we concede that valuables were removed from the chambers, were they necessarily stolen? What if the Mycenaeans, after the deceased had left his body or moved on to another world (at a moment possibly equated with the decomposition of the body), retrieved the valuables from the tomb as of their inheritance...'robbery' may thus have been a legitimate act.

(Wells 1990:126-7)

It is significant in regard to later discussion that Wells' rejection of the term and indeed concept of 'looting' is framed in terms of the simultaneous dissolution of bodily integrity and rightful ownership, but what is relevant here is her problematisation of the negative associations born from illegal activity in modernity as applied to the potentially legitimate removal of material in ancient times. Whether Wells' publication was directly influential is unknown,²⁹ but this distinction between the motivations, ideological underpinning and social acceptance of similar activities nearly two millennia apart is, in a total change of connotation and interpretation, echoed in Branigan's (1993:11) discussion of the clearing out of Platanos A in his publication *Dancing with Death*:

this example raises the possibility that what we would call looting was seen as a part of the funerary process by the builders and users of the tombs... Modern looting cannot be seen in the same light: it has to be geared to supplying the needs of the antiquities market

(Branigan 1993:11)

Branigan exhibits here both a remarkable and responsible level of scholarly interpretative flexibility, building on his earlier argument for Minoan expectation of the later removal of prestige items (1970b:107,110 and above), yet – in direct opposition to his previous statement – choosing to emphasise the very different circumstances under which these apparent clearing activities and those of modern looting were carried out. Although not an concern extended to a consideration of appropriate terminology by Branigan, I would argue that the contention of Wells (1990:127 and above) must be applied to studies of Minoan funerary practices, in that the negative connotations associated with the vocabulary and

²⁹ Wells (1990) is not cited as a reference in Branigan's (1993) publication, either directly related to discussions of 'looting' or as part of the general bibliography.

concepts of modern looting, 'stealing', 'robbing', 'plundering', etc., are wholly inappropriate and, indeed, interpretatively problematic when uncritically applied to the archaeological evidence from the Prepalatial tomb sites.

Nevertheless, although I would argue that the implicit invocation of modern looting – that which is associated with unregulated, unsanctioned enterprise generally discouraged and indeed persecuted by wider society – should be avoided in relation to the description of ancient 'clearing' activities, it is important to consider that this acknowledgement of the turbulent history of the tomb sites and the ethics of the illegal appropriation of antiquities may offer us an alternative perspective. It reminds us that although the removal, and subsequent absence, of funerary artefacts may be methodologically frustrating and thus inherently negative for us as archaeologists, we must not allow the occurrence of such practices in both antiquity and modernity to uncritically colour our interpretations of their motivation or ideological underpinning. Indeed, even before attempting to discern ancient attitudes, we must bear in mind that the ethics relating to the looting of archaeological artefacts in recent times are both complex and contested, especially in cases whereby local communities do not perceive their unsanctioned removal as 'stealing' but simply the retrieval of commodities placed there by those who have gone before them. In essence, to ascribe *permanent conceptual values* – in this case, rightful ownership – to the archaeological material of these tomb types is to discount the circumstances of their use, as sites of continual engagement with both the remains of the deceased and the artefacts with which they were initially interred.

Despite the relative lack of detailed, reliable skeletal data from traditional accounts, this prolonged engagement may be identified in the substantial evidence for the secondary interaction with human remains in Prepalatial Crete, divided by Branigan (1987:45) into five discrete categories: the *clearance* of burial remains to locations either within or outside the tombs, *fumigation* of either bones or the entire tomb contents, the *selected grouping* of certain bones, the *selected removal* of certain bones from the tomb and the *breaking/chopping of certain long bones* into fragments (Table 2).

Tholos Tomb	Fumigation/ Charring	Clearance (where to)	Bone Groups	Bones Removed	Chopping/ Breakage
Apesokari II		Chambers		Yes	
Arkhanes		Buildings			
Aspripetra	No				
Ayia Eirene e	Bones				
Ayia Kyriaki	Bones	Chambers			Chop/Break
Ayios Kyrillos		Chambers			
Ayia Triadha A		Chambers	Skulls		
Christos	No				
Drakones	Bones				
Drakones Z		Yes			
Kalathiana	No				
Kaloi Limenes 2	Bones				Breakage ?
Kamilari I		Internal			
Kaminospelio					Break/Grind ?
Koumasa B	Bones/Tomb		Skulls		
Koumasa E		Internal			
Lebena Ila	Bones				
Marathokephalo II	No	Internal			
Megaloi Skinoi IIIa	Bones				
Megaloi Skinoi IIIb	Bones/Tomb ?				Breakage ?
Platanos A	Bones/Tomb	Trenches		Yes ?	
Platanos B	No		Skulls		
Platanos	Bones/Tomb	Trenches			
Porti	Bones	Trenches			
Skotomenou Khar. A		Rock cleft ?			Breakage ?
Vorou A		Internal	Skulls +	Yes	
Vorou B				Yes	

Table 2: Evidence for secondary treatment of human remains from selected Mesara tholoi (Branigan 1987:46, Table 1)

The 1987 article within which this much-cited table was contained consisted of a self-asserted effort by Branigan (1987:43, my emphasis) to ‘draw together for the first time the evidence which exists for the *manipulation* of human bones in the tholos-using communities of Minoan Crete’, a statement which immediately contrasted in terms of terminology with the publication’s title ‘Ritual *Interference* with Human Bones in the Mesara Tholoi’. While the influence of anthropological models on Branigan and others’ interpretations of such activities will form the basis of discussion in Chapter 3, it is important to acknowledge here his explicit distinction between the two conceptual descriptions:

almost thirty of the tombs produce evidence for one or more of these activities, but that only fumigation and clearance are found at all frequently. These two activities are best described as interference, since their purpose *may* be no more than the practical one of making tombs which were becoming choked with remains suitable for further burials. The

other practices serve no such practical function and are better described as manipulation, with bones selected, removed or specially treated for what must be purely ritual reasons, very possibly with social overtones

(Branigan 1987:45)

Here, then, we see a distinction between the evidence for activities identified as of a practical nature (interference) and that of the ritual (manipulation), a differentiation that is repeated in support of arguments related to the significance of ancient practices in terms of pollution, personhood and individual identity.³⁰ The use of the word ‘interference’ to describe both ‘practical’ activities and secondary treatment more generally (as seen in its use in the article’s title) is significant, as such a term has been argued by Goodison (2012:220) to reflect the underlying ‘distaste we might feel about such practices’, a use of language that emphasises ‘the distance that separates the Minoan world view from ours’. While the value-laden terms may have fallen out of favour in recent analyses – see the implicit avoidance of the term ‘interference’ in particular (Triantaphyllou 2010, 2012; Crevecoeur et al. 2015; Triantaphyllou et al. 2017) – Branigan’s categorisation and discussion of the available evidence for such activities was the first of its kind in relation to the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete and deservedly remains a much-referenced work in current studies. In its primary focus on skeletal remains from a selection of tholoi from which evidence was available, it emphasised the diversity of secondary depositional activities between sites, both in terms of their presence (or lack thereof) and the different ways in which they appear to have been accomplished. However, although the publication was essentially a detailed overview of the available archaeological evidence for skeletal manipulation in anticipation of the results from the undisturbed deposits at Lebena and Archanes-Phourni, it still made both explicit and implicit arguments for anthropologically-informed interpretations of ancient activity, most especially for the practice of ‘ritualised and symbolic’ cleansing at the tombs (Branigan 1987:45,47; see Chapter 4).

I would argue that even now, after over thirty years of digging, data and debate since Branigan’s article, we are theoretically tied down, skeletally stagnant in our continual uncritical employment of certain interpretative models in relation to discerning ancient attitudes towards the dead body. Thus, while our knowledge of the Prepalatial skeletal remains is ever expanding, with ongoing excavations and innovative analytical methods

³⁰ See Chapters 3 and 4.

providing new perspectives on Minoan funerary practices, our critical awareness of our anthropologically-informed interpretations of them is not.

Granted, it might be tempting to return to the question of what we have lost: if the entirety of the archaeological record at the Prepalatial tombs was conceptualised as a complete human skeleton, how can we attempt to estimate with how much we are left? An optimistic torso? A couple of vertebrae? A few paltry phalanges? Interpretations differ, but the real difficulty is the acceptance that this metaphor is as impossible as it is unhelpful, as the 'entirety' of the archaeological record, as something that was once whole and knowable, is a fallacy in and of itself. By very definition, the archaeological record is partial; to forget the allegorical flesh, muscle and tissue which time has erased is to underestimate the inherent ambiguity and complexity of the past.

It is thus not surprising that we need models to make sense of things, as the practices represented by the Prepalatial archaeological record, essentially the prolonged, multi-stage interaction with human remains, are so very different from our own experiences of death, during which the intangibility of the bounded, controlled corpse is central to funerary practice. Yet, in their attempts to deal – both practically and conceptually – with the chaotic collectivity of disarticulated bones characteristic of the majority of tomb sites, scholars have made use of particular anthropological theories upon which to tether their interpretations of ancient belief and practice. Contrary to the potential of anthropology in its acknowledgement of the very many diverse ways in which humankind confronts its inevitable mortality, the uses, and subsequently, the results, of anthropological models in the interpretation of Prepalatial skeletal remains are surprisingly uniform. Indeed, so entrenched, extensive and, I argue, largely uncritical is the use of anthropological theory in the study of Minoan secondary depositional practices, it may be seen to depend predominantly on the selected writings of three prominent scholars: Robert Hertz, Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner.

2.5 The power of three: Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner

They say three is the magic number. This section will deal with the selected works of three scholars, representing three general, albeit interconnected, theories, which are in themselves based on a tripartite schema. Far from any attempt at structural sorcery, my discussion will work to highlight that the real bewitchment at hand is the analogical allure

and seeming universality of established anthropological models, which offer archaeologists of the Prepalatial cemeteries an attractive theoretical framework upon which to base their interpretations of ancient attitudes to death. The trio of theorists in question – Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner – have not been chosen arbitrarily or to fill a trivial, tripartite quota, but because they are continually referenced throughout the archaeological literature related to the tombs of Prepalatial Crete, either during explicit employment of their models or more generally, in discussions of ancient conceptions of individual personhood, pollution and ancestorhood.

As such, their interpretative influence can neither be underestimated or ignored since, as we shall see in the subsequent sections, the application of their anthropological models has had sustained and wide-ranging effect on the manner in which archaeologists explain the evidence for a diverse range of secondary depositional activities. The aim of the current discussion is thus not to provide a comprehensive account of the works of these three prominent academics, or to criticise in great detail the fundamental premises of their theories, but rather to outline their main tenets so as to render their extensive influence recognisable in the archaeological literature.

Fundamentally, all three theorists proposed models of transition, outlining stages through which the individual must pass in order to progress to a subsequent state of being. As such, their work has been utilised by those attempting to understand human reactions to death, in particular anthropologists and archaeologists who have as their interpretative focus societies who practice secondary burial. As Budja (2010: 47) has highlighted, Hertz and Van Gennep were not only similar to one another in terms of their interpretation of funerary rites as transitory, but also chronologically in regard to the dissemination of these ideas, with their initial publications appearing in 1907 and 1909 respectively, although English translations were not available until over fifty years later in 1960.³¹ However, their methodological approaches were markedly different, with Hertz basing his interpretations of funerary ritual on ethnographic data relating to the Dayak of Borneo and Van Gennep choosing instead to comment upon different examples of (what he discerned as) rites of passage across various cultures and contexts.

³¹ Hertz's (1907) essay *Contribution à une étude sur la représentation collective de la mort* was published as *Death and the Right Hand* (1960), whilst Van Gennep's (1909) *Les Rites de Passage* was translated to *The Rites of Passage* (1960).

In addition to the collection of data, Hertz was comparatively more specific in his interpretative focus, in his concentration on funerary rites specifically and their wider social significance. He recognised three components of the system of beliefs and practices surrounding death – the corpse, the soul and the mourners – entities that he argued were intrinsically entangled, likening them to a triad of actors in a ritual drama, linked symbolically to one another as they simultaneously and symbiotically progressed through a transitory state (Hertz 2004[1960]:41). For the purpose of our present discussion, Hertz's interpretation of the practices related to secondary burial is particularly relevant, during which he postulates that physical engagement with the deceased body post-mortem may be seen to relate to both eschatological belief and potentially, the existence and reverence of ancestors.

Essentially, Hertz frames death as a transition, one during which, in the case of societies who practice secondary burial, the destruction of the physical corpse is critical, with its disintegration (or lack thereof) consequentially affecting the status of the remaining two 'actors', i.e. the fate of the soul and the social positions of the mourners. The representation of the deceased (i.e. the physical body) is important and indeed, its transformation punctuates this period of transition. Upon death, the living individual becomes a corpse and the soul is only somewhat severed from the material world, only to be completely 'free...from the impurity of death' when the 'mental process of disintegration...is accomplished in a molecular fashion' (Hertz 2004[1960]:210). Put plainly, the model implies, and requires, a simultaneous dissolution of material and social personhood: whilst the corpse's flesh remains it is familiar – reminiscent of its earlier state of being as living individual – yet when it is reduced to bones, when the microbiological processes of death can have no further effect, it has reached a 'final and pacified character in the consciousness of the mourners' (Hertz 2004[1960]:210).

This concept of pacification through the achievement of a 'dry' skeletal state – of the negation of threat through the destruction of the recognisable physical flesh – is integral to Hertz's model, which correlates this change in bodily integrity with a shift in identity, with the deceased transitioning from familiar individual to part of a collective ancestorhood. Decomposition is thus the central process which the physical remains must undergo in order for the deceased to achieve a changed state of being, an inevitable transformation which may be interpreted as both critical and conceptually dangerous. Indeed, although all three theorists' models essentially work on the premise of binary

oppositions between which individuals must transition (hence their tripartite structure), it is here in Hertz's differentiation between the 'wet' and 'dry' stages of secondary burial that we may identify an association between the dead body during the processes of decomposition – e.g. in the 'wet' stage, with the preservation of soft tissue and perhaps some element of articulation – and that which requires pacification or negation through the achievement of complete or 'dry' skeletonisation.

According to the Hertzian model then, to become 'bare bones' is not the fundamental *aspiration* during the practice of secondary burial but rather a symbolic *indication* of the deceased's successful transition into another state, an entity which no longer poses a threat to the living community. Thus, the process of decomposition itself is inherently dangerous: the destruction of the physical 'wet' body exists as a simultaneously welcome and worrying process, during which the remaining two ritual 'actors' remain in a precarious position, with the potentially malevolent soul of the deceased neither fully attached or detached from the material world of the living. Consequently, the cessation, or rather, completion, of decomposition heralds the end of the deceased's conceptual and practical individualism and associated danger to the living, as seen in the final stages of secondary burial during which the living physically engage with the now disarticulated 'dry' skeletal remains.

Metcalf and Huntington (1991:107) have asserted that the power of Hertz's approach lies in his acknowledgement of the significant symbolism of the corpse in eschatological belief and associated secondary funerary rites, an approach, as we have already seen in Danforth's analysis of secondary burial in modern rural Greece, which has since been applied to societies far removed in space and time from his initial research in Borneo. Indeed, as we shall observe shortly in its use in the interpretation of Prepalatial Crete, one characteristic of Hertz's model is the ease with which it can be applied to secondary depositional activities from a wide range of cultures and chronological periods, an apparent applicability that has prompted scholars to vigorously test its suitability in relation to a variety of circumstances, subsequently critiquing its seeming 'universality' (Metcalf and Huntington 1991: xii, 10-11, 85-97).³²

A similar critique has been put forward in relation to the models of Van Gennep, who literally embraced the 'universal' in his methodological approach, leading scholars to

³² For further criticism of Hertz's (1960) model on the grounds of ethnocentrism and inapplicability, see Bloch (1988) or Rakita and Buikstra (2005).

characterise his concepts as somewhat skeletal themselves: a body of general, seemingly meaningful yet ultimately hollow 'vague truisms' (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:112), onto which the soft flesh of specificity could all too easily be grafted. Basing his analysis on the ritual behaviours of a range of different cultures and contexts, Van Gennep (1960) identified what he argued was a universal pattern by which humans encounter and achieve transition: tripartite trajectories which he called 'rites of passage'. Interested in the relationship between transitory states and their connection with both group and individual life, Van Gennep distinguished in every critical rite of passage (whether birth, puberty, marriage, death etc.) three major phases in the associated ceremonial activity: separation (*séparation*), transition (*marge*) and incorporation (*agrégation*). Citing funerary practices as an example, he noted that not every stage in the seminal triad is developed to the same extent in any one instance. While one might expect rites of separation to be most prominent upon the death of an individual, he argued that it is often the rites of transition and incorporation that are the most elaborated, developing a 'duration and complexity sometimes so great that they must be granted a sort of autonomy' (Van Gennep 1960:146).

Death, therefore, is not the only rite of passage through which an individual must progress, but it is the final one: the tripartite scheme of separation-transition-incorporation acting as a device through which the individual is assimilated into a new status, in this case, an ancestor. It is important to note that although transition was acknowledged by Van Gennep as critical, he, as a precursor to what we would now regard as functionalist anthropology, was primarily focussed on examining society's *need* to transition and the way in which ceremonial practices *facilitated* this change of state, rather than this period of transformation in its own right. He emphasised instead the social consequences of this equidistant, transitional phase, seen specifically in his analysis of the mourning process, characterising those involved in it as essentially 'liminal' to society, conceptually situated between the world of the living and the dead, just like those for whom they grieved (Van Gennep 1960:147). Despite criticism relating to the ambiguity of this theoretical framework, Van Gennep's argument for the universality of his model has been vindicated to some extent in its widespread application by scholars from a variety of disciplines, each adapting the fundamental tripartite schema to reflect their own academic interests. Indeed, it was adapted and expanded by fellow anthropologists, most famously by Victor Turner, who focussed primarily on the concept of the *limen*, the sense of the 'threshold', and the term 'liminality'.

It is important to begin our discussion of Victor Turner with an acknowledgement of the invaluable input his wife Edith Turner had on both the formulation of his theories and the anthropological fieldwork on which they were based. Although she is only officially cited as a co-author on one of his later works – 1978's *Image and Pilgrimage and Christian Culture* – Engelke (2004:8-21) highlights the crucial hand Edith had to play in the development of Victor's most influential theories, with Victor writing to Max Glucksman in 1951 that 'Edie' 'did the bulk of the work' in regard to the collection of particular datasets during fieldwork amongst the Ndembu. Therefore, while I must refer to Victor specifically due to the publication of the relevant theories in his name alone, this is not to discount the considerable contribution made by Edith Turner to their development, one which cannot – and should not – be relegated to a footnote. This is an important acknowledgement, as Edith herself (1985:7-8) describes a brief stay in Hastings in 1963 as a time during which Victor began 'the first of his explorations into liminality',³³ an interest which was inspired by their *shared* reading and discussion of Van Gennep's *Rites of Passage*.

It was through the application of Van Gennep's threefold classification retrospectively to his own anthropological work that Turner developed the concept far beyond that attempted by Van Gennep, adapting it to embrace all types of transition and ritual, rather than the fundamentally tribal and religious context of his predecessor. Concentrating on this transitional state of being 'betwixt and between', Turner identified the period of 'liminality' as an 'interstructural situation', based on his model of society as a structure of positions (Turner 1987:1,9). From this structuralist perspective, Turner went on to contrast social structure (e.g. status, power, top-down authority) with 'anti-structure', defined by him as bottom-up creative responses and pressures to change (Turner 1995:102).

Liminality is thus defined as one of the most visible expressions of anti-structure in society, a state of un-being which, despite embodying the very antithesis of social structure, simultaneously encapsulates the unlimited possibilities from which structure emerges:

³³ Waiting for visas after Victor's appointment to Cornell University, Edith (1985:7) describes their time in Hastings (where Victor was to begin the work for his 1967 article 'Betwixt and Between: the Liminal Period in Rites of Passage') as a period of uncertainty and flux, stating 'the liminal phase in rites of passage struck an echo in our own experience'.

Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in the same sense the source of them all

(Turner 1987:7)

However, Turner asserts that a discussion of liminality is not an examination of structural contradictions, but of the inherently unstructured, which is simultaneously de-structured and pre-structured. It is in this manner that the liminal period is defined as an inter-structural phase in social dynamics, which is characterised by its dissolution of, lack of and movement towards a defined structural status. Thus, as individuals or groups inevitably experience a period of liminality during a rite of passage, they too are regarded as 'liminal', as they occupy a conceptual realm which has few or none of the attributes of the past or subsequent state. While Turner elaborated on this socially problematic state of 'liminal personae' largely in reference to initiatory rites, he argues that it can be applied to 'transition-beings' in general (Turner 1987:7), 'liminal' individuals or groups that are often regarded as polluting or dangerous to society as a whole:

Transitional beings are particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing or another, or may be both, or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere

(Turner 1987:7)

Turner thus asserts that the socially liminal, as unclear and contradictory entities from the perspective of social definition, tend to be identified as ritually unclean and thus conceivably harmful to wider society. The potential for conceptual uncleanness cultivated by association with, or experience of, the liminal is therefore interpreted as an expression of 'anti-structure': social disorder that necessitates in turn *positive* anti-structural activities (or in other words, constructive communal reconceptualisation) to negate it, or, as Turner styles it, *communitas*. This alternate state – the anti-structural liminal period – imagines society as an unstructured, relatively undifferentiated community of individuals, indicative of the temporary dissolution of social hierarchy in place of a recognition of an essential and generic human bond, without which the usual *status quo* would cease to exist (Turner 1995:137). The maximisation of *communitas* thus provokes a maximisation of structure and subsequently, the return to organised, hierarchical order after the conclusion of the liminal period. It is emphasised, however, that this type of communal activity necessitated by a social disruption (for example, the death of an individual) need not be formally coordinated

but rather, in pre-industrial societies where spontaneous *communitas* does occur, is often associated with mystical power, deities or the ancestors (Turner 1995:137).

While the concept of liminality in itself has been subject to substantial criticism, the popularity of Turner's formulation of a socially threatening, antistructural transitional phase is attested by its longevity and widespread application as an interpretative model to a diverse range of contexts and chronologies. Yet, the ease with which it appears to be exported has stimulated debate as to its development, with Metcalf and Huntington (1991:33) arguing that its expansion as a concept means that it fundamentally differs from its origins as part of Van Gennep's model. They argue that its extension by Turner introduced to the concept a level of staticity and status as a 'fixed complementary category', as opposed to Van Gennep's reluctance to discern between the notion of liminality and more general ideas of change, process and passage (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:33).

Yet the popularity, longevity and near ubiquity of 'liminality' in anthropology and cognate disciplines has provoked debate as to its applicability and subsequently, the validity of associated interpretations. Indeed, Handelman (1990:65) – in his discussion of transformative 'events-that-model' – highlights the indiscriminate manner in which the 'populist concept' of liminality has been applied across disciplines, stating that 'too often it became simply a metaphor for the unclarity of situations that struck us as 'betwixt and between' in some manner'. He continues to point out that Turner himself was wary of the 'unbridled diffusion of the liminal condition' (Handelman 1990:66), as seen in his statement that 'the potentially subversive character of liminality in tribal initiations...never did have any hope of realisation outside a ritual sphere hedged in by strong taboos' (Turner 1977:281), subsequently advocating for the concept's restriction to rites of passage rituals primarily (Turner 1978:286; Turner and Turner 1978:249). Similarly, in her commentary on Vidal-Naquet's (1986) structuralist interpretation of the Athenian *ephebeia*, Polinskaya (2003:90ff.) has argued that the model of the 'liminal' has become indiscernible from its metaphorical use in popular thought. Echoing Turner's own conceptual conservatism (Turner 1977:281 and above), her assertion that any 'secondary' application of the model outside of initiatory contexts is fundamentally metaphorical – i.e. *like* the liminal, but not conceptually analogous to it – is compelling, in that it encourages the active recognition of this metaphor in archaeological interpretation and 'the problematic consequences of the metaphor gone unnoticed' (Polinskaya 2003:91).

Furthermore, I would argue that the terminology that has become prevalent with Turner's expansion of the concept – i.e. the 'liminal' – has become synonymous in archaeological discourse with ideas relating to more permanent marginality or peripherality, rather than the true state of transitory 'unbeing' proposed in the anthropological literature. I would emphasise that just because something – or *someone* – is difficult to categorise or interpret, whether it be terms of social, spatial, physical or conceptual exceptionality, does not a 'liminal' entity (or rather, *non*-entity) make. We must bear in mind the oldest joke in archaeology – 'if we don't know *what* it is, it must be *ritual*', and avoid at all costs its perpetuation with the addition of a Turner-like twist, i.e. if we don't know *why* it is, then it must be *liminal*. This acknowledgement is important in terms of the impact of the use of anthropological models in archaeology, as in a interpretative framework where anything anomalous is regarded as potentially 'liminal', the concept will have truly lost its kick.

Thus, while Turner's terminology 'appears to have caught the collective interdisciplinary imagination of scholars' (Weber 1995:526), it is important to not let our imaginations run away with us. As will become apparent during our discussion of the archaeological interpretations of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete, the designation 'liminal' is used extensively and often indiscriminately in the scholarly discussion of funerary practice. Spaces are liminal (Cadogan 2011:114; Warren 2018:5), places are liminal (Vavouranakis 2007:107; Legarra Herrero 2016:184), the dead are liminal (Murphy 1998:27), certain social statuses are liminal (Legarra Herrero 2016:186), bones are liminal (Brück 2001:154) processes are liminal (Boness and Goren 2017:516; Driessen 2018:17) and more recent discussion has even postulated a specifically Minoan conception of liminality (Warren 2018:5). Indeed, it is in this particular suggestion that we see exemplified the ubiquity and ambiguity of the 'liminal' in scholarly discourse, employed without definition or expansion, with its constant repetition introducing confusion instead of any conceptual engagement:

I think that the non-funerary role of paved and open areas beside tombs is still an open question; *ritual activity in a liminal zone* is surely established...in my own view *such liminal action* corresponds well with *a Minoan conception of liminality* in their ordering of the cosmos.

(Warren 2018:5, my emphasis)

It is therefore imperative to acknowledge that the 'liminal', however attractive an adjective, is not interpretatively useful to us as a by-word or a hollow euphemism, rather its use must be accompanied by a full critical awareness of the theoretical framework within which it operates. Indeed, as the subsequent chapter addresses, if we are to accept and apply the models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner to the skeletal remains of Prepalatial Crete, we are required to do so fully and self-reflexively, as the mere referencing of anthropological theories does not ensure their validity or suitability to the very particular and partial archaeological record which we endeavour to interpret.

Just as with Hertz and Van Gennep then, Turner's model is problematised for its seeming universality, prompting scholars to similarly urge specificity in its application to particular contexts and to advocate for the critical assessment of its suitability and validity as an interpretative model. I would follow Metcalf and Huntington (1991:10) and Parker Pearson (1999b:22) in their assertion that while the longevity of the anthropological models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner certainly speaks to their sophistication and applicability, we must not allow the universality of death itself to impede our interpretations of its conception in antiquity or the modern day. Indeed, to uncritically accept and apply 'universal' models of interpretation is to deny both the diversity of the archaeological data and our own sociocultural standing. Thus, with the sustained import of anthropological theory in the interpretation of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete comes the responsibility and opportunity for reflection; to contemplate whether the continual application of these models stimulates or somewhat stifles scholarly discourse.

Chapter 3: Anthropological models and Prepalatial funerary practice

3.1 Introduction

The use of anthropological analogy – the borrowing and application of models from one discipline, one society, even one millennium unto another – will be the basis of our discussion in this chapter. Following our acknowledgement of the problematic and partial nature of the Prepalatial human remains from Crete due to their relatively turbulent deposition and excavation history in Chapter 2, this chapter will examine the various scholarly interpretations of such archaeological evidence and the anthropological influences such conclusions may explicitly or implicitly express.

Through careful consideration of both primary and secondary sources, this discussion will highlight the conceptual framework within which the archaeological interpretations of the human remains from the Prepalatial tombs and subsequently, early Minoan worldview, have been produced. This analysis will work to emphasise the widespread import of the anthropological models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner in regard to the evidence for secondary depositional activity. It will become increasingly apparent that, despite their employment of said theorists' work, archaeologists frequently express distinct distaste for prolonged interaction with skeletal matter, revealing underlying preconceptions of what the 'appropriate' treatment of human remains entails. The intellectual underpinning of prominent interpretations related to the Prepalatial human remains will thus be explored, namely the association of individual identity and agency with the presence (or lack thereof) of flesh, individualised identity, transient personhood, and the 'pollution' or 'fear' of the dead.

Therefore, while one might argue that my research does not present any new archaeological data in the traditional sense of the term, through analysing and, to a certain extent, problematising the substantial anthropological influences of previous interpretations related to the human remains of Prepalatial Crete, this chapter will generate significant valuable data and discussion of a different kind. Such a move towards metadata – essentially the interpretation of interpretations – does not mean the undermining or devaluing of valid archaeological discourse but the very opposite, in its

acknowledgement of another layer of interdisciplinary complexity, rich with investigative potential.

Such an approach is timely, as significant archaeological discoveries are being made at multiple Prepalatial funerary sites, in addition to recent advancements in osteological and archaeothanatological techniques, which problematise past interpretations of Minoan funerary processes (see Section 4.5) . In essence, the following discussion will engage with anthropologically-informed interpretations of human remains from the ancient Cretan past, acknowledge the sociocultural influences on attitudes of the present, and continually work to contemplate the value and effect of such a conscientious approach on archaeological discoveries of the future.

3.2 ‘Sweeping’ statements: scholarly discussions of Prepalatial human remains

It speaks to the popularity and longevity of the anthropological models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner that I am not the first to point out the problems which present themselves in their application to the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete. Indeed, as part of Papadatos’ (1999) discussion of the evidence at Tholos Gamma at Archanes-Phourni, he pauses to reflect upon the use of anthropological models, those of Van Gennep and Hertz specifically, and the interpretation of mortuary practices in relation to beliefs about life and death. However, while echoing the general criticism of such models as ambiguous ‘universals’, Papadatos does so in support of his own interpretation of the evidence for secondary treatment at this particular tomb site, in his argument that the engagement with skeletal material in the Minoan period arose out of purely practical concerns:

for the people of Prepalatial Crete the most important action seems to have been a proper primary burial inside the main interment facility of the cemetery. The practice of secondary treatment was dictated and determined mainly by the use of collective tombs and the consequent problem of restricted space. The ideas of Hertz and Van Gennep are only partly, or perhaps not relevant to Prepalatial mortuary practices, and cannot be applied without consideration.

(Papadatos 1999:50)

Strangely, then, we begin our discussion of the application of anthropological models to the funerary record of Prepalatial Crete with their partial rejection by Papadatos in his analysis of a single tomb site. However, such an examination and, indeed, problematisation of these models in this context is not a widespread endeavour in Prepalatial scholarship and it thus imperative to acknowledge the importance of Papadatos' brief critical engagement with the anthropological models so often encountered in discussions of Prepalatial funerary practices.

It also merits emphasis that the exceptionality of Papadatos' contextual critique of anthropological models is not representative in any way of a lack of awareness or aptitude of archaeologists working on Prepalatial material. Scholars often illustrate a depth of knowledge in their implementation of anthropological theory, as seen in Murphy's (1998:32-5) use of Van Gennep's 'rites of passage' in relation to her interpretation of the dead's journey toward ancestorhood and later in her discussion of social change in the role of religion (2003:235-41), although she stops short of critiquing the concept itself as an interpretative model. It is of note that both Papadatos (1999:48-52) and Murphy's (2003:235-41) early discussions of anthropological theory as applied to the Prepalatial, in addition to this very paper, are presented as part of a doctoral dissertation,¹ a format which allows for, and necessitates, the sustained acknowledgement and analysis of entrenched interpretative frameworks. Both projects, however, did not attempt to problematise the concepts as applied to the Prepalatial funerary record as a whole, but rather their brief consideration of anthropological theory was implemented so as to emphasise final conclusions in relation to their particular interpretative focus, in this instance a specific archaeological context (Papadatos 1999) and a social change in the role of religion (Murphy 2003).

The following section therefore differs from previous concise critiques in terms of both scale and scope, in that it will examine the instances in which anthropological theory has been used in discussions of the skeletal material of Prepalatial Crete as a whole, so as to analyse the extent of its interpretative effect in terms of Minoan conceptions of personhood, individualism, and pollution. Moving between the explicit and the implicit, such a consideration of applications will work to reveal that certain theoretical frameworks born from anthropological literature underlie much of scholarly discourse, whether

¹ Murphy's 1998 article was based on ideas adapted from her Master's thesis, submitted to University College Dublin in 1994.

specifically stated or as part of more subtle manifestations, such as the use of value-laden vocabulary.

This attention toward, and analysis of, the implicit might initially appear an unwieldy and uncertain activity, yet I argue it is one which we neglect at our peril. To practice scholarly self-reflexivity is to contemplate the interpretative effect of our sociocultural perspectives, methodologies and language; to acknowledge and address the inevitability that when we speak of ancient attitudes towards death and the dead, we inherently reflect our own. This is particularly apparent in Branigan's discussion of what he perceives as the 'indignity' shown towards the Prepalatial dead:

Undoubtedly they suffered badly at the hands of the tomb robbers, but that was only the final indignity...Before any plunderer ever entered the tomb, their bones had been trodden underfoot time and time again as burial after burial was inserted into the chamber

(Branigan 1993:31)

Commenting on the relative lack of human bones recovered from Ayia Kyriaki, in the above quote Branigan emphasises the effect different destructive processes may have had on the survival of the skeletal material, during which he stresses the continual use of the tomb over time. As outlined in Section 2.4, the tombs were indeed sites of continued engagement with human remains, as evidenced by the grouping, clearance, breakage and apparent absence of certain parts of the human skeleton. Yet, in contrast to his earlier (1987 and above) article in which he categorises secondary treatment of human remains, identifying them as conscious and controlled practices, Branigan here invokes an image of unconscious, unthinking action in relation to skeletal material, in the Minoans' imagined trampling of the bones underfoot. Osteological damage over time is thus framed as an inherently negative consequence of an assumed ancient disrespect for the material remains of their predecessors, as seen in the explicit association between Minoan intrusions into the tomb during the interment of subsequent individuals and those of modern looters, which the bones must similarly 'suffer'.²

Therefore, while the '*final* indignity' of illicit digging in modernity has already been shown to have had an interpretative effect on the conceptualisation of Minoan clearing

² See Metcalf and Huntington (1991:34) and Triantaphyllou (2012:21) for the similar use of the verb 'suffer' in relation to secondary depositional activity.

activities,³ we cannot ignore the latent implication in this particular statement: that the *first* indignity was that inflicted by the Prepalatial users of the tomb sites, through actions, or lack thereof, which have been subsequently interpreted as inappropriate by archaeologists and commentators of the modern day.

This view of Minoan engagement with skeletal remains as indicative somehow of disrespect or even desecration is disconcertingly widespread throughout the scholarly literature, most especially in regard to descriptions of the partial clearance of disarticulated bone during secondary depositional activities. It is with surprising difficulty that I have here and elsewhere avoided terms used by tomb excavators and commentators alike to describe this secondary interaction with the physical body of the deceased, with the manipulation and movement of the skeleton frequently referred to as that of ‘interference’ (Branigan 1987; Driessen 2010:107,109,113; Hamilakis 2018:323; Kiorpe 2018:4), ‘picking over’ (Evans 1924:x), with the bones being ‘thrown about’ (Xanthoudides 1924:7), indicative of an ‘apparent disregard’ for the dead (Soles 1992:249).

Implicitly, this modern perception of negligence may be seen to continue in the descriptive vocabulary in the scholarly literature, with the use of verbs and terminology that convey a distinct distaste – and, one could argue, *disapproval* – for the seemingly unsystematic movement of disarticulated bone from the primary burial chamber to an alternate location (e.g. antechambers and/or external areas) or its internal margins. It is here we encounter ‘sweeping statements’ in the most literal sense, with scholars using the verb to describe the action which they envision is responsible for the chaotic collectivity of disorganised, disarticulated bone with which they are often faced. It is a trend which has its origins in the earliest scholarly publications, with Evans (1924:vi, my emphasis) stating that the ‘bones were liable at certain intervals of time *to be swept* on one side’ and Xanthoudides (1924:34, my emphasis) acknowledging his disappointment in being unable to discern the method or position of the burials at Tomb E at Koumasa in his observation that ‘it looks as if the accumulated burials of centuries *had been swept away* and the tomb tidied up for new interments’.

The use of the phrase continues in similarly prominent publications, with Branigan (1970b:90, my emphasis) perpetuating Xanthoudides’ description of Tomb E at Koumasa in his reference to ‘existing remains, which here had been *swept* to one side’, in addition to a

³ See Section 2.4 for a discussion of modern and Minoan ‘looting’.

later statement in which he argues that ‘in some tombs, it may have been thought sufficient *simply to sweep* earlier remains to the side of the chamber’, referencing the evidence from Kamilari and Koumasa E in its support (1970b:107, my emphasis). While Branigan’s contemplation of Minoan motivations/thought processes as to this specific type of clearing activity is of interest, one cannot ignore the tacit connotation of this particular phrasing. To state someone ‘may have thought [an action] sufficient’ is to inevitably imply that it was *not*; to make evaluations of sufficiency, however unintentional, is to apply personal and sociocultural values to the activity of another. In this instance, where the comment is made in reference to the necessity to ‘clear floor space in the centre on which new burials could be laid’ (Branigan 1970b:107), an argument could be made that Branigan is here referring to the movement of skeletal material as sufficient in terms of practically freeing up space for subsequent interments. Yet, in the context of the use of ‘sweeping statements’ both here and elsewhere (1970b:14ff), in addition to later references to a Minoan ‘lack of concern for the physical remains of the dead...[a] lack of respect for the dead, their personal belongings, and the sanctity of the tomb’ (1970b:109), it is important to consider that this concept of ‘sufficiency’ of action may be born from underlying modern preconceptions as to the appropriate treatment of human remains, in which ‘sweeping’ skeletal material possesses distinctly negative connotations.

Such vocabulary indicating an ancient lack of consideration or respect is not restricted to more seminal publications, but find further expression in secondary scholarly literature, with Murphy (2003:169, my emphasis) stating that the ‘remains of the dead were *brushed aside*’, in addition to detailing the ‘subsequent *sweeping aside* of the bodies’ (1998:35, my emphasis). Legarra Herrero (2012:348, my emphasis) similarly argues that the ‘skeletons were not the subject of any particular reverence and were *swept away*’, echoing Papadatos (1999:47, my emphasis) in his assertion that ‘after decomposition the bones and most of the offerings were *swept carelessly aside*’. Miller Bonney (2009:32, my emphasis) also refers to the repeated entries into the tombs as involving the ‘occasional *sweeping away* of bones and artifacts’, as does Soles (1992:249, my emphasis) in his suggestion that during such activity ‘the bones themselves might be *swept aside*’.⁴ It is a value-laden verb which continues to characterise Minoan secondary depositional activity, with even the

⁴ See also Vavouranakis’ (2017:387, my emphasis) similar statement that at the later Middle Minoan tombs (Kavousi-Evraika in particular), ‘bones were found heaped as if they had *been casually pushed aside*’.

most recent osteoarchaeological research referring to ‘episodes of interference’ in which skeletal remains were ‘swept aside’ (Kiorpe 2018:4).

Although it might seem trivial to object so vehemently to the use of ‘sweeping statements’, I do so in acknowledgement of their effect in the figurative sense of the phrase: their employment invokes a generalisation, in that ‘to sweep’ implies a common carelessness of sorts, a shared disregard for disarticulated remains which conflicts with modern concerns as to the continued integrity and inviolability of the human physical form. Once again, the observations of Wells (1990:125-135) find real validity when applied to interpretations of the Prepalatial tombs, in her problematisation of similar descriptive terminology used in discussions of Mycenaean secondary depositional activity:

The common verb used to describe the removal of the remains to the pits is to ‘sweep’. The word implies an act of irreverence which is questioned here.

(Wells 1990:135)

In advocating for an avoidance of ‘simplistic evaluations of human behaviour in the past’, Wells (1990:125) emphasises and rejects the negative connotation that accompanies invocations of ‘sweeping’, an approach which I argue should be extended to our consideration of the funerary archaeology of early Bronze Age Crete. This is not to discount the reality of clearing activities at the Prepalatial sites, for which there is substantial archaeological evidence, but to acknowledge that the widespread use of value-laden terminology exerts an interpretative influence on our perception of Minoan funerary practices and associated beliefs. Indeed, the popularity and longevity of such ‘sweeping statements’ may perhaps be representative of a wider issue in funerary archaeology, in its especial dependence on accurate description to demonstrate intention, as highlighted by Knüsel (2014:30), in his argument that ‘lacking standard terminology, funerary archaeological description is not only inconsistent but also tends to employ a variety of colloquial terms idiosyncratically’.

Colloquialisms, however, are a real and impactful aspect of archaeological discourse and should not be ignored or undervalued.⁵ Indeed, I myself have used the term ‘swept’

⁵ The popularity of colloquial descriptions of artefact types is especially apparent in the archaeology of the prehistoric Aegean, where designations such as ‘sheep-bells’, ‘frying-pans’ and even ‘goddesses’ may be seen to have had influence on artefacts’ recognition both in the academic sphere and in the wider public imagination.

when casually describing or referring to the positioning or fragmentary state of disarticulated skeletal material during its excavation in the field. Yet, what we must acknowledge is that what this ‘sweeping’ idiom inherently invokes is modern interpretative evaluations of *care*, or, more fittingly, *carelessness*, and thus requires real consideration and justification if employed in the archaeological literature.

This concept of care in relation to skeletal material – or rather, a lack thereof – is similarly pervasive in the scholarly literature and bound up in modern visualisations of how the disarticulated skeletal material was moved from its place of primary deposition to other areas either within or outside the tomb structures. As outlined above, Papadatos (1999:47 and above) makes an explicit association between the clearing of disarticulated bone and a lack of Minoan concern in his use of the phrase ‘swept carelessly’, ‘swept carelessly away’ (1999:88) and his description of them having been ‘disposed carelessly in special areas’ (1999:42). This perception of carelessness might be interpreted as arising out of the seeming juxtaposition between the archaeological evidence for primary burial and the subsequent secondary ‘grouping’ of skulls and long bones, versus the irregular clearance of other bone types.

Although I will discuss skull ‘nests’ and the deliberate arrangement of certain long bones in Chapter 5 in relation to anthropologically-influenced concepts of ancestorhood, in terms of archaeological practice in Crete there is a marked difference between the excavation of deposits of disarticulated skeletal material and the almost curated collections of skulls and long bones. The former can often be a source of unspoken frustration, in that their unsystematic clearance has contributed to their extremely fragmentary and incomplete condition, leading to time-intensive difficulties in both their documentation and excavation in the field. As emphasised by Knüsel and Robb (2016:670), ‘anyone who has ever had to plan and record a three-dimensional jumble of commingled bone will agree that such depositions push the limits of field recording’.⁶ These deposits exist in contrast to the ‘grouped’ skeletal material, which is often more aesthetically pleasing in its arrangement against or in the corners of walls on-site. One cannot help feeling a special thrill in the excavation of an ‘intentional’ (i.e. grouped) secondary skeletal deposit as opposed to the somewhat methodologically challenging bone heaps, but what we must

⁶ Knüsel and Robb (2016) suggest photogrammetry as an alternate means of visualising and analysing bone deposits.

recognise is that both features – however physically different – are similarly intentional and indicative of conscious funerary practices.

It is in relation to this disparity between ‘deposited’ (e.g. the body during primary burial and later skulls/long bones during secondary depositional activity) and ‘cleared’ skeletal material that we find a scholarly hierarchisation of inferred interactions with different manifestations of the physical human form, during which the concept of care is specifically invoked:

They took *care* to bury their dead in accordance with certain traditions and with fitting ritual, and yet they were *completely careless* in the disturbance, and even the destruction, of skeletal remains.

(Branigan 1970b:120, my emphasis)

Sometimes the principal bones, mainly skulls, are gathered up and placed at either side of the tomb or in special containers, *carefully stored away*.

(Soles 1992: 243, my emphasis)

In view of *the care* the Minoans took to preserve the skull

(Soles 1992:252, my emphasis)

The *care* taken in the laying out of the dead and the *apparent paradox of the subsequent sweeping aside* of the bodies, or removal for new burials, suggest that the Prepalatial communities believed in a gradation of respect

(Murphy 1998:35, my emphasis)

The corpse was *treated with great care* before the flesh vanished ... After decomposition the bones and most of the offerings were swept *carelessly* aside and only the skull seems *to be treated with some care*, sometimes accompanied by offerings inside one or very few cups

(Papadatos 1999:47, my emphasis)

three skulls from EM IIA burials were collected and *deposited carefully*

(Hamilakis 2018:322, my emphasis)

tholos A produced disarticulated remains only from the tholos area, suggesting continuous and intense removal of the skeletonised material. Tholos B on the other hand, provided different degrees of articulation of the human remains deposited in the Ossuary, indicating therefore *a more careful treatment* of the remnants of the deceased.

(Triantaphyllou 2018:146, my emphasis)

Ideas of ‘care’ and ‘carelessness’ are thus prevalent throughout Prepalatial archaeological discourse and afford us important insight into the conceptual framework within which the archaeological interpretations of the tombs and subsequently, early Minoan worldview, have been produced. As we have seen in the employment of ‘sweeping statements’, in addition to evaluations of ‘carelessness’, they frequently express distinct distaste for prolonged, unsystematic interaction with skeletal matter, revealing in their negative connotation the scholars’ underlying preconceptions as to what the ‘appropriate’ treatment of human remains entails. From the contrast between the description of deposits of ‘principal bones’ (i.e. selected long bones and skulls) and those which are designated as ‘swept’, it appears that the Minoan ‘care’ for skeletal remains is conceptualised as that which is associated with systematised skeletal deposits, which are arguably more aesthetically and methodologically agreeable to archaeologists.

Yet these judgements of ‘care’, or lack thereof, in relation to the various types of skeletal deposit may be seen to discount the reality of their creation. The very existence of the ‘swept’ skeletal material illustrates that the Minoans took *care* to move the disarticulated human remains, albeit unsystematically, to the internal walls, antechambers or outside the tomb structures. Similarly, they may be seen to have taken *care* to employ various material strategies (such as the introduction of larnakes, pits, etc.) to maximise tomb capacity so as to retain an amount of said ‘disorganised’ skeletal material. Indeed, even in statements which work to characterise the unsystematic movement of skeletal material as representative of a Minoan ‘carelessness’, we may interpret conscious, communal – and, one could argue, *careful* – decisions as to their deposition, as seen in Papadatos’ (1999:88) assertion that disarticulated bone was ‘disposed carelessly in special areas’. The juxtaposition between supposed negative action of ‘careless disposal’ versus the positive connotation of the ‘special’ locations in which it was carried out is significant here, as it associates concepts of disregard and neglect with the imagined handling of the

skeletal material specifically, as opposed to the seemingly distinguished places in which it was finally deposited.

That modern perceptions of the suitable handling of skeletal material is interpretatively influential in the analysis of archaeological material from the Prepalatial period may be understood as a consequence of current ideas of personhood and the physical human form, or more specifically, their maintenance after death. As discussed in Chapter 2, funerary practice in the modern era is characterised by a focus on the individual body, most especially its containment and inviolability post-mortem. Indeed, Fowler (2008:47) suggests that individuality ‘has been raised to the status of a dominant mode of personhood in the west’, despite advances in cultural theory, as highlighted by Tarlow (2002:23), that have de-centred the doctrine born from the Enlightenment, in which an individual is perceived of as inhabiting a distinct, single and bounded physical body. Recent discussions in archaeological discourse which advance understandings of personhood as partible and dividual in relation to the fragmentation and/or collectivisation of human remains, have questioned the import of the very preconception that the ancient embodied person was bounded by an exterior surface or skin (Chapman 2000; Fowler 2008; Joyce 2005; Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2015; Moutafi and Voutsaki 2016). Similarly, certain archaeological contexts, such as Neolithic Britain, have been postulated as best interpreted from a perspective separate from the dominant contemporary perception of individuality altogether (Thomas 2002).⁷

Thus, our discussion of anthropologically-informed perceptions of personhood in the Prepalatial must incorporate an investigation into conceptions of individualism in the archaeological literature, most especially in regard to how scholars have posited a correlation between its conceptual dissolution and changes to the physical body during the processes of secondary depositional activity in the Cretan Bronze Age.

3.3 Invocations of individualism: the skeletal remains

We have already come across archaeological evaluations of individualised ancient identity in our discussion of Minoan removal of material from the tomb sites, in that the artefacts which scholars postulated as ‘looted’ were simultaneously characterised as the dead’s

⁷ See Hamilakis (2018:316-8) for a brief overview of recent debates relating to individualism and personhood in archaeology.

‘personal belongings’ (Branigan 1970b:109ff), ‘valuables’ (Xanthoudides 1924:7) or ‘lifetime objects’ (Alexiou and Warren 2004:191). Indeed, certain artefact types found in the Prepalatial funerary record of Crete have become synonymous with concepts of established, individualised identity, predominantly that of elite males. From early interpretations onwards, such prestige items have been included in near-personalised narratives of ancient life, seen for example in Xanthoudides’ (1924:27) discussion of the substantial number of daggers excavated from Koumasa, Aghia Triada and Platanos, in his statement that ‘it was the fashion among the Early Minoans for every man to wear his dagger in the tomb as well as, of course, in his daily life’. This argument for the social biography of funerary goods as closely following that of their sole proprietors is similarly echoed by Branigan (1970b:86), in his assertion that the ‘personal nature of many...[of grave goods in tholoi]...suggests that they were buried there with their owners’.⁸

Similar interpretations are put forward in relation to the discovery of seals within the tomb structures, items which have been argued to represent the administrative (and thus social, political, etc.) authority of certain individuals within the community (Blasingham 1983), artefacts which Branigan (1970b:68) describes as ‘the equivalent of a man’s signature’. These interpretations of social status are supported in instances whereby one or multiple seals are excavated in close association with undisturbed primary deposits (Krzyszkowska 2012:145). Grave goods which originate from outside of Crete, such as Egyptian and Syrian scarabs, Egyptian stone vases, and daggers of Syrian origin have been subsequently suggested as ‘treasured personal possessions’ (Branigan 1970b:73), in that their exoticism was both a source of social and sentimental value for the individuals with which they were initially deposited. Thus, while our current focus here are discussions of individualism in relation to skeletal remains specifically, it is of significance that the deposition of grave goods within the built tomb structures is interpreted as representative of providing for, or placating, the dead on an individualised, ‘personal’ level. That is to say that the artefacts that have survived the substantial disturbance at the tomb sites are framed in reference to a modern perception of individualised ancient personhood and possession.

The most common manner in which discussions of ancient individualised personhood are invoked is in discussions of the osteological record at the Prepalatial sites.

⁸ See Gosden and Marshall (1999) for their interpretation of a ‘cultural biography’ of objects, in which artefacts are conceptualised as possessing their own multi-stage ‘lifetimes’.

While the majority of skeletal material has been disturbed due to ancient and modern activity within the tomb structures, the discovery of articulated, primary burials – such as the fourteen adults and children in Burial Building 19 at Archanes Phourni (Maggidis 1998:91) – allow us as archaeologists to more readily determine the skeletal remains of any one ‘individual’ and determine more securely the spatial (and potentially, as above, the ‘personal’) relationship between the interred remains and any associated grave goods.

Despite their location within a characteristically communal environment, these primary burials essentially represent the maintenance of bodily integrity (in terms of skeletal articulation) after death and subsequently, our ability to promptly identify ‘individualised’ human remains. In fact, the archaeological recognition of skeletonised ‘individuals’ is extended by scholars to interpretations of the Minoan experiences of these tombs. It is suggested that the variety of burial positions (i.e. contracted or extended) or the manner of deposition of the body might have ‘enabled the identification of individual skeletons’ post-decomposition’ (Murphy 2011b:38). In addition, the suggestion that both articulated and disarticulated remains were subject to ‘direct visual inspection and manipulation’ with every entry into the tomb, is argued by Vavouranakis (2007:135, my emphasis) as promoting the ‘fusion of the dead *individuals* into a pastscape of collective memory and history’.

However, although both quotes essentially describe similar events – that of continued Minoan engagement, both visually, physically and mnemonically, with the skeletal remains of their dead – their invocation of the ancient ‘individual’ is markedly different. For Murphy, then, just as in many archaeological reports, the term ‘individual’ is used to denote a single, identifiable set of skeletal human remains, whereas in Vavouranakis’ use of the term, he invokes the ‘individual’ as a discrete social persona, one which exists in contrast to an overarching collective into which it must be incorporated. This distinction is important in regard to anthropologically-informed models of transient personhood in the Prepalatial, as the ‘individual’ is consistently posited as the entity which undergoes intra-state transition through the process of bodily decomposition.

Yet entering into discussions about the ancient ‘individual’ is inherently difficult, as it forces us to consider our culturally-constructed definition of the concept and subsequently, our perception of our very own ‘selves’. Tarlow (2002:26) has argued that archaeologists have ‘used the terms “person”, “individual”, “subject” and “self” interchangeably in their colloquial sense as synonyms for the human being’, a tendency

which, casual conversation aside, invokes assumptions as to what a human ‘individual’ is, does and can become. In the technical, descriptive use of the term, it is perhaps bound up with the manner in which we conceive of and pay reverence to inert human matter. One way in which we do so in modernity is rarely referring to it as such; skeletal matter is instead the ‘dead’, ‘individuals’, ‘bodies’, and later ‘ancestors’, a collective or singular whole even when our archaeological evidence for their very existence is characterised by its partibility, partiality and fragmentation.

That our modern ideological understanding – or, rather, *championing* – of individualism is influential in scholarly discourse is evident in discussions of the use of funerary receptacles at the Prepalatial tombs of Crete. While the Prepalatial practice of interring children’s remains within ceramic containers is becoming more apparent with improved excavation techniques and the ongoing excavations at Sissi (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:288-9; see Section 4.5),⁹ the use of terracotta chest-like receptacles known as *larnakes* appears to have been an introduction later in the period. Archaeologists have disagreed as to the impetus and ideological significance of this development in funerary practice, but what is interesting in relation to our current focus is that debate predominantly centres around the question of whether they represent the advent of what has been termed the ‘phenomenon of burial individualism’ (Maggidis 1998:98; *contra* Hamilakis 2013:149, 2018:328; Papadatos 1999:63; Legarra Herrero 2016). Citing the evidence from Tomb V at Patema, Palaikastro, Vavouranakis (2007:135) uses the introduction of *larnakes* and *pithoi* as funerary receptacles in the late Prepalatial – in addition to three articulated skeletons excavated there – in support of his argument that secondary depositional activity (in this case, bone re-arrangement) had become more collectivised in character in this era and thus heralded a change in attitude towards the dead. Highlighting funerary receptacles’ capacity to ‘box’ bodies instead of the skeletal remains occupying space on the tomb floor, for Vavouranakis (2007:136, my emphasis), the *larnakes* and *pithoi* rendered old burials ‘invisible’. He also suggests that the presence of multiple articulated skeletons suggested that skeletal disarticulation and subsequent dispersal may have occurred on a collective level, thereby signalling a form of secondary depositional activity which had ‘less direct involvement with the dead because it is not

⁹ Flouda (2012:115-6) also suggests that burial containers with lids were used for the deposition of children’s remains at Apesokari A, although their contents and findspot are unknown due to the turbulent excavation history of the cemetery.

directly linked to *individual* funerary rites any more' (Vavouranakis 2007:136, my emphasis).

While projects which attempt to virtually reconstruct tomb space and environment highlight the very 'visible' (and arguably more conspicuous) nature of larnakes within tomb structures (Papadopoulos 2010), Vavouranakis' point is salient when it comes to assessing scholarly perceptions of ancient engagements with the 'individual' during funerary practice. In this view, the late Prepalatial heralded a change in attitude and access to(wards) the dead, in that engagement with skeletal matter moved from a distinct focus on the individual to a process during which multiple skeletons were involved and physically interacted with. Here, then, we may identify an interpretative tension between the *collective* and the *individual* (*contra* Hamilakis 2018:323), in that the supposed interaction with multiple articulated skeletons at any one time is perceived in scholarly interpretation as a lessening of the ancient recognition and importance of individualism and its expression in multi-stage funerary activities.

In contrast, Maggidis (1998:99) invokes the use of larnakes not as mechanisms through which access to older burials was restricted or made 'invisible', but in direct association with his argument for an increasing concern for individualistic burial, albeit one which possessed a distinct hierarchy:

the use of burial containers inside collective tombs should be differentiated from cemeteries of pithoi and larnakes...Individual container burials associated with collective tombs indicate individualism of high social status and veneration in the context of communal, clan, or family bonds. In contrast individual burials independent of any architectural setting where the burial container replaces the tomb, betray poverty, lineage isolation and low social status.

(Maggidis 1998:99)

In this case, in contrast to individualised burials in architecturally-undefined cemeteries, burial in an individual funerary receptacle within a communal tomb is postulated as a mark of veneration afforded the high-status dead. To be both included within a communal, monumental structure and simultaneously demarcated as retaining some element of individualised identity is thus framed by certain scholars as the choice method of

interment,¹⁰ encapsulated by Branigan's (1993:31) description of single larnax burial in a communal tomb context as 'the best of both worlds'.

This interpretation of hierarchy on the basis of the maintenance of bodily integrity (i.e. in terms of its physical separation from nearby collectivised skeletal remains) has been influenced by modern sensibilities as to the importance and irreducibility of the individual. Even in a situation whereby Prepalatial Cretans were seemingly simultaneously carrying out funerary activities that resulted in both collectivised and arguably more 'individualistic' skeletal deposits within the tombs, current attitudes related to the prominence and continued significance of individualised personhood post-mortem have produced a modern hierarchisation of prehistoric burial practices, with the one most resembling our own unsurprisingly characterised as the 'best'. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that the conceptual association of funerary receptacles such as larnakes with individualistic personhood and its maintenance after death is a problematic argument to begin with, as many of examples that have been excavated from Prepalatial contexts indicate that they contained the skeletal remains of multiple burials.

This very point is emphasised by Hamilakis (2013:143-54) in his discussion of the 'individual' in Cretan Bronze Age contexts, both in regard to scholarly invocations of such a concept and the influence of recent theoretical advancements in its displacement as an exclusive model of personhood. Rather than perceiving funerary receptacles as 'distinctive, highly idiosyncratic, and thus individualised and individualising objects', he asserts that they should instead be considered a practical strategy for the organisation of mortuary space, to be interpreted alongside features of similar function such as the outer rooms and antechambers at Apesokari A and B, Platanos B and Kamilari C (Hamilakis 2013:149). Later citing the archaeological evidence for the existence of compartmentalisation strategies before the beginning of the Prepalatial – such as dividing walls of EM I-II date at the tholos tomb at Kaminospelios and subdividing walls and burial containers at EM II Sissi – Hamilakis (2018:323) continues his rejection of the 'advent of individualism' at this time, in his assertion that:

¹⁰ While problematising the concept of the 'individual' in prehistoric contexts, Hamilakis (2018:328) argues that the 'temporary isolation of a dead body within a communal burial space' is representative of what he terms '*collective individuation*'.

it is clear that neither in the early Prepalatial, nor in the late Prepalatial and the first palatial phase are we justified in talking about the material expression of the emergence of individuality, nor do we see, at least in the mortuary record, an interplay between the communal and the individual.

(Hamilakis 2018:323)

It is worth pausing on Hamilakis' comments for a moment, as in his subsequent argument for an acknowledgement of 'the primacy of sensorial engagements and flows' that contribute to the 'continuous constitution and re-constitution of the various forms of personhood and selfhood' (Hamilakis 2018:317), he explicitly rejects the implications of stacidity and boundedness that accompany conceptions of bodily boundaries. He instead emphasises the fluid processes that move *through* bodies, rather than their existence as inherently bounded entities (Hamilakis 2013:147-8; 2018:317-8).

This is an important point to consider in reference to the anthropological models of transition applied to the Prepalatial funerary record, as these models operate on a binary opposition, that of individualised personhood versus collective ancestorhood. As outlined in Section 2.5, while they are fundamentally models of ontological transformation, the start and end points of such a transition are conceptualised as absolutes, as seen in Hertz's model of the simultaneous dissolution of material and social personhood, in which the loss of individualism is associated with the disintegration of bodily boundedness through the process of decomposition. Such a model of transition is thus paradoxically based on a movement between states of stasis and boundedness, as transience is posited as occurring exclusively in the progression between them. Hertz's (2004[1960]) model, in particular, is reliant on the destruction of an inherently binding flesh, rather than – as Hamilakis (2013:147) would have it – a return to it, in an acknowledgement of 'the sensoriality of humans, of other living beings, and of things'. Sensory archaeology, therefore, in which the *constant* transience of personhood is emphasised in its definition as a 'matter of sensorial and corporeal expression and performance' (Hamilakis 2013:147), undermines models of linear, tripartite transition in which one progresses from one state of staticity to another, such as those of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner.

However, I would contend that this is not the only consideration to be made in terms of the validity and consistency of applying such anthropological models to the archaeological record of early Bronze Age Crete. It is also important to acknowledge that

not only is the retrospective construction of prehistoric individualised personhood and its rightful maintenance in death flawed in its uncritical import of modern values and concepts of 'self', it is fundamentally contradictory in light of further theoretical arguments made in relation to the prehistoric tombs. That is to say that this concept of the maintenance of bodily demarcation as protecting and perpetuating ancient individualism post-mortem is in disagreement with the anthropologically-influenced models of *transient* personhood repeatedly applied to the osteological record of Prepalatial Crete.

3.4 Transient personhood in the Prepalatial period

Hamilakis (2013:148), in his discussion of 'sensorial necro-politics', reflects upon the treatment of the 'body' not only in Bronze Age Crete, but also in more general archaeological discourse, advocating in response a sensorial approach that sees personhood and selfhood 'not as permanent and unchanging types...but as transient, corporeally expressed, performative states'. Arguing for a discussion of the juxtaposition between sensorial remembering and forgetting rather than perpetuating the ongoing discourse about the individual and the collective, Hamilakis' consideration of 'transitory stages' thus sits outside the wider scholarly discourse relating to the funerary record of Prepalatial Crete, which has at its centre, either explicitly or implicitly, the anthropological models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner.¹¹

These models as applied to a funerary context are not characterised by a 'condition of corporeal and sensorial fluidity' as advocated by Hamilakis (2013:157; 2018:317), but are rather defined by a relatively rigid, tripartite structure, consisting of a period of transition between two polarised binaries: individualised personhood and collective ancestorhood. While Chapter 5 will focus in detail on anthropologically-informed arguments for ancestorhood in Prepalatial Crete, it is in discussions of transient personhood and Prepalatial interactions with human remains that we may identify the most sustained import of anthropological models in the interpretation of the funerary record. However, these applications of anthropological models frequently fail to acknowledge the wider theoretical frameworks from which they were selected, leading to

¹¹ However, as discussed in Section 5.3, 'remembering and forgetting' may also be identified as a Hertzian interpretation in the context of the achievement of collective ancestorhood.

a potential inconsistency in their use and a somewhat unsettling uniformity in their interpretative results.

Although it is arguably in the application of a more Hertzian model of simultaneous dissolution of material and social personhood through which archaeologists concerned with the Minoan 'care' for skeletal remains seek an explanation, Van Gennep's 'rites of transition' are the most explicitly applied to the Prepalatial funerary record. Indeed, Murphy (1998), in her discussion of the funerary practices associated with Mesara tholoi, directly cites Van Gennep in her use of his tripartite scheme of transition, drawing especially on the intermediary 'liminal' stage in her argument for a model of transient personhood in the Prepalatial:

I argue firstly, that the dead were initially buried as individuals with their own personal identity, secondly, that this identity became distanced from the physical body during the period of decomposition – the liminal period, and thirdly, that after the liminal period when the flesh has decomposed the deceased was then incorporated into the realm of the ancestors.

(Murphy 1998:27)

In this passage, personhood in the early Bronze Age is postulated as of an individual, corporeally-bounded nature, which enters into a state of transience at the onset of bodily dissolution post-mortem. For Murphy (1998:34), the 'liminal' stage of Van Gennep is a 'transitional period between the living, physical and secular world and the world of the dead, of the ancestors, of the sacred', a buffer between absolute binary oppositions, a statement which leaves little space for contemplations of embodied ancestorhood, the continued agency of the physical dead and ritual activities of the living. Although Hertz is not cited, Murphy's (1998:34) interpretation of the evidence for secondary depositional activities has a lot in common with his model, in that the decomposition of the body is posited as physically reflecting the conceptual dissolution of the deceased's individual identity, agency and links with the living.

Van Gennep's 'liminal' period is thus invoked as a model which works to explain what she terms a Minoan 'gradation of respect' towards the dead (Murphy 1998:35), a concept essentially built on the premise of transient *embodiment*, which is equated with individualised personhood:

When the physical body had decomposed it no longer had the same needs or commanded the same respect that it had whilst living or whilst in the liminal period and therefore it could be brushed aside to make room for new burials.

(Murphy 1998:35).

This argument, that the breakdown of the physical body through decomposition and skeletonisation to a dry and dividual state paralleled a simultaneous dissolution of the 'individual' in terms of social agency, is essentially Hertzian in nature (2004[1960]:210, see Section 2.5). This is because it makes a direct link between the maintenance (or lack thereof) of physical integrity and social status within the community. It is here implemented so as to explain the practices of moving or removing human remains post-decomposition, activities which, as discussed, are frequently framed in 'sweeping statements' as acts of disregard or disrespect.

Interestingly, within a later volume which explicitly aims to incorporate anthropological theory (Murphy 2011a:1-22), Murphy (2011b:40) similarly argues for bodily decomposition as the 'great leveller' in Prepalatial Crete in reference to the evidence from Lebena. Although Hertz is not directly referred to as a model on which she bases her interpretations, Murphy's position is certainly recognisably Hertzian in nature, in her argument for bodily decomposition's capacity to negate 'individual status in favor of a common identity among the dead or ancestors' (Murphy 2011b:40). While highlighting that social ranking and individuality was stressed at the time of initial interment – as interpreted from the variety of burial positions and accompanying grave goods – Murphy (2011b:38) suggests that such differentiation was de-emphasised in the long-term ideology of the community through the post-depositional treatment of the tombs' contents, namely the periodic cleaning of the tombs and continued interaction with the skeletonised remains. Hers is an argument for transient, individualised personhood then, achieved through the experience and eventual negation of Van Gennep's 'liminal' stage, characterised here as associated with a Hertzian-like model of social and bodily dissolution. This view of a dissolution of individualised identity is echoed elsewhere in a separate article by Legarra Herrero (2012:348), in support of his argument that group and co-residential communal identities were emphasised in the structures and funerary practices of the MM I cemeteries of Crete, stating that 'each individual underwent the same process of loss of identity by

being interred in the collective tombs...The individual was lost in the larger social unit represented by the tomb'.

It is certainly interesting in terms of the application of anthropological models in Prepalatial funerary archaeology that although the models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner are commented upon in the aforementioned volume's introduction (Murphy 2011a:4-5), anthropological theory is not explicitly invoked in either Murphy's (2011b:38-42) discussion of the treatment of the dead post-decomposition, or indeed later in Betancourt's (2011:96) related statement in relation to Tomb 4 at Pseira, in which we may observe a similar theoretical stance:

In this view, after the body has decayed and the flesh is no longer present, the individual characteristics of the deceased (like facial features) are no longer visible, and the departed member of the community has become a member of the collective group of ancestors. It is at this stage that the remains can be removed from the tomb because they are no longer closely associated with a particular individual.

(Betancourt 2011:96)

This view of a period of conceptual transition during which individual identity broke down through decomposition is equally invoked by Soles (1992:249), in his description of an essentially tripartite model of Minoan eschatological belief in reference to the tombs at Mochlos and Gournia, suggesting that:

life after death also involved two stages, first perhaps a period of limbo which lasted as long as the body remained intact and during which time the dead remained on earth and lived in the tomb, and later with the decomposition of the flesh and the removal of the skull a release from earthly existence and an afterlife in another world.

(Soles 1992:249)

While the vocabulary is different, as seen in the use of the Christian concept of 'limbo' rather than the anthropological 'liminal', Soles' argument is essentially another of transient personhood, which equates individual identity, agency and, indeed, residency in both the tomb and on Earth with embodiment in a bounded, corporeal form.

The models of Van Gennep, much like their use by Papadimitriou (2009:479) in the context of later mainland Mycenaean tombs, have even been explicitly applied to the

architectural arrangement of certain tombs, as seen in Vavouranakis' (2007:107) discussion of the layout of the funerary structures at Tomb III at Gournia, Linares and eastern Crete more generally:

Thus, the domestic facades arranged burial space in a tripartite scheme, which is reminiscent of Van Gennep's basic three-stage structure of passage-rites: preliminal/liminal/postliminal.

(Vavouranakis 2007:107)

The idea of a 'passage' through a defined architectural space is thus linked with a hypothesised 'gradual' progression of the interred dead to another state of being, an argument for conceptual transition that is interestingly based on spatial arrangement rather than the achievement of complete decomposition or disarticulation of human remains.

In contrast to other explicit uses of Van Gennep which see the loss of individual identity as associated specifically with the breakdown of the physical body, Vavouranakis (2007:107) interprets a model of a gradual, conceptual transition of the dead from the location of the human remains. He references the evidence for the 'pushing back' of older burials to the rear of tombs, the deposition of older burial goods in pits at Tombs I/II/III at Mochlos, and the layout and topography of the cemetery complex as a whole, through which its users would have progressed from new tombs to old.¹² While still arguing for a model of transient personhood from an explicitly Van Gennepian perspective of a gradual, progressive and transitory stage through which the dead must pass, Vavouranakis' application of the model does not incorporate more Hertzian ideas of decomposition as the process through which the 'liminal' stage is both characterised and eventually negated. However, his model still emphasises the physicality of, and the hypothesised Minoan interaction with, the skeletal remains, in his association of the decreased visibility and accessibility of older burials within the tomb over time with the gradual transition of former individuals into another, 'postliminal' state.

This association of architecture with the concept of liminality may be further identified in Cadogan's discussion of the tomb at Myrtos-Pyrgos in east-central Crete,

¹² See Soar (2015:289-91) for a discussion of the cultural performativity of such a procession through early Bronze Age cemetery space.

which ranged in use from the EM II to the LM I period. Musing on how to interpret the ‘long-lived’ tomb, Cadogan (2011:114, my emphasis) suggests that ‘its *liminal location* at the west corner of the living area positions it as a gateway to the next world’. Further to my discussion of the ubiquity of the ‘liminal’ in Section 2.5, I would argue that this connection between the seeming peripherality of the tomb complex and its interpreted ‘liminality’ is fundamentally paradoxical, in that it equates a specific state of *being* (i.e. the tomb’s location on the margins of the site) and an anthropologically-informed state of *non-being* (i.e. liminality). Thus, interpretation of the tomb complex as ‘liminal’ due to its location outside of the settlement may be seen to confuse the concept with more broader understandings of peripherality and marginality. Indeed, Cadogan’s use of the term ‘gateway’ reminds us that ‘liminal’ zones need not be peripheral or marginal in nature – the origins of the term itself indicates that they may encompass architectural features that are characterised by their spatial centrality such as doors and thresholds,¹³ as highlighted by Eriksen:

Crossing the threshold means abandoning one space and entering the next...a transition from one social role to another...The exceptional thing about a doorway is that it is simultaneously a place and a non-place. The door stands between spaces, but also connects them.

(Eriksen 2013:188-9)

While the potential impact of recent methodologies and excavations on the interpretation of secondary depositional activity is discussed in Section 4.5, it is important to acknowledge that transient personhood as an anthropological model applied to the material record of Prepalatial Crete has not solely been interpreted as achieved through the *natural* processes of bodily decomposition and decay. In their discussion of the human skeletal remains from House Tomb 5 from Petras, Triantaphyllou et al. (2017:296) have argued that the purposeful burning of human remains may have been carried out during the Prepalatial period in a conscious attempt to facilitate the ‘breakdown of personal histories and the prominence of communal identity’, stating:

¹³ The term ‘liminality’ originates from the Latin word ‘limen’, translated as ‘threshold’.

The persistence in seeking a communal frame of redefining the self may also have led to the use of fire as a breaking mechanism against individuality, since the latter was expressed in the still recognisable human remains.

(Triantaphyllou et al. 2017:296)

Once again, individualised personhood is expressed in terms of embodiment in a recognisable physical human form, the transition from which is conceptualised from an explicitly anthropological perspective, with the implicit invocation of a Van Gennepian influenced model of an 'extended liminal phase' characterised by a '*damnatio memoriae* of the individual for the sake of the community and/or the lineage' (Triantaphyllou et al. 2017:297). It is also a perspective which is particularly Hertzian in nature, in that it equates the breakdown of bodily form through fire with the dissolution of individualised identity. Indeed, while our discussion has focussed on Hertzian theories of decomposition, Hertz (2004[1960]:41; *contra* Rakita and Buikstra 2005:99-104) explicitly equates the process of cremation with other forms of secondary burial practices (e.g. decomposition or mummification), therefore positing the burnt calcined remains as equivalent to pure skeletal remains.¹⁴

Interestingly, in the presentation of recent preliminary results from other Prepalatial tomb sites like that of Tholos B at Koumasa,¹⁵ archaeologists have also posited fire, as well as decomposition and skeletal disarticulation, as a process through which conceptual transition was achieved. Lange et al. (2017) have suggested that the major burning event attested at Koumasa signalled 'the end of the individualism of the dead',¹⁶ in their argument for 'the symbolic use of fire as a mechanism against individuality', while Boness and Goren (2017:517, my emphasis) invoke Turner's concept of transition in their characterisation of fire in the context of these burning episodes as 'ambivalent and *liminal*, a symbol for birth and renewal'.

¹⁴ For a criticism of Hertz's equation of cremation and decomposition, see Rakita and Buikstra (2005:99-104), who argue that the 'final remains' of a body post-cremation fundamentally differ from those post-decomposition in the context of recognisable individualism, etc.

¹⁵ Situated in the south-central Mesara plain, the tholos cemetery at Koumasa was originally excavated by Xanthoudides in 1904 and 1906 (Xanthoudides:1924:1, 3-50). However, ongoing re-excavation at the site has revealed unexcavated strata, yielding some preliminary interpretations (Lange et al. 2017; Boness and Goren 2017).

¹⁶ These remarks were made as part of a presentation at a workshop entitled 'Ritualizing funerary practice in the prehistoric Aegean: acts of transforming and viewing the human body', held on the 6th April 2017 in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Although Hamilakis (2018:316-8) questions the relevance of this concept of the individual in pre-modern contexts, he equally suggests localised burning as an activity carried out so as ‘to destroy the remaining flesh of specific bodies...eliminating any remaining signs of individuality’. Indeed, while neither Van Gennep’s model of transient personhood nor Hertz’s interpretation of the simultaneous dissolution of material and social personhood in funerary customs are explicitly cited, Hamilakis’ (2018:318) subsequent statement – that practices such as the targeted burning of the flesh might ‘signify efforts to forget individuals as active social agents in order to remember them as members of the collective of the ancestors’ – may be seen to have much in common with both Van Gennep’s stages of *séparation* and *agrégation*, and also the Hertzian equation of individuality and social agency with the maintenance of bodily integrity. Similarly, Triantaphyllou (2017:286) has included the deliberate burning of human remains as a means of purposefully facilitating a Hertzian model of transition in her discussion of the burial processes of Prepalatial and early Protopalatial Crete, asserting:

Incomplete but identifiable body parts were transformed through fragmentation and burning into non-individual and anonymous bones which were moved around and circulated perhaps within the living community. Personal identities would gradually have broken down, thus underlining the ‘dividuality’ of the person

(Triantaphyllou 2017:286)

While Triantaphyllou’s use of the concept of ‘dividuality’ is of interest,¹⁷ it is important to acknowledge that whether through the natural process of decomposition or the human activities of skeletal disarticulation and/or burning, the models of Van Gennep and Hertz, in particular, are applied either explicitly or implicitly to argue for a perception of transient personhood in Prepalatial Crete. Yet, this personhood is specific in its interpretative conceptualisation. As is evident from the above examples of archaeological discussion, it is overwhelmingly individualised and most importantly, corporeally embodied. The transition from individual to ancestor, however problematic such distinctions, is framed through the application of anthropological theory as associated with

¹⁷ See Section 4.5 for a discussion of dividuality and recent archaeological evidence from the Prepalatial tombs.

the complete destruction of a familiar flesh. In essence, to be identifiable post-mortem is to be individual and to be anonymous, an ancestor.

If we accept this anthropologically-informed interpretation of the evidence for secondary depositional activity – i.e. that the Minoans conceived of a transitory stage through which the dead transgressed and lost their individualised identity and physical efficacy – then we must similarly acknowledge that such a model of transient personhood is fundamentally bound up with understandings of embodiment and agency. The dead's transition through the intermediary stages of Van Gennep or Hertz is presented in the archaeological literature as a transition during which the individual broke down not only biologically, but also in terms of their conceptual links to the physical world of the living.

However, although consistency in the application of the aforementioned anthropological models of transition would necessitate an acknowledgement of the *dissolution* of a distinctly *corporeally embodied* identity of the dead both during and post-decomposition, this is not the situation with which we are faced in the context of the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete. Indeed, while transient personhood is continually equated with transient corporeal embodiment, the archaeological interpretation of multiple aspects of the funerary record, including architectural features, grave goods and funerary receptacles, still conceptualises the decomposed dead as possessing the physical necessities and capabilities of the living.

It is in this disparity that I argue that we may observe an inconsistency in the application of anthropological theory to the funerary record of Prepalatial Crete. While the models of Van Gennep, Hertz and Turner are implemented so as to interpret certain secondary depositional activities and to support arguments for transient personhood in the Prepalatial, their inherent implications – that of a collective dead who were no longer bound by their previous individualised physical forms – is in contradiction to the manner in which other aspects of the same archaeological record are interpreted.

In contradiction to the aforementioned anthropologically-influenced arguments for transient personhood then, discussions of Minoan attitudes towards the deceased and decomposition are situated within a framework of a distinctly embodied, polluting dead: entities which are argued to have instilled feelings of fear, anxiety and dread in the contemporary communities with which they were associated. Through the application of Turner's concept of 'liminality' in particular, anthropological theory is interestingly invoked in such discussions of the 'dangerous' dead in the Prepalatial era. The dead are interpreted

as theoretically disembodied ‘non-beings’, yet paradoxically those which archaeologists view as having retained the physical necessities and capabilities of their former state, as seen in archaeological interpretations of the dead’s placation, purification, and containment.

3.5 The ‘dangerous’ dead: liminality and transient embodiment

Do we fear the dead? With the rise of dark tourism as both an entity for academic research and a popular pursuit,¹⁸ the question of whether the dead are a cause for concern for us in modernity is more frequently framed in terms of archaeological ethics or practical matters, such as the containment of potential pathogens, as opposed to a contemplation of their potential emotional effect on the living. Representations in gothic literature and popular culture, however, of the supernatural and the ‘undead’ in particular, remind us that the dead that defy accepted categories – those that occupy a state in which they are both dead and simultaneously possess physical capabilities, necessities or social motivations for action – exist as a source of anxiety and apprehension.

Statements as to a ‘universal’ fear of the dead, however, need to be treated with caution. Thus, although we might encounter arguments like that of Déderix, who, on the basis of viewshed analyses in south central Crete, states that ‘*universal fears* associated with death, the dead, the decomposition of the body and the related pollution require the deceased to be kept away from the living’ (2015:61, my emphasis), we should remain ever sceptical of such universalising models which posit humankind’s attitude towards the dead, bodily dissolution and associated ‘pollution’ as unchanging and uniform.

Indeed, even the consideration of simply one example illustrates that such a statement is not supported. As outlined in Chapter 2, attitudes towards the dead and the processes of decomposition are highly relational and socio-culturally situated. The anthropological study of Danforth (1974) in the rural Greek village of ‘Potamia’ illustrates that there is little ‘fear’ in the act of embracing, kissing and washing the skeleton of a loved one, despite remnants of decomposing flesh and hair still being visible and existing as tangible elements of physical and emotional interactions. One of the strengths of anthropology as a discipline, then, is to illustrate the diversity of human approaches

¹⁸ ‘Dark tourism’ is currently broadly defined as the visitation of places associated with death, suffering and/or destruction.

towards, and understandings of, what we would perceive of as 'death'. It is thus striking that anthropological models of transition have frequently been applied to the Prepalatial funerary record in support of interpretations which include both preconceptions as to an inherent 'fear' of the dead, and socio-culturally specific judgements as to sensory experience, colour symbolism, pollution, and purification (see Chapter 4).

A rejection of a 'universal' fear of the dead should similarly prompt us to problematise preconceptions of an 'ancient' fear of the dead, the generalising nature of which is perhaps encapsulated by comments made by Ariés (1981:29) during his discussion of the Appian Way, but in reference to the inherent attitudes of antiquity more broadly:

In spite of their familiarity with death, the ancients feared the proximity of the dead and kept them out of the way. They honoured their burial places, partly because they feared the return of the dead... Whether they were buried or cremated, the dead were impure; if they were too near, there was a danger of their contaminating the living.

(Ariés 1981:29)

Such grand statements as to the inherent fears, anxieties and conceptual contaminants of ancient people(s) need to be questioned in relation to the very particular archaeological record, and subsequently, funerary practices, we seek to interpret. It is the aim of this discussion to highlight that in the discourse surrounding the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete, we may observe these same interpretations in a hypothesised Minoan 'fear' of the dead, in that the dead are posited as an entity/entities that instilled feelings of anxiety and dread in the Prepalatial period, due to their perceived physical, polluting capacities and subsequent danger toward the living.

However, despite the aforementioned application of anthropological models of transient personhood, those that ascribe to a *loss* of physical integrity, capacity and agency during a 'liminal' phase characterised by the process of decomposition, arguments for the 'dangerous dead' in the context of Prepalatial Crete are situated within a framework of distinctly *embodied* efficacy. Although influenced and incorporated with Turner's characterisation of a precarious 'liminal' period, interpretations of the danger, pollution and placation of the dead are thus at odds with the application of models of transient personhood, which posit decomposition as the means by which the dead loosened ties with the physical world of the living.

'Liminality' as a model is frequently invoked to support arguments for a Minoan 'fear of the dead'. As discussed in Section 2.5, Turner (1987:7) expanded the 'liminal' period of Van Gennep to include all rites of transition and focussed on the polluting and socially dangerous nature of 'transitional beings' as they passed through the ambiguous, intra-structural stage. The concept of 'liminality' and 'liminal' entities are thus associated with conceptual uncleanness, necessitating the 'transitional beings' avoidance, containment or symbolic purification by wider society for fear of contamination. As evident from discussions of transient personhood in Prepalatial Crete, the transitional, 'liminal' dead are posited as those which are in the process of decomposition: it is only after the full dissolution of the familiar flesh (and associated social and physical agency) that the tomb users are envisioned as physically interacting with the dry, skeletonised material that remains.¹⁹

Questions of pollution, physicality and embodiment are raised in relation to scholarly discussion of grave goods. Although models of transient personhood as applied to the archaeological record emphasise a Hertzian concept of the dead's simultaneous loss of individual social agency and physical integrity, capability and necessity, the interpretations of the grave goods that accompanied burials in the Prepalatial period are continually associated with the deceased's continued personal identity, in addition to their potential physical and emotional requirements:

Care was exercised in the orientation of the body, and the dead man or woman was buried with all of his or her personal belongings which might be needed or missed in the next world.

(Branigan 1970b: 104)

Writing in reference to the evidence from the tholoi tombs of the Mesara, Branigan (1970b: 104-12) continues on to consider whether the archaeological evidence suggests a Minoan belief in an embodied or disembodied 'spirit' after death, subsequently suggesting that the deposition of 'personal belongings' with the body within the tomb structures may have been a practice of placation or a means by which precarious material links to the world of the living were severed:

¹⁹ See Section 4.5 for a discussion of recent archaeological evidence from Prepalatial tomb sites, which suggest a Minoan interaction with fleshed, decomposing bodies and/or body parts.

Their retention in the house of the living would be to deprive the deceased's spirit of a visible (and lasting) expression of personality, and it might also invite the return of the deceased's spirit to the house of the living in search of this lost part of its personality...Once the body had decomposed, and certainly once its skeleton had been disturbed...it may have been deemed safe to remove grave-goods.

(Branigan 1970b:110)

While situated within a contemplation the motivation for the 'looting' of the tombs in the early Bronze Age, Branigan's judgement of the 'safety' (and, ergo, previous 'danger') of removing grave goods is bound up in a conception of the dead as potentially threatening agents with the capacity for movement, action and presumably, the infliction of harm upon the living. This idea of a physically adept, decomposing dead is echoed in his later conclusion, based on his interpretation of what he terms 'restrictive measures' (1970b:112). He argues that the dead in the Prepalatial were dangerous in a distinctly physical capacity, albeit perhaps only for a temporary period which concluded with the body's complete disarticulation, as seen in his statement that 'the dead were regarded with a certain amount of fear and hostility as long as they possessed an articulated body' (1970b:111).

While such a view of ancient Minoan belief clearly has much in common with both the Hertzian model of decomposition as a marker of transition and Turner's emphasis on the inherent danger and polluting capacity of 'transitional beings', the 'danger' of the dead is specifically associated with a period of bodily dissolution during which they retained certain requirements. This is a interpretation shared by Murphy (1998:34, my emphasis), in her explicit application of Van Gennep's 'liminal' period to the deposition and subsequent removal of grave goods:

The placing of goods with the bodies in the initial interments, their later removal ... strongly suggests that there was a belief in a *transient* afterlife where the *physical body remained dependent on the objects used in life*...When the body decomposed it no longer needed these objects.

(Murphy 1998:34, my emphasis)

A 'transient afterlife' is thus equated with the period of decomposition, a time during which the dead still relied on the furnishings of their lived lives. Although using the same vocabulary, this concept of a 'transient afterlife' is somewhat inconsistent with the models of 'transient personhood' applied to the archaeological record within the same scholarly literature. While the models of Hertz and Van Gennep as applied to the Prepalatial argue for a *gradual* loosening of individual identity, social agency and efficacy in death – a process paralleled with the progressive loosening of flesh from the physical body – this view of the function of deposited grave goods instead imagines a continued embodied and individualised identity (and subsequent requirements) up until the point of complete decomposition.

Interestingly, it is with reference to anthropological writing on funerary practices (Hertz 2004[1960]:37-8; Goody 1962:133; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Carr 1995:177), that Papadatos (1999:85-8) disagrees with such views of grave goods as personal possessions of the dead, in addition to interpretations of their deposition as potentially representative of their conceptual use in the afterlife, an aversion to their use by the living, or the placation of the dead. In contrast to the arguments of Branigan and Murphy, he makes the point that if they were indeed 'personal possessions', it would be expected that utilitarian objects required during life would also be interred with the individual in death. Highlighting the relative absence of stone and copper tools in comparison with the deposition of obsidian blades, copper daggers and toiletry implements, Papadatos (1999:88) argues that the latter 'category' of (what we would term 'prestigious') artefacts 'were removed or swept carelessly away since social display and conspicuous consumption were not important anymore'. He thus sees grave goods not as polluted 'personal possessions' which had the capacity to contaminate the community either through their use, proximity or invitation to the dead to return to the settlement of the living, but as markers of social organisation that had no further purpose after the decomposition of the human remains, during which – from a recognisably Hertzian perspective - 'the corpse became a skeleton without soul and personal identity' (Papadatos 1999:88).

However, the interpretation of Prepalatial grave goods as 'personal possessions', and thus the continued danger or requirements of a distinctly embodied dead during decomposition, is extensive across the archaeological literature. In reference to the cemetery at Lebena Yerokambos, Miller Bonney (2016:21, my emphasis) cites 'personal items' placed with the body, envisioning each interment as 'a reassembling of things *used*

in life with things newly assembled for the ceremony'.²⁰ The excavators of the Early Minoan tombs at Lebena similarly subscribe to a model of an embodied dead possessing a continued need for sustenance, in their reference to the absence/displacement of vase lids in the lower stratum of Tomb I (Papoura), stating that this was 'clearly to 'facilitate' the dead person's drinking or taking food from their vessel' (Alexiou and Warren 2004:16). This interpretation of an ancient Minoan anticipation of the bodily needs and subsequent physical action(s) of the deceased is further developed in their later statement about the deposition of grave goods more generally:

they surely demonstrate belief in an afterlife where material goods were needed or a belief that they symbolized and thus supported such needs. The placing of food with burials suggests belief in transient needs of the dead.

(Alexiou and Warren 2004:191)

This concept of placating, or sustaining, a potentially dangerous dead through the deposition of food or 'personal' items is echoed by Soles (1992:249) in reference to the grave goods placed within the house tombs of Mochlos and Gournia, in his suggestion that the 'function of the original deposit was to equip the dead with objects to sustain him in the afterlife'. This is one of two possible motivations suggested by Soles, the other echoing Branigan (1970b:110), in that they could also have been placed in the tombs because of an aversion toward their further use by the living (Soles 1992:226). However, he stresses the 'danger' of interfering with the 'possessions' of the dead before the end of decomposition, the completion of which signalled the end of an embodied, individual identity and indeed, 'residency' within the tomb structures:

after the decomposition of the flesh and the removal of the skull, neither offerings nor personal possessions, nor even a resting place in the tomb were required. Possessions, earlier offerings, and the bones themselves might be swept aside, sometimes removed or sometimes stored away, *without fear of harming or provoking the dead*.

(Soles 1992:249, my emphasis)

²⁰ While Miller Bonney (2016:21) mentions the variety of ceramics deposited with the dead, this evidence is interestingly juxtaposed with the 'smaller number of personal items', an interpretative framework which interestingly excludes even smaller ceramic containers as potentially 'personal' in nature.

The Minoan ‘fear’ of the dead is thus posited as one of embodied, decomposing entities, of a dead who retained both physical necessity, efficacy and subsequently, the capacity to threaten the wellbeing of the living. This interpretation of an ancient perception of a distinctly embodied dead that required the same level of comfort as they enjoyed in life, is perhaps most romantically illustrated in Dierckx’s (2017:198) suggestion that a quern found in association with a skull in House Tomb 3, Room 4 at Petras could have been used as ‘pillow’ for the dead, suggesting that ‘the slightly concave shape of the upper surface of the querns would provide a nice head rest for the skull’, providing ‘extra support for the head of the deceased’.

In relation to the other, badly-preserved querns from Petras, Dierckx (2017:198) suggests that they were ‘ritually killed’ through purposeful fragmentation and formed part of the ‘personal burial assemblage’ of the dead, drawing on Hamilakis’ (1998:122) argument for the ‘killing’ of the dead as social persons through the erasure of their memory. However, while Hamilakis (1998:122) speaks of the ‘fabrication of remembering and forgetting’ the dead,²¹ the motivation behind the deposition and/or destruction of grave goods is not framed by him in terms of their inherent *contamination* or other negative attributes gained through association with a polluting dead, as is suggested by Branigan:

It is at least an arguable hypothesis that the very considerable quantities of grave-goods found in the Mesara tholoi are also a reflection of an *attitude of fear and/or hostility to the dead*, rather than an attempt to provide generously for the deceased in after-life.

(Branigan 1993:67, my emphasis)

They may have been buried to accompany the deceased into some after-life but... it is at least as likely that the personal belongings were placed in the tomb with their former owner because *the living were anxious to dispose of them both*.

(Branigan 1993:75, my emphasis)

While it is interesting in terms of later discussion in Chapter 5 that Dierckx’s perception of an embodied dead includes disarticulated, fully skeletonised material (i.e. a

²¹ In support of this argument, Hamilakis (1998:112) cites the evidence for the ‘clearing’ of disarticulated remains, the consumption of food, drink and narcotics, as well as seemingly purposefully broken artefacts at the funerary sites of the Bronze Age Aegean.

skull), her interpretation of comfortable quern ‘pillows’ lends a whole new meaning to the use of term ‘resting place’, which is found elsewhere in the archaeological literature (Soles 1992:249). Whilst existing as a phrase and concept which is used widely in the Christian faith and in general discourse,²² its connotations – as well as references to the tombs as structures which acted as ‘the earthly abode of the dead’ (Déderix 2015:64), ‘dwellings of the dead’ (Branigan 1998:19), which the dead ‘lived in’ pre-decomposition (Soles 1992:249) – may be seen to be influenced by modern understandings and expectations of more permanent, undisturbed places of burial. Indeed, Branigan (1998:80) directly evokes this idea of ‘interrupted’ interment, stating:

they may have been laid to rest in their local tholos tomb but it is quite certain that their rest was not to be uninterrupted

(Branigan 1998:80)

These concepts of ‘resting’ or ‘residency’ thus share in influence with ‘sweeping statements’ and ‘looting’ (see Section 2.4 and above), which betray a distinct distaste for the disturbance of skeletal material and grave goods during the funerary practices of the early Bronze Age. Hamilakis (2013:154, 2018:323) rightly asserts that although the disturbance of material contained in the tombs has previously been attributed to looting in modernity, it must now be acknowledged that it is more likely a product of ancient activities as part of the funerary process, as highlighted in his statement that ‘these locales were far from being resting places’ (see also Driessen 2010:18).

Indeed, it is in a reconsideration of the so-called ‘looting’ in antiquity that we may observe one of the most striking inconsistencies between the application of models of transient personhood and the description of secondary depositional activities in the Prepalatial period. As discussed in Section 2.4, Wells (1990:126-7) questioned whether the removal of grave goods would have been conceived of as an illegitimate act in the context

²² Interestingly, Soles (1992:237-9) invokes vocabulary associated with the Christian faith elsewhere, in his description of a ‘chapel’ at Mochlos IV, in his reference to tholoi antechambers as ‘sacristies’ due to the large numbers of cups and jugs excavated there, and in reference to a transitional state of ‘limbo’ (1992:249). This is echoed in Girella and Todaro’s (2016:172) reference to the EM-MM tombs as ‘a form of family chapel’. Similarly, the concept of the ‘sanctity’ of the tombs is notable elsewhere (Branigan 1970:109) and Driessen (2018:17) highlights that Xanthoudides’ (1924:7-8) use of the phrase ‘gathered to their fathers’ to describe Prepalatial funerary practice is a biblical reference (*Judges* 2:10).

of the evidence for secondary depositional practices carried out at the later Mycenaean tombs on the mainland. She posits that the disturbance of the tomb contents could have been an accepted and expected activity, at a time 'after the deceased had left his body or moved on to another world', a Hertzian view of a transition which she suggests was 'possibly equated with the decomposition of the body'. In the context of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete, however, this is exactly what has been argued in the application of models of transient personhood: that the completion of full decomposition heralded the end of individualised, embodied identity. In essence, that the dry, skeletonised material that remained after the dissolution of a 'familiar flesh' was no longer representative of a particular 'person', whose remains demanded (our understanding of) actions of reverence and respect.

Therefore, analogies made between modern looting and the movement of material both from and within the tombs in antiquity fail to acknowledge the implications of applications of anthropological models of transient personhood. The negative connotations of the descriptions of 'sweeping' – born from our own perception of the 'appropriate' treatment of human remains – similarly do not take into account arguments for the transience of embodied identity and agency. If the Prepalatial dead are truly perceived in scholarly literature as having had passed through a stage of transition after which their physical remains no longer held the same sociocultural value, why should funerary practices which involve their unsystematic movement, damage, and general disarray be conceived of as 'disregard', 'carelessness' or 'indignity'? In effect, you cannot 'disrespect', 'disregard' or be 'careless' with entities which no longer elicit respect, regard or care. If the models of transient – and, as we have seen, distinctly *corporeally embodied* – personhood are to be applied consistently to the archaeological record of Prepalatial Crete, then they must be done so in isolation from socio-culturally specific judgements of the appropriate treatment of human remains.

This disparity between the application of models of transient personhood and the very way in which we describe the archaeological evidence that is used to support them, may conceivably be due to the fact that the burial practices popular in our own sociocultural context are those of relative permanence. To disturb or 'desecrate' a grave is to commit a grievous crime, and undisturbed burial is even afforded the most detested members of society, as seen in the interment of high-profile criminals in unmarked plots so as to preserve their anonymity and subsequently, physical integrity.

While one could argue that new funerary practices, such as ‘biopod’ burials, mark a movement away from a concern with the maintenance of physical integrity post-mortem,²³ they equally exist as methods by which, once interred, the deceased’s remains are not physically engaged with to a further extent. A similar anxiety as to the ‘disturbance’ of the dead after burial may be observed in the substantial public backlash against councils in highly-populated areas, who, in the face of limited space, sustainability concerns and the morbid certainty of further consumers, have begun to re-use graves for further interments. Our perception of, and commitment to, the place of burial as the dead’s undisturbed, final ‘resting place’, is perhaps most evocatively encapsulated by the campaign against grave reclamation and reuse in south London, which argues that such activities will ensure ‘no more RIP in Southwark’ (Save Southwark Woods n.d.).

In effect, the concept of a post-mortem ‘resting place’ is that of uninterrupted residency, in that it anticipates that the physical remains of the dead are located within a specific space usually off-limits to the intrusions of wider society, where they may dwell ‘in peace’. While the rectilinear ‘house tomb’ type predominantly found in the eastern areas of Crete are thus named due to their interpretation as ‘architectural imitations of houses of the living’ (Soles 1992:vi), the influence of such a designation in terms of scholarly conceptualisations of transient personhood and, later ancestorhood, cannot be discounted. Indeed, although Soles (1992:vi) points out that this definition is ‘not necessarily’ used because the dead were thought to inhabit the tombs, the use of ‘residential’ vocabulary in reference to the Prepalatial tombs of Crete is interesting both in terms of scholarly interpretations of Minoan perceptions of the ‘location’ of the dead post-decomposition and the continued interaction such a definition implies. On the one hand, describing tombs as ‘houses’ does speak to the evidence for the continued entry of the living into structures which have been widely posited as foci for communal gathering and activity. Like the furnishings of the living, the removal of grave goods as part of funerary practice also implies that the tombs’ contents were deemed valuable and thus worth retrieving.

On the other hand, however, to invoke concepts of ‘residency’ – i.e. that the dead were perceived as paradoxically ‘living’ in a specific place ‘if only for a few years after death’ (Soles 1992:249) – is to evoke ideas of a more permanent, embodied state of being and

²³ See Section 2.2 for a discussion of new trends in funerary practice.

installation than would perhaps be expected in association with models of transient personhood. In addition, the disturbance or removal of material from any one person's 'home', is inevitably likely to be perceived negatively, due to modern ideas as to privacy, property and trespass. Finally, this conceptualisation of the tombs as structures built to function as 'houses' in which the dead 'resided' is also somewhat at odds with scholarly arguments for the dead's purposeful 'containment' by the living, due to their hypothesised practical and conceptual polluting capacities.

3.6 Purposeful containment of a 'pollutant' dead

long-held and deep-seated fears associated with death, decomposition and contamination demanded that strategies were devised to control and manage the dead.

(Branigan 1998:26)

Despite the application of anthropological theories which posit a Prepalatial perception of transient embodiment and personhood, one area in which we may observe a contradiction of such an argument is in scholarly discussions of the conscious control of a potentially 'dangerous' dead by the living communities of Prepalatial Crete. Branigan (1970b:112 and above) states that 'restrictive measures' – essentially strategies which involve the *physical* restraint of the dead – were implemented so as to prevent the issuing of the dead from the tomb and subsequent harm to the living. The different 'measures' suggested by scholars as Prepalatial attempts to avert such a situation are framed as those made in response to a dead which were perceived of, contrary to models of transient personhood and embodiment, as retaining their physical form and efficacy. In addition, the scholarly interpretation that the dead were conceptualised in Prepalatial Crete as inherently pollutant and somewhat malevolent entities will be shown to be influenced by the import of ideas as to a 'universal' fear of the dead, perpetuated by unsupported claims as to their 'long-held' and 'deep-seated' nature.

While the use of burial containers, namely larnakes, have been included in discussions of ancient individualism, they also figure heavily in discussions of the supposed fear of the dead in the Prepalatial era. Branigan (1970b:111), citing the evidence from MM I Vorou A (Marinatos 1931:146-7,150), argues that the stacking of empty larnakes and pithoi on top of other burial containers implies their use as 'covering vessels', in that they

functioned as heavy lids or covers for those located beneath them. These burial containers, in addition to the actual heavy clay lids that accompanied other examples, are suggested by Branigan as potentially indicative of an effort to ensure ‘the protection of the living’, rather than that of the interred dead. Similarly, and in agreement with the initial interpretation of Marinatos (1931:151), Branigan (1970b:111) emphasises that large stones found in many of the pithoi were placed there so as ‘to keep the dead firmly in their place’ (Branigan 1993:67; 1998:25). Although Branigan (1970b:111) acknowledges that this may have been symbolic, in such an interpretation – echoed elsewhere by Papadatos (1999:51) in his discussion of the ‘anxious attitude to the dead’ – the archaeological evidence is suggested as representative of ancient efforts to contain the dead as distinctly embodied entities that seemingly retain potentially threatening physical capabilities. Interestingly, it is also an interpretation which is drawn on as a case study in broader discussions of death and burial that reference Cretan examples, such as in Parker Pearson’s (1999b:130) characterisation of the Vorou A evidence as a ‘constraining treatment of the polluting and dangerous recently dead’.

Similarly, the evidence from Sissi suggests that the mouths of terracotta containers that contained perinatal remains from EM IIA and EM II B contexts were purposefully closed, interpreted as ‘an attempt to contain the dead’ (Schoep et al. 2017:380). This concept of purposeful ‘containment’ of the dead is also invoked in relation to adult and adolescent remains from an EM II context in Locus 1.1, where the skeletal remains exhibited a rectangular ‘edge effect’, suggesting that the four burials decomposed in a perishable container of the same shape, potentially a wooden larnax, in which the dead were purposefully ‘contained’ (Schoep et al. 2017:380).

Speaking about the clear problems in discerning Minoan practices of ‘containing’ the dead from the ‘confused mass of bones’ created by the secondary depositional practices of the disarticulation and movement of skeletal remains, Branigan (1970b:111) suggests that ‘this need not mean that measures were not taken’, indicating the possibility that the interred bodies could have been ‘bound with ropes’. Although Branigan references the lack of archaeological evidence to support such a claim, it is of note that in more recent evidence from primary burial deposits, this concept of consciously restraining the dead through the binding of their bodies is similarly situated in discussions of their physical ‘containment’ within the tomb structures. In a section entitled ‘Containing the Dead?’, Schoep et al. (2017:380) propose that the hypercontracted position of the legs of certain

adults in later (Protopalatial) MM IB and MM IA contexts at the site of Sissi suggest that they may have been bound together. The positioning of the skeletal remains – as seen in the case of Individual 2 in Locus 9.2, who was excavated with ‘arms folded across the upper body and legs drawn up to the thorax’ – is thus interpreted as representative of a situation in which the legs were tied together or ‘contained’ in a tight container such as a textile body bag or basket (Schoep et al. 2017:381): the use of which Branigan (1970b:112) would term a ‘restrictive measure’, albeit one which no longer survives in the archaeological record due to its incorporation of perishable materials.

Leggara Herreo (2016:185) and Vavouranakis (2014:214) highlight the physicality necessary to achieve the ‘containment’ of the dead within funerary receptacles, as their emplacement would have required the body to have been tightly trussed, especially in cases in which smaller pithoi were used. Indeed, Vavouranakis (2014:214) highlights that – contrary to interpretations which posit the post-mortem fleshed body as ‘liminal’ and thus inherently pollutant – such an activity necessitates considerable knowledge of, and physical engagement with, the processes of bodily disintegration, in that such an activity depended upon its completion either before or after the stages of rigor mortis.

The ‘containment’ of the dead is thus interpreted as having been achieved through restrictive, physical means, indeed, the same kind of measures one would expect in restraining a living individual. It is in reference to the use of funerary receptacles such as larnakes and pithoi, as well as the evidence for stones placed on the dead or their binding with textiles, that the term ‘containment’ realises its dual meaning, as it is used to indicate both measures to hold/keep contents together and to restrain a (seemingly hostile) entity. The ‘feelings of fear and stress among the living towards death and the dead’ (Papadatos 1999:51) are thus here imagined as associated with a potentially mobile dead, one which had to be physically restrained from exiting the tomb structure or funerary receptacle within which they had been interred. This invocation of mobility, and the capacity for subsequent harm to the living, highlights the continued conceptualisation of the dead in scholarly discussion as entities which were thought to have maintained their physical agency and social motivations for action, despite applications elsewhere of anthropologically-informed models of transient personhood and embodiment.

That conscious measures were taken so as to ‘contain’ a dead which maintained the physical form and capacities of their former state is further argued in relation to the architectural features of the Prepalatial tombs, most especially in discussions of tholos

entranceways, both in terms of their architectural construction and orientation. While they vary in dimension, the doorways of the tholos tombs may generally be described as under-sized, in that their small size has been argued to serve no structural function and would have made their impasse difficult and unwieldy (Branigan 1993:61; 1970b:112; see Fig. 7). Indeed, even after taking differences in average height into account,²⁴ upon visiting the tomb sites in the south-central region of Crete in the present day, the size of the doorways (where they survive and/or have been reconstituted) is one of the most striking features and their ingress a physically demanding task (Fig. 8). Indeed, the practicalities of entering into the tomb structures through the doorways, let alone the movement of an inanimate body whilst doing so, is an important consideration to be made in terms of the reality of tomb use in antiquity. Branigan (1998:25) highlights that over 80% of the tholos doorways surveyed were less than a metre high and a metre wide, necessitating the manoeuvring of the body – a literal deadweight – through an incredibly restricted space, especially considering that 40% of entranceways were less than 0.7 metres wide.

While debate as to the architectural techniques employed in the construction of the tholoi is outside the remit of our current discussion, the entranceways into the tomb structures have traditionally been situated within scholarly discussions of a Minoan ‘fear’ of the dead, with their architectural under-sizing interpreted as indicative of a measure carried out by the Prepalatial Cretans through which to control and contain a ‘dangerous’ dead. Although a feature which would have been apparent since their discovery, the association between Minoan eschatological belief and the under-sized tholos doorways is perhaps most explicitly made in a chapter by Branigan (1993) entitled ‘The Eye of the Needle’, in which he argues for their construction as a purposeful means of controlling the dead:

²⁴ Despite extensive study of the skeletal remains from Tomb C at Archanes (Triantaphyllou 2005), they were too partial to yield an average height value. In digital visualisations of Prepalatial tomb use, parallel bone assemblages from other areas in Crete have been employed, producing a mean stature of 1.67m (5’5”) for male figures and 1.55m (5’1”) for those designated female (e.g. Papadopoulos 2010:49).



Figure 7: External view of the doorway of the Kaloi Limenes A tholos tomb.



Figure 8 : View of the doorway from the interior of the Kaloi Limenes A tholos tomb.
Pictured is a 5'5" female of average build.

Since there was no structural benefit in building such small doorways we must assume that their tiny proportions are a reflection of attitudes to the dead and that it was made as difficult as possible for the dead to pass, in either direction, through these needle-eye openings.

(Branigan 1993:61)

The under-sized doorways are thus posited as constructed thus because of a 'similar intention' as that underlying the placement of large stones on the interred body, i.e. to keep the dead firmly 'in their place' (Branigan 1998:25), an interpretation echoed by Papadatos (1999:51), in his suggestion that the small size of the tholos doorways was 'caused by the feelings of fear and anxiety towards the dead'.

This argument of a Minoan fear of a dead as an entity which necessitated physical restraint through the inclusion of specific architectural features is further extended to discussions of 'closing slabs' at multiple tholoi sites. Existing as large stone slabs excavated close in proximity to the 'ridiculously small' doorways, 'closing slabs' like that found *in situ* at the later Protopalatial Kamilari A measuring 1.3 x 1.1 x 0.14 metres (see Fig. 9), have been interpreted as another measure though which a potentially harmful dead were contained (Branigan 1970:111-2; 1998:25; 1993:61).



Figure 9: View of the 'closing slab' at Kamilari A, from the interior of the tholos chamber.

Referencing their location and sheer size, often out of proportion with the smaller entrances they seemingly blocked, Branigan (1970b:111-2, my emphasis) directly associates their use with a Minoan belief in, and fear of, a mobile, corporeally embodied and inherently dangerous dead:

I am convinced that these huge slabs were intended *to keep the dead in* rather than the living out...The size and weight of the slabs, and their position at the entrance of the tomb itself rather than the antechamber, suggest that they were intended to *keep the newly dead inside* the tomb.

(Branigan 1970b:111-2, my emphasis)

This idea of ‘keeping the dead in’ is essentially that of ‘containment’, in which the dead are continually framed as a negative, precarious and volatile entity. This conceptualisation of the dead as something to be inherently feared and, indeed, physically guarded against, may be seen in the interpretation of the double ‘closing slabs’ at the site of Porti B, the use of both an inner and outer slab having been described as ‘an extra precaution’ (Branigan 1970b:112; see also Papadatos 1999:51). Invoking Turner’s concept of transient personhood and associated pollution, tomb architecture is also posited as a means of ‘containing’ the dead by Driessen (2018:17), who refers to the interment of the dead within the tomb structures as ‘physical containment...an act of liminality and separation construction’.

Another feature of the tholos entranceways which has been interpreted as associated with a Minoan ‘fear of the dead’ is their orientation. On the majority, the tholos entranceways are orientated towards the east, although multiple exceptions exist, such as the south-east entrances of Lebena Ib, Trypiti and Marathokephalon II, in addition to the doorways at Kephali, Kaloi Limenes II and Korakies N, which face the south (Branigan 1970b:105). While tentatively suggesting that such an orientation may be suggestive of a ‘connection with the rising sun...related to a belief in the revival of the body after death’, Branigan (1970b:105) sees the lack of complete uniformity in tomb orientation as an obstacle to subsequent interpretations of ‘any belief in a physical afterlife’, a statement which is in contrast to his later conclusions as to tholos entrances more generally (Branigan 1970b:112). Although the discussion as to Minoan perceptions of a ‘physical afterlife’ is one to which we shall return in Chapter 5, it is important to note that the tombs’ orientation

as associated with solar illumination has been extensively investigated since Branigan's hypothesis, with Goodison (2004; 2019) illustrating a concentration of alignments at particular times of the year. Although arguments for the 'seasonality' of cemetery use in the Prepalatial has been discussed in reference to extra-funerary activities in Section 1.4, in discussions of the 'containment' of a feared dead, the doorways' orientation is posited as important in relation not to the sun, but to the settlement of the living.

As a tomb type which has traditionally received the most scholarly attention, the discussion surrounding tomb location, orientation and subsequent interpretations of a Minoan fear of the dead have largely focussed on the circular tholoi in the south-central region of Crete. Xanthoudides (1924:49) noted that the known settlements associated with tholoi sites were found 'very close' to the tombs, highlighting the fact that the proximity of the tholoi to their purported corresponding settlements is one of the main shared characteristics of the Prepalatial tomb type. Although locational information such as Xanthoudides' rather vague descriptions of the tombs as 'near' or 'close' to settlement may partially hinder our perception of proximity, it is apparent from the instances in which a specific distance is given that there seems to be no aversion to locating the tombs close to settlement, with 15 out of the 29 tombs surveyed located within 100 metres, 24 within 200 metres and 27 within 250 metres (Xanthoudides 1924:49). Indeed, if we accept Branigan's (1998:17) suggestion that Xanthoudides' definition of 'near' did not exceed 200 metres from associated settlement, then 40 out of the 42 tombs surveyed by Xanthoudides were within 250 metres of supposed residential areas.

Therefore, it is not the tombs' proximity to associated settlement that has been interpreted as representative of a Minoan 'fear of the dead' but rather their relative *directional* location. Branigan (1998:19ff.) argues for a 'strong aversion to the settlement area being to the east of the tombs', highlighting that out of 28 tholos tombs surveyed, only the Platanos cemetery had a nearby settlement recorded to its east, the existence of which remains to be proven due to its location underneath the modern village. This directional data, combined with the preference for eastern-facing doorways, is interpreted by Branigan (1998:19), and later by Papadatos (1999:51) and Parker Pearson (1999b:130), as indicative of a conscious means of control over a distinctly *embodied* dead, in his argument that it represents:

the *anxiety* that the doorways of the tombs should look away from, rather than into, the settlement area. That is, whilst the living can see, and oversee, the dwellings of the dead, *the dead cannot reciprocate*.

(Branigan 1998:19, my emphasis)

Branigan's hypothesis – that the directional location of the tholoi indicates a material strategy to prevent the dead within from overlooking the settlement of the living – is essentially one based on viewshed analysis and thus, a conceptualisation of an embodied dead who retained the physical capacities of their former (living, pre-liminal) state. Such an argument for the purposeful containment or control of the dead's viewshed ultimately posits the preservation of the visual capacities they enjoyed in life, a perception of a dead which has retained the physical abilities of the living, along with their obvious limitations. Far from the implications of the application of anthropologically-informed models which argue for a Minoan perception of the decomposed, long dead as having transcended their physical forms, interpretations of a Minoan 'anxiety' or 'fear' of being overlooked by their predecessors that arise from viewshed analyses inherently rely upon a dead which retain the visual – and thus specifically *corporeal* – capacities of their former state. While the application of the models of Hertz and Van Gennep are used to explain the evidence for secondary depositional activities at the tomb sites within a framework of transient personhood and corporeal embodiment, their fundamental implications are seemingly ignored when it comes to interpretations of a Minoan 'fear of the dead'. In other words, if they were to be applied consistently, then the decomposed dead would no longer possess a 'vision' facilitated and limited by the physicality of their previous state, as viewshed data itself relies on the capabilities (or lack thereof) of the physical, human eye.

Therefore, to speak of the 'anxiety' evoked by the long dead's distinctly embodied gaze is to contradict the application of models of transient personhood borrowed from anthropology, which do not see the decomposed 'dead' as located in, or limited by, their physical remains. If such models were applied consistently, the directional location and architectural arrangement of the tholoi would not have prevented the long dead from 'reciprocating' the gaze of the living, as such a reciprocation – based on the maintenance of physical integrity, agency and social motivation for action – would not have been possible.

I have above specified the 'long dead' in opposition to multiple scholars' emphases on the 'recently' or 'newly' dead (Branigan 1970b:111-2; Parker Pearson 1999b:130), which are seemingly postulated as those interred within the tombs who retained some element of bodily articulation. One might argue that a Minoan 'fear' of the 'recently dead' – those which assumedly were in the process of decomposition – agree with the models of transient personhood applied to the archaeological record. Yet this would be to overlook the *gradual* loosening of ties to the physical world of the living hypothesised by Hertz (see Section 2.5), in addition to interpretations that argue that such a 'fear' extended to distinctly embodied, post-liminal, disarticulated dead.

Indeed, while it is a point to which I shall return in relation to anthropologically-informed interpretations of ancestorhood in the Prepalatial in Chapter 5, such an argument may be observed in scholarly discussions of viewshed and tombs as territorial markers, in which it is argued that 'the function of the view from the tombs was for the benefit of both the ancestors and the living to see the resources they controlled' (Murphy 1998:31). Interestingly, it is of note that this association between 'post-liminal' ancestors and tomb viewshed is an interpretation that is made within the same article that directly applies Van Gennep's rites of transition to the Prepalatial archaeological record, in an assertion that after 'post-liminal' rituals:

The deceased has finally been incorporated into the world of the ancestors and removed from the physical world of the society.

(Murphy 1998:34)

Ancestors are thus posited as retaining the physical capabilities – or more specifically, the visual range – of their former state in interpretations of the ideological importance of their 'view' from the tomb sites. Yet they are simultaneously described as having passed through an irreversible rite of transition, during which they severed ties to the physical world of the living. Indeed, Murphy is explicit in her discussion of 'ancestors' within a specifically anthropologically-informed framework. Therefore, the explicit use of Van Gennep's theory, the concept of post-liminal, post-decompositional 'ancestors' and viewshed analyses reminds us of the ease with which models of transient personhood, embodiment and agency may contradict subsequent interpretations as to ancestorhood and an inherent 'fear of the dead'.

However, whilst the above discussion of 'restrictive measures' outlines scholarly support for the hypothesised danger or potential polluting capabilities of a distinctly corporeally embodied dead in the Prepalatial era, such anthropologically-informed arguments for the inherent contaminating capacities of the dead is not restricted to the purely physical realm, but rather may be seen to extend to interpretations of a symbolic and conceptual nature.

Chapter 4: Symbolic pollution, cleansing and partibility: alternative anthropological approaches

4.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates that the hypothesised Minoan ‘fear of the dead’ extends further than interpretations of their distinctly *physical* polluting capacities and danger discussed in Chapter 3. Rather, scholars have interpreted from the archaeological record various strategies which they argue were implemented by the Bronze Age Cretans to combat the *symbolic* pollution arising out of interaction with the disintegrating bodies of the deceased. It is in these interpretations which we may discern both socio-culturally specific judgements relating to smell and colour symbolism, in addition to attempts to distinguish between which activities at the Prepalatial tomb sites may be deemed ‘practical’, versus those which are characterised as ‘symbolic’ in nature.

While previous chapters have focussed on the underlying and often contradictory influences of anthropology in the interpretation of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete, it is important to acknowledge the potential of such interdisciplinary approaches for broadening our perspectives of the material record, in that they encourage us to consider symbolisms, perspectives, and sensory perceptions dissimilar to our own. One of the great strengths of anthropology as a discipline is in documenting this diversity – the literal variety of life – most especially in relation to responses to death and the decomposing body. This chapter will thus aim to incorporate anthropological fieldwork and theory in its discussion of interpretations of smell and colour symbolism, in addition to recent archaeological evidence which raise questions as to what – or rather, who – was deemed symbolically ‘pollutant’ by the users of the Prepalatial tombs.

4.2 ‘The intolerable and nauseous stench’: smell, pollution and decomposition

It might seem antithetical to begin our discussion of interpretations of symbolic pollution with reference to smell, as odour itself may be argued to be essentially physical, consisting of chemical compounds in low concentrations detectable through olfactory sensory receptors. Yet the smell of decomposition, in addition to the Minoans’ imagined experiences of it, occupies a central role in interpretations of symbolic purification and cleansing at the Prepalatial tomb sites. Following Hamilakis (2013:77, my emphasis) in his

invocation of Turner's (1967) terminology then, interpretations of smell based on archaeological remains echo the very nature of the sense itself, in that they occupy 'at the same time *that liminal space* between the material and the immaterial'.¹

As discussed in Chapter 3, scholarly discussion of the Prepalatial tombs frequently refers to a Minoan fear of the dead, in that the Bronze Age Cretans are hypothesised as having possessed a distinct aversion to the inherently pollutant and physically threatening dead, which was subsequently managed through various strategies such as the construction of under-sized doorways, tomb orientation and the restrictive 'containment' of bodies.² Instead of the control of the dead, however, other archaeological features have been interpreted as representative of Minoan efforts to manipulate the sensory experiences of the living, namely to counteract what modern scholars frame as the overwhelming, inherently negative and symbolically contaminating smell of bodily decomposition.

Undoubtedly, the dead interred within the tombs would have emitted strong odours during the decomposition of any remaining soft tissue. Depending on the amount and composition of the soft tissue,³ how many bodies were deposited at any one time, and how frequently the tomb was opened or entered, such odours would have been present within in various concentrations, amplified by the enclosed space of the funerary structures. Unsurprisingly, the smell of decomposition, with which we are less than familiar, is most frequently characterised as negative and unpalatable, and subsequently, one that necessitated negation through the implementation of various strategies. Indeed, in reference to the EM Tholos II at Lebena Yerokambos, Miller Bonney (2016:21) imagines an individual upon entering the tomb as interacting with 'smells so intense visitors could taste them', echoing Hamilakis (2013:134) in his synaesthetic blurring, or rather, denial, of sensorial and bodily boundaries in his assertion that 'in this dark space, it is your touch that can see'.

Yet the excavation of certain ceramic vessel types, namely low volume containers, from funerary contexts has led scholars to interpret the smell of decomposition as one which is inherently negative, in that it required both practical and symbolic cleansing. While

¹ This statement is similar to the argument of Howes (1987:401ff.), who argues that 'the sense of smell is the liminal sense *par excellence*'.

² See Sections 3.5 and 3.6.

³ See Section 4.5 on the recent archaeological evidence for the deposition of body parts in 'fresh' condition.

Alexiou and Warren (2004:191, my emphasis) hypothesise that the juglets and pyxides excavated from the EM IIA Tomb IIa at Lebena Yerokambos may have contained scented oils or unguents deposited 'to be of use' to the dead, they state that they could have simultaneously carried out 'a practical function of counteracting the *intolerable and nauseous stench* of rotten or rotting corpses'. This is echoed in Branigan's (1970b:92) suggestion that tomb users would have lit small fires in bowls, on clay tablets or even in the bases of broken pithoi 'on which they burnt aromatic substances to cover the stench of the tomb'.

Although one only has to consider the range of vocabulary used in English to designate bad smell (reek, hum, stink, fetid, rank, etc., even arguably, 'odour') in comparison with that relating to good smell (perfume, scent, aroma, etc.) to realise that smell is more frequently referred to in less than desirable terms,⁴ the use of the phrase 'intolerable and nauseous stench' is undeniably negative in connotation. In addition, in its invocation of judgements of 'toleration', it makes certain assumptions about the sensory perception of the early Bronze Age Cretans, as well as their reactions to such a perception within a specifically funerary context.⁵

This argument – that the Minoans employed strategies so as to negate the smell of decomposition perceived by them as overwhelming and abhorrent – is evident elsewhere, as seen in Evans' (1924:xii) suggestion that the fragments of amber/resin found in association with burnt deposits in the Porti tholos may be interpreted as a purifying 'deodoriser'.⁶ This is a perspective which finds continued expression in more recent interpretations,⁷ as seen in Boness and Goren's (2017:517, my emphasis) discussion of the presence of lime in burnt deposits at Koumasa as a 'transformative material...a sanitizing, disinfectant agent and *bad odor neutralizer*'. Moreover, although he does not characterise

⁴ See Classen (1993:52-6) for a discussion of the vocabulary and etymology of smell, in which she highlights the tendency for smell words to acquire negative connotations in English.

⁵ See Toner 2014, Butler and Perves 2013 and Bradley 2015 for broader discussions of smell and the ancient senses.

⁶ Xanthoudides (1924:69) documents a disagreement related to the interpretation of the amber/resin fragments excavated from Porti, which were too decayed to determine original shape but did not exhibit any evidence of piercing or suspension as pendants/beads. He states that although they were given by the Director of the Museum to Sig. Mosso for analysis - who identified them as the earliest fragments of Baltic amber known from Greece - this interpretation was rejected by Sir Arthur Evans, who instead thought they had a similar function to fragments he had excavated from a tomb at Isopata, Knossos, which he interpreted as pieces of resin burnt as a deodoriser.

⁷ Boness and Goren's (2017) study was the first instance of a micromorphological analysis at a Minoan tholos tomb.

the smell of decomposition as inherently bad, Hamilakis (2013:135) also suggests that the excavation of vessels imitating the pod of the opium poppy, such as those from EM I Koumasa (Xanthoudides 1924, plate I), may indicate that psychoactive substances could have been consumed in funerary contexts, which would have ‘numbed the strong olfactory and other sensorial experiences’ (*contra* Peatfield and Morris 2006:39-41).⁸

However, as seen in Evans’ comment, I would argue that to suggest that substances were employed practically so as to negate the perception of the overwhelming, inherently ‘bad’ smell of bodily decomposition, is to equate early Bronze Age sensory perception – and subsequently, experience – with our own. It is in this vein that Hamilakis (2013:2,118-99) has emphasised that ‘there is nothing pre-cultural about the bodily senses’, later arguing for an acknowledgement of ‘the historicity and cultural specificity of the senses’ and urging archaeologists to problematise phenomenological approaches based on the idea that we share the ‘same’ body with humans in the past.

In the case of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete, locales where the dissolution of the body was both observed and facilitated through secondary depositional practices, I would emphasise that we must acknowledge not only the historical and cultural specificity of the Minoans’ perception of the smell of decomposition, but also that of the *contextual*. These were structures that were continually entered and within which fully or semi-decomposed human remains were collected and curated. The smell of decomposition would not have come as a surprise, rather it was an expected and contextually appropriate aspect of the Minoans’ sensorial experiences related to funerary practice.

This idea of ‘expectation’ is essentially that of memory, an acknowledgement that sensorial perception is inevitably influenced by previous experiences of similar stimuli (or a lack thereof). Smell in particular is powerful in its ability to evoke memory, a capability perhaps most famously commented on by Proust, rather fittingly, in reference to death, destruction and disarticulation:

But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more faithful, but with more vitality, more

⁸ In contrast to Hamilakis’ interpretation of numbing as the primary bodily response to the consumption of psychoactive substances, Peatfield and Morris (2004:39-41) highlight the range of bodily responses and changes during the achievement of an altered state of consciousness (ASC), during which ‘senses may feel sharpened or heightened, leading to strong sensations of smell and taste’.

unsubstantial, more persistent, more fragile, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

(Proust 1970:36)

This link between the perception of familiar odour and memory – dubbed the ‘Proust phenomenon’ after his literary romanticisation of such olfactory-inspired recollections – has most recently been monetised by French company Kalain, who provide a service whereby scent is extracted from the possessions of an (usually deceased) individual to manufacture ‘olfactory comfort sets...to cope with a definitive absence’ (Kalain n.d). In the context of a modern demand for ‘smelling the dead’ then,⁹ we should bear in mind the argument of Hamilakis (2013:118), and remain wary of phenomenological approaches in archaeological literature that frame sensorial perception as ‘first time’ encounters, thus failing to recognise the influence of memory and subsequently, familiarity and context.

Equally, the *appropriateness* of smell is not something we can afford to discount in interpretations of ancient revulsion and subsequent symbolic cleansing. In his visualisation of Tholos Tomb C and Burial Building 19 at Archanes-Phourni, Papadopoulos (2010:51) highlighted the importance of appropriate lighting, in that we expect – or rather, accept – lighting ‘appropriate’ to the context in question. The maintenance of an ‘appropriate’ atmosphere is important, for just as one would find it unnerving to encounter a dimly-lit modern operating theatre, so too would it be unusual, and arguably offensive, to smell a strong odour in an unexpected context.¹⁰ Therefore, a certain smell is equally deemed appropriate dependent on the context in which it is perceived and/or its familiarity to those who perceive it.

This was a point I made in a presentation recently, at which Dr Suzanne O’ Neill, a faculty member who was formerly employed as a police officer, was in attendance. While in agreement with my general argument, she asked whether I had ever smelled a decomposing human body and continued to recall a time during the course of her duties

⁹ Arguably, Kalain is also representative of the commodification of the dead and the existence of a market for sensorial mnemonic aids. The production of an olfactory set involves laboratory testing of the (predominantly textile) personal items of the deceased and costs approximately €600.

¹⁰ As occurred at Victoria station on the London underground in 2017, where commuters using the District line platform complained of an overwhelming smell of cooking meat, allegedly emanating from a burger restaurant located directly above the station (CityMetric online, 21st March 2018).

at which she had had such an experience, which she described in negative terms. While having certainly smelled decomposition before, I was forced to concede that I had not, but to contend that the smell of human bodily decomposition, however strong an odour, could still be deemed appropriate, and thus less affecting, in certain circumstances. A case that stands out is that of Stephen Fry, who, in a documentary in which he visited an anthropological research facility at the University of Tennessee (Stephen Fry in America: Deep South 2008), described the smell emanating from decomposing human remains deposited in a closed refuse bin as 'a great seething, living, appalling smelling thing', emphasising the intrusiveness of the 'unspeakably horrible' odour.¹¹ Despite having been warned of the smell beforehand, Fry's reaction was extreme, but it was that of his forensic anthropologist guide that was most interesting in relation to our present discussion, who, as Fry recoiled in revulsion from scent of the bin and its decomposing contents, did not react, stating 'I have a really bad sense of smell'.

Although it is important to acknowledge that the reaction of both individuals involved an element of performativity encouraged by the presence of a third party (i.e. the camera crew and, by extension, us as audience), I would argue that her reaction was influenced by both her expectation of, and familiarity with, the smell of bodily decomposition, in addition to its appropriateness to the context in question. Indeed, familiarity with a certain smell is important when one considers the psychology of hedonics,¹² which suggests that unfamiliar smells are much more likely to be perceived as unpleasant (Porteous 2006:91). As a forensic anthropologist who episodically encountered human bodies in various stages of decay as part of controlled and sanctioned activities, the smell of decomposition had become both anticipated and appropriate, so far as in this instance, it appeared to have lost most of its sensory effect. This may be also interpreted as indication of what Porteous (2006:91) calls the 'habituation effect', in which the perceived intensity of a smell declines rapidly after one has been exposed to it for some time.

Such an acknowledgement of the 'appropriateness' of smell echoes Douglas' (1966:35-6, my emphasis) argument as to the relativity of dirt, in its definition as 'the by-

¹¹ Anthropological research facilities (or 'body farms' as they are colloquially known) conduct forensic research on human bodies at various stages of decomposition in different contexts, usually to inform future forensic interpretations related to criminal investigations.

¹² Porteous (2006:91) highlights that out of over 400,000 existing odourous compounds, only approximately 20% are regarded as 'pleasant'.

product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting *inappropriate* elements'. Although highlighting the influence of our knowledge of pathogenic organisms on post-nineteenth century thought, she argues that our conception of dirt, and in turn, our subsequent 'pollution behaviours', is that of matter out of place. Therefore, while shoes are not inherently 'dirty', they are perceived as pollutant when placed on a dining table, as an object 'likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications' (Douglas 1966:36). It is an argument of context then, in that, just like the smell of decomposition in an anthropological research facility, ideas or objects *within* expected classifications are not perceived as 'dirty' or inherently pollutant in nature.

How, then, may we speak with confidence about the 'nauseous stench' or of the 'revulsion' that the early Minoans experienced in relation to the smell of bodily decomposition during their continual entries into the tomb structures? The smell of bodily decomposition would have been an expected and anticipated element of engaging with the remains of the deceased, especially in cases in which soft tissue remained or body parts were deposited in 'fresh' condition. Bodily decomposition within the tomb structures at which secondary deposition was practiced was therefore arguably 'in context', in that it was a process central and critical to early Bronze Age funerary practice. Thus, if we are to accept anthropologically-informed arguments for transient personhood in the Prepalatial which echo Hertz in his identification of bodily decomposition as a critical factor (Chapter 3), then the possibility that the process of decomposition (and the odours that accompanied it) may *not* have been perceived of as inherently negative must be explored.

Although interpretations of the symbolic and practical cleansing of smell may be seen to overlook the potential positivity of decomposition and invoke more modern ideas as to its avoidance and pathogenic pollution, anthropological fieldwork in societies other than our own may offer us an alternative perspective. Here, under the subtitle 'Liminality and the Corpse', Metcalf and Huntington (1991:71-4) discuss the parallels between the fermentation processes and the secondary deposition practices of the Berewan of Borneo:

Making indigo dye is infamously stinky, and many Westerners dislike the preserved foods... because of their pungent scent. The *familiarity* that Southeast Asians have with such smells may indicate different attitudes to corpses. It was not our experience that the Berewan were indifferent to these smells of decomposition, but they did show *fortitude in the presence of corpses*. *Rotting does not have the wholly negative connotations* for them that

it does for us. Consequently, they may be a radically different set of attitudes to the decomposition of the corpse than those found in the West.

(Metcalf and Huntington 1991:71-4, my emphasis)

Arguing that exposure to production processes involving rotting and fermentation had increased the familiarity of the Berewan with the odours of decomposition and subsequently affected their reaction to the smells associated with the secondary deposition of the dead, Metcalf and Huntington's analogy essentially posits smell as a sign of production, in that it represents the achievement of a positive outcome, whether in terms of the decomposed dye or dead. Yet I would add that, as seen in the aforementioned forensic anthropologists' own 'fortitude' in the literal face of the smell emanating from the refuse bin, repeated encounters with decomposing human remains may also breed familiarity with (and to some extent, acceptance of) the strong odours of bodily decomposition in their own right. That is to say that while contemporary attitudes to the processes of decomposition seek to prevent or contain the indicators of bodily dissolution, continual exposure to, and anticipation of, such odours may affect the way in which they are perceived.

It is also important to consider that the binary opposition of negative/positive values may be more nuanced than we might initially assume when discussing the smell of bodily decomposition. Tuzin (2006:63) outlines the traditional funerary practices of the Ilahita Arapesh of northeastern New Guinea,¹³ who place the corpse in a shallow or open grave in the groundhouse floor, 'so that during the period of decomposition family members may express piety by sleeping with and inhaling odors of decay'. Here, then, although his informants' description of the smell was decidedly negative in *physical* terms, its inhalation and – in terms of the placement of the grave – purposeful installation, is perceived as *morally* positive:

The stench was horrendous and the blowflies bothersome, but to not have suffered these things would have implied a lack of filial piety; the vapors hung as a pungent reminder of the recent loss.

(Tuzin 1975:557)

¹³ Tuzin (1975:557) states that the traditional practice was discontinued in the 1950s 'under administrative insistence'.

Indeed, this rejection of the smell of decomposition as universally negative (*contra* Classen 1993:102) is further strengthened if we consider the funerary practices of the Lesser Sunda Islands of Eastern Indonesia, during which the odour of bodily decay acts as both indicator and motivator for action:

When the stench of the corpse can no longer be tolerated by the mourners, it is rolled into its mat and buried in the dancing ground at the centre of the village.

(Metcalf and Huntington 1991:105)

Although the smell is still framed negatively by Metcalf and Huntington in terms of the use of the value-laden term 'stench' and the concept of 'toleration', we must acknowledge that the odour of decomposition remains a positive and productive element of funerary practice, in that it both signals and stimulates the beginning of a subsequent stage of secondary rites. Admittedly, we cannot know whether the smell of bodily decomposition was used as an indicator during secondary deposition practices in the early Bronze Age. Yet it is important to acknowledge that interpretations which immediately frame its experience as inherently negative – and subsequently, necessitating symbolic and/or practical negation – fail to consider the possibility of its positivity, in that it demonstrates the progression of processes central to funerary practice. Indeed, one need only consider the phenomenon of 'osmogenesis', during which a 'supernaturally pleasant odour' is emitted from the body after death (McBride 2017), to observe an instance of an overtly positive attitude towards the smell of decomposition. As highlighted by Tuzin (2006:60), saints in the Middle Ages were perceived to be osmogenic, exuding a sweet 'odour of sanctity', conceptualised as reflective of their moral and spiritual superiority (see also Classen 1993:19-21). Such cases remind us that the smell of bodily decomposition may be perceived of as pleasant, indicative of purity and positivity, thus problematising its characterisation as inherently foul, negative and pollutant.

As Hamilakis (2013:136) has shown, discussions which centre around the Minoans' experience of the tombs need not refer to the sensory effects of such an endeavour in negative terms, but rather as elements which contributed to 'a locale which would have enabled new sensorial possibilities to emerge'. Employing a second-person narrative, Hamilakis (2013:134) urges the reader to imagine entry into a tomb structure, during which

‘the smell is familiar... Odour envelops and incorporates. Through the strong sense of smell, dead and alive become one; they become a transcorporeal landscape’. Although emphasising that the *synaesthesia* of such an experience is fundamentally inextricable from one particular ‘sense’,¹⁴ it is important to consider the lack of value-laden terms in his description of the smell within the tomb, especially in light of descriptions of the ‘intolerable and nauseous stench’ elsewhere (Alexiou and Warren 2004:191). Instead, the smell of decomposition is postulated as both an indicator and, more importantly, a *means* by which the decomposing dead achieve an altered state of being:

the person that, despite being seemingly dead, was still part of the social unit, and which was still active together with you by being there seemingly bounded, distinct, and visible, by being materially transformed, *by emitting strong odours*, ceases to be.

(Hamilakis 2013:137, my emphasis)

The smell of decomposition, then, although not overly ‘pleasant’, is positive in the sense that it both indicates and facilitates the dissolution of an individual, which, as discussed in Chapter 3, has been posited as the desired outcome of secondary depositional activity by archaeologists who utilise the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz.

However, despite the potential for anthropological fieldwork to provide us with alternate perspectives on perceptions of bodily decomposition,¹⁵ scholarly discussions of the smell of decomposition in relation to the Prepalatial tombs of Crete do not acknowledge its potential positivity. Instead, they tend to identify in the archaeological record the material remnants of activities interpreted as the means through which its inherent negativity and/or pollution could be negated. This is most apparent in the evidence for burning episodes, which are frequently interpreted as indicative of the tombs’ ‘fumigation’ during secondary deposition practices.

¹⁴ Hamilakis (2013:75) has argued elsewhere that the abandonment of the Western paradigm of the ‘five senses’ is long overdue and advocates for archaeologists’ involvement in a wider rejection of the scheme.

¹⁵ Metcalf and Huntington’s (1991:85-107) analysis of the perception of the smell of decomposition in the Lesser Sunda Islands is framed within a wider discussion of Hertz’s (2004[1960]) theory of the symbolism of the corpse in funerary practice.

4.3 'Fumigation' as symbolic cleansing

Currently defined as an action 'to treat (something contaminated or infected) with fumes or smoke' (Collins English Dictionary) or 'to use poisonous gas to remove harmful insects, bacteria, disease, etc.' (Cambridge Dictionary), it is important to note that the term 'fumigation' does not necessarily refer to the neutralisation of smell specifically. Rather, it may be seen to relate far more to post-nineteenth century ideas of contamination than the interpretation of ancient purging it is used to describe in the archaeological literature of Prepalatial Crete, in that it largely denotes the cleansing of microbial elements.

While the presence of harmful pathogens during the decomposition of the human body might seem obvious to the modern commentator, knowledge of bacteria is a hallmark of post-nineteenth century thought. Indeed, as Prothero (2001:49) highlights in reference to the rise of cremation in America, although germ theory had been postulated in various forms beforehand, it was the invention of the compound microscope in the 1820s and subsequent laboratory testing in the 1880s that led to the association of microbial contaminants with the decomposing body, as opposed to the previous theory of 'miasma'. Despite this, concepts and vocabulary associated with the destruction of bacteria may still be discerned in interpretations of activities carried out within the Prepalatial tombs, with the translator of Xanthoudides' *The Vaulted Tombs of the Mesara* J.P. Droop adding a footnote to the discussion of potential Baltic amber found at Porti, associating the fragments with 'small braziers, *doubtless used for burning disinfectants...*found in late Helladic tombs at Mycenae' (Droop in Xanthoudides 1924:69, footnote 3, my emphasis).

In contrast, Evans' (1924:xii) association of 'purificatory' fires and these amber/resin 'deodorisers' at Porti, which links the neutralisation of a (supposedly bad) smell and the purification of the tombs, may be seen to have more in common with miasma theory than later conceptions of pathogenic contamination (see also Boness and Goren 2017:517). Miasma theory – in which the spread of disease was attributed to a harmful airborne vapour associated with decaying matter – is bound up with perceptions of smell by virtue of the fact that a foul odour was how the pollutant 'miasma' was purported to have been recognised and eradicated in its neutralisation. In miasma theory, then, just as in Evans' association, a pollutant smell required deodorising so as to achieve its purification.

Through the removal of foul smells or their decomposing origins one might indirectly achieve a level of bacterial sanitation, but despite its origins in the Middle Ages

and widespread scientific disapproval, it is worth noting that vestiges of miasma theory remain in the popular imagination. This is evident in the frequency of lemon and lavender scents in modern antibacterial products, two popular plague preservatives (McBride 2017), in addition to instances (like Evans' interpretation) in which 'bad' smell is associated with pollution and subsequently, actions of purification. Indeed, whilst current germ theory informs us of the 'real' contaminants, i.e., harmful pathogens, in modernity something is rarely perceived of as truly 'clean' until it smells so, an olfactory cleanliness achieved through the use of scented products or the perceived eradication of odour altogether.¹⁶

The 'pollution' that both germ theory and miasma theory seek to elucidate, however, is arguably *practical* in nature, in that it is based in the identification of physical, measurable contaminants (i.e. vapour or microorganisms) that arise from interaction with decomposing bodily matter. Yet in scholarly discussions of the 'fumigation' of certain tombs in the Prepalatial period, the purpose of such an activity is postulated as an attempt by the Minoans to also combat the *symbolic* pollution associated with the dead and subsequently, the funerary structure in and of itself. The purpose of this distinction is not to discount the symbolic systems that influence our own conceptions of physical, 'practical' dirt, which, as highlighted by Douglas (1966:34-5), should cause us to question frameworks in which only our pollution behaviours are posited as 'hygienic', but rather to emphasise the existence of scholarly arguments for symbolic pollution and its negation in the context of Prepalatial funerary practices.

In the context of detailing the thick stratum blackened by one or more burning episodes at Porti, Xanthoudides (1924:135, my emphasis) considers the possible function of lighting fires within the Mesara tholoi, suggesting that they could have provided light or served 'to fumigate the tomb from *the flavour of death*'. Xanthoudides does not elaborate on the nature of this (supposedly negative) 'flavour' but exemplifies in his phrasing the ambiguity of the term and concept of 'fumigation' itself, an unhelpful interpretative vagueness which continues in recent analyses and interpretative discussions. On the one hand, his invocation of the senses – of *flavour* – reminds us that fumigation is frequently associated with sensorial perception, both in relation to smell and, in the context of Hamilakis (2013:124 and above) and Miller Bonney's (2016:21 and above) comments on synaesthetic experience, the senses more generally. On the other hand, the use of the

¹⁶ See Classen (1993:26-26) for a discussion of the 'discrediting of scent' from the eighteenth century onwards.

phrase ‘the flavour of death’ could be more metaphorical, in that it could refer to a kind of contaminant aura, positing the act of fumigation with the negation of symbolic pollution within the tomb structures. From the very beginning of excavation at the Prepalatial tombs of Crete, we must acknowledge that scholarly interpretations of ‘fumigation’ as a cleansing activity have moved between the sensorial and the symbolic, a shifting of perspective that is echoed and amplified in the ambiguous use of the term ‘fumigation’ in the archaeological literature.

Branigan (1987:45-6) includes fumigation in his discussion of secondary interaction with human bones in the Mesara tholoi, describing ‘the fumigation of either bones or the entire tomb contents’ as an action of either ‘interference or manipulation’.¹⁷ While highlighting that fumigation was an activity for which evidence was found relatively frequently in the surveyed tombs (see Table 2), Branigan is undecided as to whether the evidence for burning episodes in the Prepalatial should be interpreted as practical or symbolic in nature, echoing his previous distinction between activities of ‘interference’ and those of ‘manipulation’. His uncertainty arises from the lack of uniformity in the evidence for ‘fumigation’ as a practice in and of itself, emphasising the difference in size and scale of the ‘fumigatory fires’ between tholoi, ranging from the evidence for more intense burning episodes which left marks on the floors and walls of Platanos A and Γ and Koumasa B (Xanthoudides 1924:6,89,92) and smaller, more localised fires indicated by the confinement of burning to certain skeletal deposits such as at Ayia Kyriaki, Porti and Drakones (Branigan 1987:45-6, Table 1). He asserts that the diversity of the evidence – including instances in which no such trace of burning exists such as at Christos, Kalathiana, Lebena Ila, Marathokephalo II and Platanos B – suggests that ‘fumigation was clearly not a mandatory part of the ritual or funerary practices of the Mesara communities’ (Branigan 1987:45). Indeed, the prevalence of small-scale, localised burning episodes, termed ‘partial fumigation’, led Branigan (1987:45) to suggest that ‘it was not *fumigation* at all, but was used to cleanse, symbolically or otherwise, the bones of one or a handful of individuals’.

In this instance, then, ‘fumigation’ is seemingly defined by Branigan as an activity *opposed to, or other than*, symbolic cleansing, an interpretation in keeping with his attempt to distinguish between practical ‘interference’ with and symbolic ‘manipulation’ of skeletal material at the tomb sites (Branigan 1987). However, this terminological and conceptual

¹⁷ Branigan’s (1987:45) query in this case is not framed as part of a question but rather in parenthesis in a summary of secondary deposition practices.

distinction is made less clear in subsequent discussion, with Branigan associating ‘general fumigation’ with the *manipulation* of skeletal material in a later article (1998:13). If we follow his previous terminological guidelines (Branigan 1987),¹⁸ this makes fumigation an activity of a *symbolic* nature (*contra* Branigan 1987:45 and above), a view echoed in Papadatos’ (1999:33, my emphasis) later suggestion that ‘some cleaning and fumigating activities could have acquired a *ritual or spiritual* character’ (see also Boness and Goren 2017:516). Indeed, in Branigan’s discussion of the site of Moni Odigitria, he describes a ‘black’ or ‘burned’ soil deposit in the Outer Courtyard (from which 66 EM IB to EM III vessels were excavated), in association with which he states:

An interpretation of this soil as evidence for some sort of fumigatory or ritual fire, or even pyre, in which the pottery vessels were “purified”, cannot be supported, however, because few of the pots themselves show signs of charring.

(Branigan 2010a:258)

In this statement, there seems to be an association between ‘fumigatory’ fires and the act of purification, although it is rejected here as a feasible interpretation in light of the lack of charring on the associated vessels. The rejection of this hypothesis is interesting in itself in relation to interpretations of purification and ‘fumigation’, as it suggests that the purification of an entity is associated with direct (and thus archaeologically discernible) contact with fire, rather than its immersion in vapour, smoke or gas that the current technical use of the term ‘fumigation’ implies.

Perhaps the difficulty arises out of the choice of the word ‘fumigation’ in the first place, as there is a fundamental difference between the process of fumigation and that of burning, despite both terms being used almost synonymously in the archaeological literature relating to secondary depositional practices in Prepalatial Crete. Pathogenic implications aside, in ‘fumigation’, the smoke/gas/smell/vapour produced by a fire or otherwise is thought to cleanse the space in which it circulates. Air-borne particles disperse and circulate, thereby evading easy control or containment. They affect a larger area than their immediate source, especially if produced in an enclosed structure with limited ventilation. Thus, even small-scale, short-duration fires could have worked to ‘fumigate’ an

¹⁸ Branigan (1998:13) directly cites his 1987 article in relation to this association of skeletal ‘manipulation’ and ‘general fumigation’.

entire funerary chamber and its contents, as they would have facilitated the circulation of perceptible fumes within the structure, despite their visibility in the archaeological record being confined to localised burnt deposits. It is in this acknowledgement – of the *transience* of processes of fumigation proper – that we might begin to deconstruct the definition between ‘localised fumigation’ and ‘general fumigation’ (Branigan 1987:45) and the interpretative consequences such a reconsideration implies.

In effect, when we consider the diffusion of fumes, even localised fumigation may be considered ‘general’ in that it had the potential to affect the atmosphere of the general area in which it was carried out. ‘General fumigation’ then, in its scholarly association with ‘extensive burn marks on walls and floors and a totally charred burial stratum’ (Branigan 1987:45), may be seen to relate more to evidence of large-scale *burning* than ‘fumigation’ in the conventional sense of the word. Although large-scale burning episodes would inevitably have produced fumes, smoke, and smells that could have functioned as ‘fumigatory’, interpretations of ‘full scale fumigation’ (Branigan 1987:45) that are restricted to the evidence for widespread burning fail to acknowledge the ephemeral, circulatory nature of air-borne fumes, whose reach, sensory effect and indeed, potential practical and/or symbolic significance is more difficult to discern in the archaeological record. The *extent* of fumigation, i.e., the purposeful circulation of fumes in antiquity, then, cannot be exclusively interpreted from the scale or intensity of burning episodes within the tomb structures.

However, the scale, intensity and duration of burning episodes associated with Prepalatial tombs may be seen to have encouraged interpretations of so-called ‘fumigation’ (and subsequently, symbolic purification), in which it is juxtaposed with larger, more sustained fires. Indeed, in a similar equation of fumigation with burning, Triantaphyllou (2010:232, my emphasis) discusses the evidence for burned human bones from Tholos A at Moni Odigitria, stating:

Burning of the human remains thus appears to be the result of a rather hasty, incidental and short-lived process that was not aimed at the complete or incomplete cremation of the human body...It seems possible therefore that the burned human bones represent the *fumigation* of the tholos, a practice that is usually associated with *the symbolic and practical clearance of the floor of the earlier human remains* and its preparation for the deposition of the newly deceased.

(Triantaphyllou 2010:232, my emphasis)

Fumigation in this case is conceptualised as both practical and symbolic in nature and directly associated with the clearance of previous human remains in preparation for new deposits. This idea of fumigation as associated with clearance or cleanliness is similarly invoked by Murphy (1998:35), in her association of 'fumigation fires' with 'cleaning' at the tombs of Porti, Lebena, Platanos and Kamilari, in addition to Triantaphyllou (2010: 236) and subsequently Branigan's (2010a:257) interpretation of a single 'fumigation' episode as a final stage of tomb clearance at Tholos B at Moni Odigitria, where it was seemingly carried out after the majority of skeletal remains and body parts had been moved to the nearby Ossuary.

The relationship between 'fumigation' and burning in scholarly discussions of Prepalatial funerary practice is complex. The two activities are often conflated and interpretations of their function are bound up in attempts to distinguish between 'practical' and 'symbolic' activities at the tomb sites. Hamilakis (2018:324) has noted that burning as a secondary depositional activity has been traditionally underestimated due to its conventional interpretation as 'fumigation', during which the localised burning of human remains was posited as accidental and consequential. However, as discussed in Section 3.4, Triantaphyllou (2017:286) has argued that the burning of selected human remains was purposeful and representative of a Minoan intention to destroy 'familiar flesh' of the dead and enact the dissolution of individualised, embodied personhood. Yet even in such detailed discussions of recent evidence from the Prepalatial tombs of Crete, 'fumigation' is still used to describe the use of fire at the tomb sites, illustrating the conservatism of archaeological terminology and perhaps perpetuating the conflation of two potentially distinct activities in scholarly discourse.

Acknowledging this conflation is important, as while fumigation and burning seem similar in terms of material representation in the archaeological record (i.e. the presence of burnt deposits), they are fundamentally different, in that they may be seen to represent divergent motivations, intention and outcomes. As discussed, burning has been posited (within a Hertzian framework of interpretation) as a material strategy through which to facilitate the dissolution of social and material personhood, while 'fumigation' has been interpreted as associated with both the 'practical' negation of foul odour and the symbolic cleansing of the tomb structures. Attempts to untangle various interpretations of 'fumigation' as 'practical' versus 'symbolic' cleansing, then, are somewhat impeded by the

inconsistent use of the term itself. There appears to be essential differences in the ways in which scholars define such a process, both in terms of physical enactment, i.e., localised versus extensive burning episodes, and in relation to its potential non-physical, i.e., 'symbolic', 'ritual', 'spiritual', outcomes.

This juxtaposition of the 'practical' versus the 'symbolic' in interpretations of smell and 'fumigation' at the Prepalatial tombs reminds us of the scholarly discourse related to 'individualised' burial discussed in Chapter 3. Just as scholars disagree in that instance whether the archaeological evidence suggests conscious attempts by the Minoans to materially enact symbolic meaning (i.e. social hierarchy, post-mortem individualism) or whether it represented practical strategies of spatial organisation (i.e. increasing tomb capacity through the 'boxing' or burning of bodies), so too have scholars attempted to distinguish between the symbolic and the practical in discussions of 'fumigation'. As outlined, such an endeavour is inevitably confusing and contradictory, which prompts the question of whether such a distinction is interpretatively restrictive in our imaginings of ancient practices, which may have dual, multiple or even theoretically, a complete absence of 'functions', whether they be 'symbolic', 'practical' or otherwise.

Admittedly, this is not a natural or comfortable position for the archaeologist, trained to recognise features in the material record which conform to particular interpretative categories. Yet one's own actions provide sufficient evidence to acknowledge that it holds true: as Douglas (1966:68) points out, even our annual 'spring cleans' cannot be so easily defined:

When we honestly reflect on our busy scrubblings and cleanings in this light we know that we are not mainly trying to avoid disease. We are separating, placing boundaries, making visible statements about the home we are intending to create out of the material house.

(Douglas 1966:68)

Pollution behaviours may be complex then, and even our own may not be clearly designated as either exclusively 'practical' or 'symbolic' in nature. Reflecting on the nuances of our own behaviour thus raises further questions about our perspectives on perceptions of pollution in the past. Is it because we perceive a necessity for actions to combat the 'intolerable and nauseous stench' based on our own socio-cultural olfactory sensitivities that we interpret such strategies in the archaeological record? Hamilakis

(2008:4) certainly makes a similar point in his suggestion that certain aspects of the funerary archaeological record of Prepalatial Crete may have been traditionally ignored and/or censored to conform to 'middle-class norms of respectability', citing the potential over-estimation of olfactory devices in his statement that 'implements more likely to have been used for the consumption of narcotic and hallucinogenic substances had become "fire boxes" or "incense burners"'. In the same vein, he briefly makes the point elsewhere that such a scholarly emphasis on 'fumigation' and its negation of 'bad' smell may have been influenced by our own attitudes towards bodily decomposition and its associated odours, which he characterises as 'a modernist and simplistic argument' (Hamilakis 2018:324).

In order avoid such ethnocentric perspectives, we should follow Metcalf and Huntington (1991:74 and above), in their acknowledgement that other cultures, both past and present, may have had a 'radically different set of attitudes to the decomposition of the corpse'. Therefore, to suggest that the smell of bodily decomposition was not perceived in Bronze Age Crete as inherently negative, unpalatable and symbolically pollutant, is surely just as radical as stating that it was. What I argue for then, is not radicalism, but relativism: that anthropological fieldwork can and should force us to consider our own perceptions of smell and their interpretative influence when applied uncritically to the ancient past.

Such a consideration is important, especially as our modern experiences arguably move further away from engagement with smell, even the perception of 'pleasant' odours. In domestic contexts, Porteous (2004:104) has highlighted the replacement of smell-masking devices and air fresheners with electrostatic air cleaners, heralding what he calls 'another step in the regression of urban-industrial towards total asepsis'. This sentiment is echoed by Hamilakis (2016:16), who states that 'Western modernity has declared war on smells', with McBride (2017) arguing that 'we moderns live in a sanitised blur of white smell'. Certainly we must acknowledge that 'to smell' is not a positive descriptor and even recent attempts to circulate 'pleasant' smells throughout public places have been met with mixed responses.¹⁹

The ongoing development of 'white smell' might arguably even signal a modern *commitment* to the production of olfactory 'blandscapes', as scientific research aims to create the olfactory equivalent of 'white noise' (Weiss et al. 2012). Through applying the

¹⁹ As occurred at St. James' Park London Underground station in 2001, where a floral-based scent named 'Madeline' was described as 'medicinal' and similar to 'industrial cleaner' by commuters (The Guardian online, 24th April 2001).

same conditions to odorant mixtures as those which produces white noise,²⁰ Weiss et al. (2012:19959) hypothesised that in doing so, ““whiteness” may emerge in olfaction as well’. Their results state that (their version of) ‘olfactory white was in no way overwhelming’, in that ‘olfactory white was largely intermediate along the key axes of human olfactory perception’ (Weiss et al. 2012:19962-3).

‘White smell’ then, just as with white noise, is characterised by our inability to perceive individually any of its composite elements, whether it be frequency or odourous compound. It is purposefully neutral, blandly ‘intermediate’ and inoffensive, carefully balanced so as to un-stimulate our socio-culturally shaped senses. In a perfectly modern paradox, its sole purpose is to smell of nothing. Yet, as Weiss et al. (2012:19963) are quick to point out, ‘naming a percept “white” may be taken as having various implications’. Although their focus in this statement is to acknowledge the fundamental physical differences between white light, white noise and white smell, it is these ‘various implications’ that we must endeavour to continually acknowledge and problematise in interpretative discussion. This is an exercise of self-reflexivity which we cannot afford to neglect, especially in relation to the archaeological interpretation of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete, where ‘whiteness’ is frequently invoked in discussions of colour symbolism and symbolic pollution.

4.4 ‘Whiter than snow’: colour symbolism and symbolic pollution

At the end of the funerary rites, a widow or widower is washed, anointed with oil, shaved around the hair line, given a new white cloth, and adorned with white beads, a series of acts that illustrate the close connection between washing and white symbolism. What is being washed off in these *life-crisis rites is the state of ritual death, the liminal condition between two periods of active social life*. Whiteness or “purity” is hence some respects identical with the legitimate incumbency of a socially recognized status.

(Turner 1967:77, my emphasis)

In Turner’s discussion of the Ndembu tribe of northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), white is included in what he discerns as a tripartite colour classification central to ritual symbolism, together with red and black. His informants assert that white clay and other ‘white things’,

²⁰ I.e. when the mixture components span stimulus space and when they are of equal intensity.

stand for “whiteness”, which (among other designations) is purity, life, health, to remember (e.g. the ancestors), to be without death, to lack bad luck/misfortune, to make visible, to sweep clean and to wash oneself (Turner 1967:69). “Whiteness”, like the ‘white things’ that represent it, is positive and pure. It is ‘the unsullied and the unpolluted’, a lack of defilement that ‘may have either a moral or ritual character’ (Turner 1967:76).

Turner’s discussion of Ndembu colour symbolism was rooted in his (self-admittedly controversial) interpretation of the universal psychobiological experiences of mankind, in which he argued that links between ‘basic human experiences of the body’ (semen, milk, blood etc.) provided ‘a kind of primordial classification of reality’ (Turner 1967:88-90). The comparative ethnographic and archaeological data outlined by Turner to support such a claim for the ‘universal’ is scant,²¹ and as such, readers must be wary of throwing ‘caution to the wind’ (as Turner (1967:88) himself characterises his approach) and uncritically accepting such universalising models of interpretation.

This said, it is undeniable that when we read Turner’s account of the colour symbolism of the 1950s Ndembu,²² we recognise certain similarities between their purported associations of ‘whiteness’ and our own. We too associate whiteness with various forms of symbolic purity: one only has to consider the white garments traditionally worn by Christian brides to represent their chastity, the white colour of children’s coffins in an acknowledgement of their innocence, or the inclusion of white in emblems as a symbol of peace in order to recognise relevant examples. Whiteness in modernity is also bound up with ideas of cleanliness: bathrooms or washing appliances are largely white and it dominates the décor of healthcare facilities. White is often perceived to be clean and without corruption, it is the blank canvas and the metaphorical clean slate. White in modernity is both symbolically and scientifically the colour of absence then, in that it is not technically a physical colour in itself, but rather a colour percept (Weiss et al. 2012:19959).

In this brief consideration of white symbolism, I am not proposing any kind of comparative symbology, but rather to emphasise that to interpret colour symbolism in Prepalatial Crete, a time from which we have no ethnographic informants, no contemporary deciphered text and a characteristically fragmentary archaeological record,

²¹ In a characteristically honest caveat, Turner (1967:81) introduces his limited comparative data by stating ‘Since I have had little opportunity to comb through the literature systematically, what follows must necessarily be somewhat haphazard.’

²² The majority of fieldwork carried out by Victor and Edith Turner in Zambia occurred between the years 1950-54.

is to inevitably import symbolic colour values from other contexts. While it is important to acknowledge cultures with differing symbolic schemes – such as in Cantonese society where white is both the colour of mourning and the pollution of death²³ – I argue that the interpretation of whiteness in this context is influenced by our own socio-culturally specific perception of white as representative of a lack of symbolic pollution and/or a means through which to negate it. Indeed, it is in scholarly discussions of Prepalatial funerary practices in which we may recognise similar assertions to those of Turner (1967:77 and above), in that ‘whiteness’ is interpreted as having been introduced so as to punctuate and facilitate the conclusion of periods of liminality and ritual uncleanliness associated with death.

The primary manner in which this ‘whiteness’ is invoked in terms of symbolic purity is in reference to the tombs’ ‘clearing’ of human remains during secondary depositional practices. ‘Clearance’ is designated by Branigan (1987:47) as one of five categories of physical engagement with human bones which (along with ‘fumigation’) was found frequently at the surveyed tholos tombs. ‘Clearance’ is subsequently immediately placed in association with ‘fumigation’ as an inherently symbolic activity at the tomb sites, an interpretation supported through reference to the inclusion of white substances during its completion:

The combination of total fumigation and total clearance of bones and grave-goods before a new burial stratum was begun in Platanos A, and the total fumigation overlain by a new floor of *clean white sand* in Lebena IIa, suggest that fumigation in these tombs *was ritualised and symbolic*. The same may be said of the clearance of Koumasa E, where much of the burial deposit was cleared out and the remainder was swept into a heap at one side and the whole deposit *covered with a layer of white earth*.

(Branigan 1987:47, my emphasis)

The use of the term ‘clean white sand’ here may well refer to the lack of inclusions in the sedimentary mixture, but more explicit interpretations of prepared white strata at the Prepalatial tholoi suggest that its ‘cleanliness’ may also indicate the scholarly invocation of

²³ As opposed to the black clothing traditionally worn during public mourning/funeral services in contemporary Britain and Ireland, white is the colour of mourning in Cantonese society. Watson (1982:157) highlights that a Cantonese funeral depends on the employment of professionals who specialise in *pai shih* or ‘white affairs’, namely ritual or funerary specialists such as priests, nuns, musicians, coffin makers, fortune tellers, exhumation specialists etc.

ideas of white symbolic purity, rather than solely an attempt to describe in detail its physical attributes. Such an interpretation is evident in Branigan's (1970b:88) discussion of the same tombs, Platanos A and Lebena IIa, in which he describes "'floors" of white sand or earth...laid over earlier burials, usually at an important time in the tomb's history':

The use of white material for floors laid after clearing or fumigation seems persistent and one wonders if it was chosen deliberately to symbolise, perhaps even confirm, the purged state of the tomb.

(Branigan 1970b:90)

This is a view that is later repeated by Branigan (1993:126-7, my emphasis) in reference to the same archaeological features (in addition to a layer of white earth at Koumasa E), which he describes as representative of Minoan acts of '*wholesale purification*'. This suggestion that white substances were consciously used for their symbolic purity – or, alternatively, an ability to facilitate it – is echoed in Murphy's (1998:35) citation of the evidence for layers 'of sand or another white substance' at Lebena, Koumasa E, Platanos A. This reference to white layers is situated within her wider discussion of tomb 'cleaning', which occurred after the conclusion of what she identifies as the ritually unclean 'liminal' period (Murphy 1998:35). The evidence for white strata within the tomb structures is thus framed in terms of symbolic purity, seen as punctuating the end of the dead's inherently pollutant state of 'non-being'. Indeed, the argument for the equation of whiteness and the conscious negation of symbolic pollution is made further explicit by Branigan (1993:57-8) in his discussion of both Vorou A – where a 'white floor was introduced to separate the extended inhumations from later pithos and larnax burials' – and the white clay floor of Koumasa E,²⁴ in his assertion that:

Such considerations must have been considered important, if not necessary, and evidence from elsewhere suggests that in some way *the laying of a floor of new material* was considered as *ensuring the purity of the tomb environment*.

(Branigan 1999:58-9, my emphasis)

²⁴ This interpretation of white floors as indicative of symbolic purity is not one which is found in Xanthoudides (1924) whose description of Koumasa E is cited by Branigan (1999:58-9). Xanthoudides (1924:7) simply states that 'all bones had been heaped together and covered with white earth'.

This conceptualisation of symbolic purity as characterised by the absence of previous burials, as associated with tomb ‘cleanliness’, ‘organisation’ and purged ‘whiteness’, should give us pause for thought in light of our previous discussion of modern preferences for individualised, ‘organised’ and ‘contained’ burials in Chapter 3. It is important to acknowledge that interpretations of symbolic purification – white ‘floors’, ‘fumigation’ or otherwise – are built on the premise that such purification was inherently necessary, which in turn relies upon the perception of the dead as inherently pollutant in nature. As we have discussed the anthropological influences and interpretative consequences of such a perception in previous chapters, it remains to note here that Branigan (1998:58-9 and above) refers here not only to white ‘floors’ as a Minoan attempt at negating symbolic pollution, but the introduction of ‘new materials’ into the tomb structures in general.

This is an important consideration, since in many cases where prepared floors may be discerned in the archaeological record of Prepalatial Crete they do not consist of predominantly white substances. For instance, in contrast to Branigan’s characterisation of the stratum as a ‘white floor’ (1970b:88; 1999:58), Alexiou and Warren (2004:18) describe a ‘layer of dark sand’ placed over the bones in Lebena Ila (Yerokambos) after the largest ‘fumigation’ episode.²⁵ Elsewhere, Xanthoudides (1924:77) and Branigan (1970b:88; 1999:57) refer to ‘floors made of sand and gravel from nearby streams’ at Drakones Z and Platanos B, in addition to a layer of red clay present at Platanos A. Similarly, Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis (1997:247) report that the ground in EM Tholos C, Burial Building 13, and in the rooms of Burial Building 18 at the cemetery of Archanes-Phourni was levelled by a layer of stones, on top of which burials were placed, either within larnakes/pithoi or without.

While the preceding examples are largely restricted to the circular tholoi, recent excavations at the house tombs of eastern Crete similarly reveal prepared floors of various predominantly non-white materials. At the site of Sissi, ongoing work has suggested that prepared floors typified primary burials, which is the most attested type of deposit on the northeastern and northern slopes of the cemetery during its use (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:294; Schoep et al. 2017:381). However, as Schoep et al. (2017:381) highlight, a range of materials were employed in their construction within the rectilinear structures, including

²⁵ Boness and Goren (2017:514) refer to such characterisations – e.g. ‘black earth’, ‘white clay floors’, ‘pink sand’ etc. – as ‘fuzzy terminology’, highlighting the terms’ unhelpful ambiguity.

blue-grey limestone pebbles, rock, clay and fill. Pebble 'floors' are also attested at the site of Petras, where a layer of small sea pebbles was excavated from the levelled bedrock floor of EM III House Tomb 3 (Room 4) (Tsipopoulou 2017b:63). Similarly, Soles (1992:214) describes a mixture of pebbles and 'sticky white clay' having been used to create a flooring material at Building 3 at Archanes, in addition to a 'special pebble flooring' underneath a disturbed burial at Palaikastro VI (Soles 1992:244).

In addition, whilst Branigan (1970:90) describes an 'apparently universal clearing of the existing soil' within the Mesara tholoi, it is clear that in certain instances prepared floors were the result of the introduction of 'new' soil into the funerary structures, which was subsequently treated in order to form a more compacted surface. This is exemplified at Gypsades and Koutsokera, where 'the floor was simply twenty-thirty centimetres of pure earth beaten hard' and at the near-destroyed tomb of Kamilari B where 'the rock had been covered with a thin layer of beaten earth which formed a bed for a floor of polygonal slabs' (Branigan 1970b:88).²⁶ Flouda (2012:113) also describes a 'beaten floor made up of small stones and clay' used to cover the western area of the main room G at the tomb of Apesokari A and at Ayia Kyriaki an EM II 'pinkish-white' earth floor appeared to have been 'thoroughly trampled... to form a very hard surface' (Blackman and Branigan 1982:5,54; Branigan 1993:22).

Thus, the existence of other floor colours, materials and treatments cause us to question interpretations which posit white strata as representative of an ancient attempt at ensuring symbolic purity after the decomposition of a seemingly pollutant dead. 'Whiteness' may have various implications within modern schemata of colour symbolism as a percept associated with purification, cleanliness and neutrality, and as such, white surfaces must be considered within the wider context of Prepalatial tomb architecture, where prepared floors were seemingly constructed to define cemetery space and direct actions within it.

It is important to note that prepared floor surfaces are also present outside of the tomb structures themselves, as seen at Moni Odigitria, where the eastern and outer courtyards were delineated by a 'cobbled' surface laid down within a boundary wall (Branigan and Campbell-Green 2010:130).²⁷ External paved floors have also been attested

²⁶ Xanthoudides (1924:75) refers to the floor at Koutsokera as 'a layer of .20m to .30m thick of foreign earth trodden down which contained neither bones nor sherds'.

²⁷ This 'cobbled' surface is referred to as a 'pebble surfacing' elsewhere (Branigan 1993:129).

at Platanos, Krasi and Apesokari I and II (Murphy 1998:37) in addition to the bluish slate flooring at the cemetery of Koumasa, which extended over an area of at least 50 x 6 metres (Branigan 1998:21). At the house tomb cemetery of Sissi, it appears that pebbles were one of the mediums through which space was horizontally defined, with the largest open space identified thus far partially covered by pebbles (Schoep et al. 2017:371).

None of the non-white internal or external floors mentioned, however, have thus far been explicitly interpreted as possessing a symbolic, extra-structural function, although recent research has suggested such a possibility for pebbles in particular (Finn forthcoming). That white surfaces have dominated interpretations of the potential symbolism of prepared floors at the tomb sites suggests that scholars perceive white to be somehow exceptional. This is also suggested by its characterisation as representative of symbolic purity, purification and purging. I argue that this exceptionality is inherently influenced by our own modern schemata of colour symbolism, in which white is associated with both practical and conceptual purity.

In addition to this, I would emphasise that interpretations that suggest that prepared floors were introduced so as to indicate or facilitate symbolic cleansing at the tomb sites should also be considered in light of the comments of Wells (1990:138) in reference to later Mycenaean funerary archaeology, in which soil layers present within tomb structures have similarly been traditionally hypothesised as representative of acts of symbolic purification. Wells emphasises that this interpretation of potential floor preparation should be appropriately contextualised,²⁸ arguing for a broader consideration of the evidence for multi-stage funerary practices:

I therefore consider it highly unlikely that soil was brought into the tomb for the sole purpose of purifying it and ameliorating the atmosphere for the living. The chamber tombs were designed for multiple burials. This fact itself is a refutation of Mycenaean abhorrence of death and putrefaction, which is not to say that the Mycenaeans were indifferent to the odors in the tombs.

(Wells 1999:138)

²⁸ Wells (1999:138) suggests that the soil layers may not be purposeful at all, but rather a consequence of seepage until tombs during their continual entry over time.

While Wells makes these comments in reference to later Mycenaean secondary depositional practices, I argue that prepared surfaces within the Prepalatial tombs of Crete – white in colour or otherwise – should similarly be considered within this same framework of continual, multi-stage entry into the funerary structures. Thus, while there is clear evidence for the investment of time and labour in the construction of prepared floor surfaces within both tholoi and house tombs, we must remain wary of any interpretation which seeks to situate white surfaces as exceptional or as inherently symbolic and/or purificatory. It is in this way that we might begin to include other types of prepared floors in interpretative discussion, as equally significant features of the archaeological record.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the entities from which symbolic pollution emanates are postulated as the decomposing, liminal dead, who, like Turner's account of the Ndembu widow/er (1967:77 and above), only regain social agency once they are associated with 'whiteness' during secondary funerary practices.²⁹ While this view of 'whiteness' – as purificatory and as punctuating periods of ontological precarity – is most explicitly argued for in reference to white 'floors', we are also reminded of scholarly interpretations related to the burning of human remains, during which it is postulated that any remaining pollutant flesh was destroyed, the dead were reduced to 'purified' bone and completed their final rite of passage into the realm of ancestors (see Chapter 5). Whereas burnt bone most frequently presents in the material record of Prepalatial Crete as dark in colour, any archaeologist who has excavated funerary contexts in the region would agree that burnt skeletal remains are excavated in a range of colours and shades. For instance, Triantaphyllou (2012:232) groups the burned human remains from Tholos A at Moni Odigitria into seven categories, whose discolouration and distortion on the external surface of the bone suggests different conditions of burning from low to high temperature, ranging from black, black/brown, black/blue, blue/grey, blue/grey with evidence of warping, white with evidence of cracking to white with evidence of cracking and warping.

White burnt bone is diagnostic then, in that osteoarchaeologists may infer from its colour the intensity of the burning episode to which it was exposed.³⁰ White calcined bone, along with severe distortion, warping and deep transverse and longitudinal cracking, is representative of the human remains' exposure to fire at high temperatures, the high

²⁹ In the case of the Prepalatial dead, this social agency is argued by scholars as that which is achieved through incorporation into a collective ancestorhood, as discussed in Chapter 5.

³⁰ Intensity does not refer exclusively to temperature but rather incorporates considerations as to the duration of exposure to high temperatures.

frequency of which at the Livari-Skiadi tholos tomb has led Triantaphyllou (2016:775) to suggest that the burning of the bones took place before full decomposition of the flesh, with remaining fat and soft tissue facilitating the high temperatures to which the skeletal remains were exposed.

White bone is therefore representative of sustained exposure to high temperatures, the facilitation of which could have been aided by the simultaneous destruction of flesh by fire. We are thus reminded of the interpretative arguments for so-called ‘fumigation’ and Hertzian modes of interpretation in previous sections (3.4-3.6), in which burning episodes are interpreted as purposeful attempts at the dissolution of individualised, embodied, and (in the context of decomposition) *pollutant* personhood. In this anthropologically-influenced framework, then, the production of ‘whiteness’, e.g., the calcination of the skeletal material, is implicitly associated with processes of purification, in that the dead’s achievement of a ‘white’ state of being is interpreted as negation of decomposition, symbolic pollution and a return to social agency.

In addition, as discussed in Section 1.5, analogies made in the scholarly literature between modern Greece and ancient Crete perpetuate unfounded conceptions of cultural continuity between the two societies, an interpretative tendency particularly evident in discussions of secondary depositional practices. In scholars’ emphases on white surfaces and substances, in addition to their interpretation in terms of both punctuating and facilitating periods of symbolic purity and ritual cleanliness, we are reminded of instances in the archaeological literature where reference is made to modern funerary practices in rural Greece, in which the colour white plays a central role.³¹ Indeed, one has only to reflect upon the words traditionally spoken as the priest pours wine over the open coffin in modern rural Greece, to notice substantial similarities with archaeological arguments for white as representative of symbolic purity and ritual cleanliness in Prepalatial funerary contexts:

You shall sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

You shall wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

(Vaporis 1977, as cited in Danforth 1982:Plate 12)

³¹ See Section 2.3 for a discussion of funerary practices in modern rural Greece.

Whiteness, cleanliness, purity: these are all interpretations in the archaeological literature that are constructed in juxtaposition to the process of bodily decomposition, which is posited as inherently pollutant, dangerous and unclean. As outlined in Chapter 3, scholars have argued that decomposition of the flesh inspired fear in the Prepalatial tomb users, and that the dissolution of the 'individualised' physical form heralded a period of danger, social uncertainty and 'liminality', necessitating multiple strategies for its avoidance and negation. However, recent evidence from funerary contexts in Crete may be seen to challenge this traditional interpretation of a conscious Minoan avoidance of the processes of bodily dissolution, raising questions as to whether the application of entrenched, universalising anthropological models related to transient personhood and associated symbolic pollution remains a valid means of interpretation.

4.5 Partial people?: body parts, decomposition and partible personhood

It is not an overstatement to say that it is an exciting time in the study of the funerary archaeology of Crete. While sustained and widespread looting at the tomb sites and the methodological biases of early excavations have traditionally impeded both the collection and interpretation of skeletal remains from the tomb sites, recent and ongoing osteoarchaeological research is beginning to shed new light on the funerary practices of the early Bronze Age Minoans.

In contrast to the early archaeological disinterest and disposal of human skeletal remains at the Prepalatial tombs, osteoarchaeologists are now crucial personnel on site, with their research appearing as integral elements of published volumes (see Triantaphyllou 2005, 2010, 2017). The osteoarchaeological team based at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, led by Dr Sevi Triantaphyllou, are particularly active in the interpretation of human remains from Bronze Age funerary contexts in Crete, at sites such as Petras, Koumasa, Livari-Skiadi, and Moni Odigitria (Triantaphyllou 2005, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2018; Triantaphyllou et al. 2017, Kiorpe 2018). In addition, relatively new approaches to the study of human remains such as archaeoethanatology have also been employed in Prepalatial contexts,³² as seen in their use by the Belgian School of

³² As highlighted by Crevecoeur et al. (2015:285), archaeoethanatology as a technique (also termed 'field anthropology') has been developed in France over the past thirty years.

Archaeology in the excavation of the cemetery of Sissi in eastern Crete (Crevecoeur et al. 2015; Schoep et al. 2017).

However, the particularity of this research and its results must be duly acknowledged. This sustained, specialised focus on osteological data from Crete is inevitably confined to contexts in which skeletal material survives in sufficient quantities, such as at the ongoing excavations at the eastern house tomb cemeteries of Petras and Sissi, or instances in which re-excavation of previously overlooked or disturbed deposits is possible, such as at Koumasa and Moni Odigitria. Although the geographical, historical and institutional contexts of these preliminary results must be recognised, one cannot help feel that we are now in the midst of a critical moment in the study of the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete, with more detailed information about Minoan physical interactions with their dead available than ever before.

The preliminary conclusions of this recent research, however, fundamentally contradict the anthropological models that have been traditionally applied to the archaeological record of Prepalatial Crete (see Chapter 3). Despite the ongoing publication of such osteological analyses, then, if we fail to reconsider the theoretical framework with which they are immediately associated, we run the risk of perpetuating entrenched interpretations of ancient conceptions of personhood, pollution and social agency, despite their clear inconsistency with recent results.

One of the most evident ways in which previous, anthropologically-influenced interpretations differ from recent osteoarchaeological perspectives of Prepalatial funerary practices is in their argument for a Minoan active avoidance and/or fear of the processes of bodily decomposition. As discussed at length in section 3.6, scholars have echoed Hertz in their characterisation of decomposition as a process perceived by the Bronze Age Cretans as inherently pollutant, a stage in funerary practice associated with a Turner-like ‘liminality’, during which the dead needed to be actively ‘contained’ and separated from the living through various material strategies. The preliminary results from recent osteoarchaeological and archaeothanatological approaches, however, do not suggest a scenario in which the Minoans actively avoided physical engagement with the decomposing remains of their dead. Instead, such evidence indicates close interaction with fleshed, ‘fresh’ human remains. As highlighted by Triantaphyllou (2018:149) the presence of fully or semi-articulated body parts in the archaeological record of Prepalatial Crete is thus not exclusively compatible with interactions during primary deposition, but might

rather represent secondary depositional practices during which *parts* of the body were physically engaged with.

While the skeletal remains from Tholoi A and B at Moni Odigitria was largely collected through the dry sieving of deposits created by looting activities at the site, Triantaphyllou (2010:232) notes that a few cases of ‘certain partially decomposed body parts, such as the shoulder joint and the hand and foot bones’ were removed from Tholos A, as identified by the minimal presence of scapula, clavicle, metacarpals and metatarsals. Through reference to the osteological evidence, including the survival of flat bones, she envisages the removal of human remains from the tholos as one which involved physical engagement with not just completely skeletonised, ‘dry’ bones, but also with partially decomposed – or rather, *decomposing* – body parts.

Evidence for physical engagement with whole body parts in the process of decomposition is further suggested at the EM/MM Kephala Petras rock shelter in eastern Crete, at which current analyses of the human remains suggest that (along with the deposition of burnt and skeletonised material), there occurred the secondary deposition of ‘body parts which were in fresh condition saving much of their organic components or even their anatomical articulation’ (Triantaphyllou 2018:148-9; see also Triantaphyllou 2012). Similarly, in the EM III – MMIA House Tomb 5 in the Petras cemetery, Triantaphyllou et al. (2017:291, my emphasis) report that taphonomic evidence suggests physical interaction with human remains both ‘*during* and after the decomposition of the body’ in the Prepalatial period, during which they were deposited or transferred between the rooms of the structure in either semi- or disarticulated form.³³

Furthermore, the variety of discolourations and periosteal texture change, such as warping and erosion, on 336 post-cranial and cranial bone fragments from rooms 1, 2, 3, 9 and 10 of House Tomb 5 at Petras suggests that they were burnt as ‘partly defleshed body parts’ (Triantaphyllou et al. 2012:292). The minimum number of individuals represented by the burnt human remains – estimated to be only six – in addition to the lack of evidence for traces of burning within the tomb and wider cemetery area, has led Triantaphyllou et al. (2017:292) to propose that these fleshed body parts were moved at some point after their ‘initial disposal’ and exposed to firing conditions at an unknown location outside of the cemetery.

³³ Triantaphyllou (2017:279) argues elsewhere that the skeletal remains (both in ‘fresh’ and ‘dry’ condition) may have ‘circulated’ within the rooms of House Tombs 2 and 5 at Petras.

The excavation of a semi-articulated body represented by an upper torso (Fig. 10) in Room 10 of House Tomb 5 at Petras similarly suggests funerary practices during which human remains were physically manipulated whilst they were in the midst of decomposition and thus retained some element of soft tissue. Articulated body parts in ‘fresh’ condition have also been observed in Room 9, where a pair of left ulna and radius and a pair of left tibia and fibula were excavated (Fig. 9), in addition to those from Room 10, in which a left clavicle articulated to a humerus and a right ulna and radius were deposited (Triantaphyllou et al. 2017:295; Kiorpe 2018:3). My emphasis on these instances of body parts deposited in seemingly fleshed, ‘fresh’ condition is not intended to overestimate their proportion in the context of the far more substantial amount of mixed, commingled remains deposited in skeletonised, ‘dry’ condition in all of the rooms of House 5 at Petras. However, although we must acknowledge that these are preliminary examples of deposited fleshed body parts which are ‘very few’ relative to the overall skeletal material (Triantaphyllou et al. 2017:278), it is also important to recognise that their excavation implies physical engagement with decomposing human remains during the Prepalatial period.

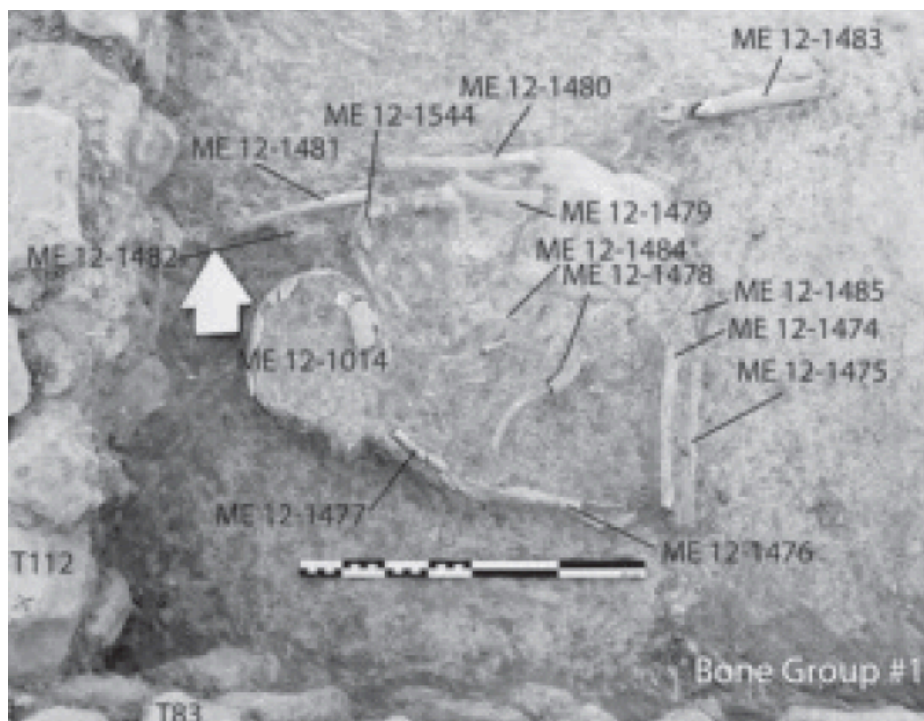


Figure 10: Semi-articulated upper torso manipulated in fresh condition from Room 10, House Tomb 5 at Petras (Triantaphyllou et al. 2015:294, Fig. 1a)

The extent of this engagement conflicts with scholarly interpretations which posit Minoan interactions with the decomposing dead as characterised by revulsion, avoidance and physical containment, as osteoarchaeologists have interpreted decomposing body parts as having been moved both between the rooms of House Tomb 5 itself and between the tomb and an unknown location outside of the cemetery. Furthermore, the variety of the manipulation of human remains in different stages of decomposition has prompted excavators to consider the length of time between each physical interaction with the human remains, suggesting that the presence of human remains seemingly deposited in both ‘fresh’ and ‘dry’ condition indicates that entry into the tomb occurred after varying intervals (Triantaphyllou et al. 2017:295).

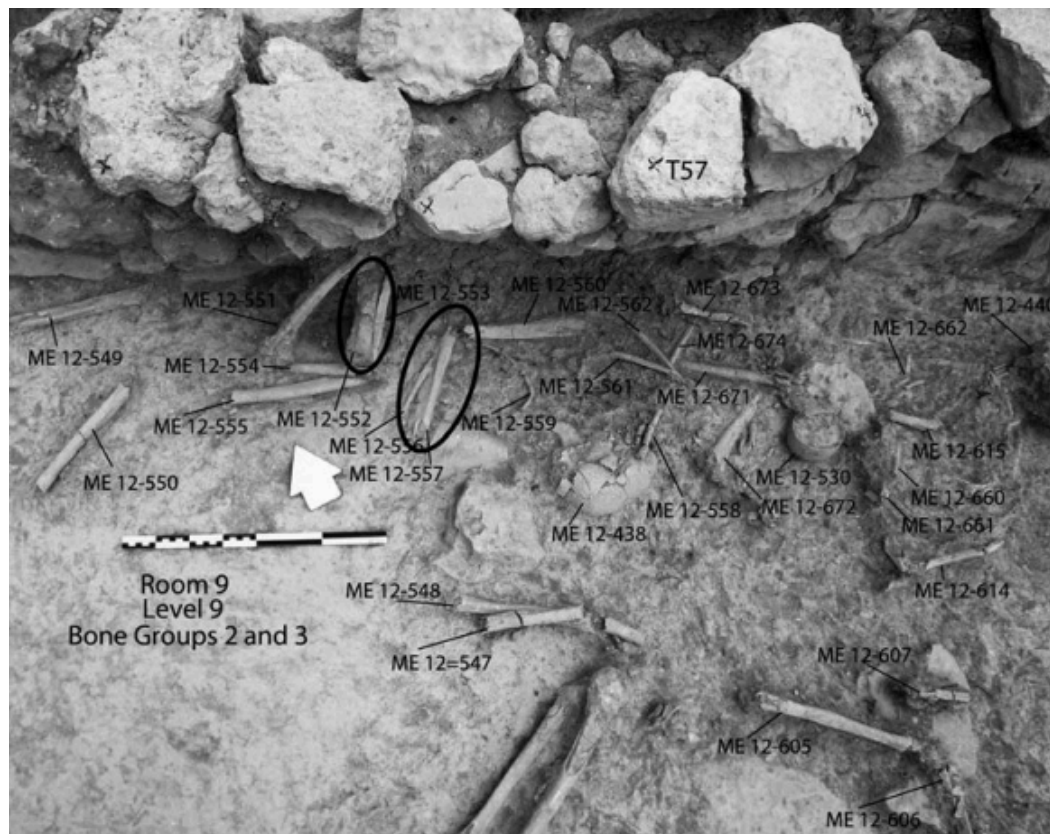


Figure 11: Two cases of articulated body parts (indicated): a left ulna and radius (ME 12-552 and ME 12-553) and a left tibia and fibula (ME 12-556 and ME 12-557) (Kiorpe 2018:4, Fig. 5)

Preliminary results from other house tombs at the cemetery of Petras paint a similar picture, in which there seems little evidence for what has been termed Minoan ‘avoidance’ or ‘fear’ of interaction with human remains in the process of decomposition. Kiorpe (2018:3) reports that ‘three primary burials that were secondarily manipulated’ were excavated from House Tomb 2, all placed in funerary receptacles but exhibiting signs of

removal and/or relocation of certain bones 'which were either in dry or "fresh" condition when handled'. In her brief report, Kiorpe also mentions that House Tomb 2 likewise exhibited examples of semi-articulated body parts, indicating that 'secondary deposition was not limited to completely skeletonised remains', in addition to stating that semi-articulated body parts have also been identified at House Tombs 4 and 10 (Kiorpe 2018:3).³⁴

In the case of House Tomb 2 at Petras, Triantaphyllou (2017:278-9) even suggests that the human remains' state of decomposition may have determined their location within the tomb structure:

two distinct uses of space can be considered in relation to the different states of body decomposition: rooms deemed appropriate to serve as temporary repositories for the deposition and storage of the human bodies (e.g. Rooms 3 and 9) and rooms which served as the final areas of deposition and storage only of defleshed human remains (e.g. ossuaries Rooms 1 and 2).

(Triantaphyllou 2017:278-9)

If we accept this interpretation of the circulation of human remains dependent on their state of decomposition, then we must also acknowledge that such a circulation necessitates the close observation, manipulation and movement of partible, decomposing bodily matter in a specifically Prepalatial context.

Archaeoethanatomical research at the house tomb cemetery of Sissi in eastern Crete also provides evidence of instances in which the tomb users were physically interacting with human remains which had not yet fully decomposed. At the northern edge of the cemetery, Locus 1.9 – a small, rectangular walled compartment measuring 1.8 x 0.75 metres, with an estimated terminus post quem of MM IA – was found to contain at least thirteen individuals: nine adults, two children (age classes 1-4 and 1-4/5-9), one adolescent (age class 15-19) and one perinatal (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:292). The underrepresentation of small bones (such as carpals, metacarpals and phalanges) prompted the excavators to question how they came to be disproportionately present in Locus 1.9. One suggested explanation was that the movement of a body part such as the upper limb had occurred prior to its having fully decomposed (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:292).

³⁴ Kiorpe's ongoing PhD dissertation is focussed on the human remains from the cemetery of Petras in the 2nd and 3rd millennium and will no doubt provide a more comprehensive overview.

Similarly, Crevecoeur et al. (2015:292) describe another instance in which the transfer of body parts may have taken place prior to full decomposition, highlighting the existence of a loose anatomical connection between a craniofacial complex and the first two vertebrae. Since the atlanto-occipital joint is one of those most resistant to disarticulation, this suggests that 'its preservation implied that the head was moved despite the fact that it was still partly attached to the neck' (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:292). They conclude that Locus 1.9 represents a complex secondary deposit of human remains, the majority of which were most likely displaced after complete decomposition had occurred. However, the presence of small bones, in addition to some connected elements, suggests that 'some movement took place before full decomposition had been achieved' (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:293).

It is difficult to restrict our discussion of 'body parts' strictly to the Prepalatial period, as many funerary contexts (such as Locus 1.9 at Sissi, which is at earliest MM IA in date) bridge the chronological divide between Pre- and Protopalatial and it is evident that this Minoan physical engagement with partially fleshed and articulated human remains continued into the latter period. For instance, McGeorge (2008:578) describes cases of articulated vertebrae from the Hagios Charalambos cave in the Lasithi plain of east-central Crete, in which human remains were placed at some point during MM IIB after their initial deposition elsewhere.³⁵ She asserts that this articulation indicates the 'incomplete decomposition of some skeletons at the time of secondary burial', which, in contrast to the 'very slim possibility' of identifying bones belonging to a single individual amongst the extensive amount of commingled skeletal material, may have been recognisable as associated with a certain person. In Compartment 1.7 at Sissi – which was seemingly cleared before its reuse in MM II A-B – we are confronted with evidence that suggests physical interaction with decomposing human remains during primary burial.³⁶ In this case, the left tibia of Adult 2 was excavated in an anatomical position in relation to the left fibula, implying 'an intentional displacement of the lower part of the leg *before the body had*

³⁵ McGeorge (2008:598-9) states that there is no evidence for primary burial within the cave and all skeletal evidence is interpreted as the result of secondary deposition. It is suggested that stones intrusive to the context of the cave suggest that the burials were initially made within built tombs elsewhere before their later removal to the cave.

³⁶ The excavators of Sissi make explicit their understanding of the term 'primary burial' (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:285-6; Schoep et al. 2017:371), which they use to refer to a situation in which the body remains in the location where it was initially placed prior to decomposition. See Introduction for a detailed discussion of terminological issues in Cretan Bronze Age funerary archaeology.

completely decomposed' (Schoep et al. 2017:377, my emphasis; see also Crevecoeur et al. 2015:290).

In addition, while it must be similarly be acknowledged as a later, Protopalatial context, the block of soil removed from the Ossuary at Moni Odigitria certainly conflicts with anthropologically-influenced models that posit the decomposing dead as entities actively avoided by the Minoans. The large lump of earth (0.80 x 0.50 m) was packed with skeletal remains, including two fully articulated individuals, one male and one female (Branigan 2010a:253; Triantaphyllou 2010:234). The lower body of the male individual (Skeleton 2) was excavated prone in 'a strongly flexed position and folded almost onto the upper body, whilst the upper body was lying on its back in a fully extended position' (Triantaphyllou 2010:234). While Branigan (2010a:253) highlights that they are among the last burials to be made in the cemetery and provide invaluable evidence as to the practice of primary burial in this period, in the context of our current discussion of decomposing remains, this is not the most striking aspect of their excavation. Rather, Triantaphyllou (2010:234-5; 2018:146) emphasises that the positioning of the male body – essentially folded back over on itself – would not have been possible if deposited shortly after death. Instead, it is representative of what she terms 'secondary interference',³⁷ deposited at a time when the body had just begun to decompose, at which point 'the tendons could hold together the articular joints as well as the pelvic and thoracic girdles, which were found almost intact' (Triantaphyllou 2010:234).

Thus, we are faced with another (albeit Protopalatial) instance in which there is evidence for Minoan engagement with the decomposing remains of their dead. In this case, however, it is not in relation to decomposing body parts, but a fully articulated, potentially *recognisable*, body. Indeed, in contrast to anthropologically-influenced models which emphasise the importance of the destruction of the 'familiar flesh' during Prepalatial funerary practices, Triantaphyllou (2010:234) suggests that Skeleton 2 possibly retained its physical appearance when it was removed from elsewhere to be placed in the Ossuary and subsequently 'folded', supposedly to make space for further deposits.

While Branigan (2010a:253) tentatively suggests Tholos B as the location for this previous interment and Triantaphyllou (2010:235) rules out exposure outside of the tomb due to the lack of cut, gnawing and scavenger-associated marks on the skeletal material, it

³⁷ See Section 2.4 for a discussion of the term 'interference' in relation to Prepalatial secondary depositional practices.

is unknown where Skeleton 2 was interred before its deposition in the Ossuary. Yet what is clear is that the remains were consciously and physically engaged with at a time when the body retained a substantial amount of soft and connective tissue (in addition to full articulation), potentially affording a Minoan recognition of a familiar, albeit decomposing, 'individual'. In keeping with her Hertzian interpretation of the burning of human remains then (see Section 3.5), Triantaphyllou (2010:234) makes a direct connection between the maintenance of a fleshy appearance and that of individuality, as seen in her assertion that "'Skeleton 2" should perhaps be re-defined as "Individual 2"' on the basis of the retention of physical appearance during deposition.

It is thus evident that in this case, interaction with the decomposing body was not actively avoided, but was a critical aspect of funerary practice, as it allowed partially decomposed bodies to be 'folded' into artificial positions. Whether the positioning of Skeleton/Individual 2 was achieved as a means of spatial management within the Ossuary is subject to interpretation, but what is evident is that its positioning was wholly dependent on the process of decomposition. The stages of such a process were thus observed and exploited, with the body being physically bent back on itself, a movement allowed by both the retention and partial disintegration of soft and connective tissue. In other words, flesh would have been felt: decomposing remains were physically interacted with during their conscious manipulation and deposition, a far cry from the picture of purposeful avoidance and/or 'fear' of the decomposing dead influenced by the anthropological models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner.

When seen in the context of the aforementioned evidence for Prepalatial engagement with decomposing human remains, these Protopalatial examples contribute to the growing body of evidence for interaction with decomposing, partial and even potentially 'familiar' human remains in the Prepalatial period. While it is to be hoped that more information will become available about the nature, sequence and frequency of these interactions from the ongoing excavations at Sissi, Petras and Koumasa, in particular, it must be acknowledged that they are fundamentally at odds with the anthropological models widely applied to the archaeological record of Prepalatial Crete. The physical interaction, manipulation, and even the potential *recognition* of partially fleshed, partially articulated, decomposing human remains does not suggest an active avoidance of and/or 'containment' of a dangerous, 'liminal' dead. Neither does it suggest that 'individuality' in the western sense of the term (i.e. as situated in the identifiable physical body) was

destroyed before secondary interaction with the deceased, with potentially recognisable body parts being physically engaged with before full decomposition had taken place. Therefore, decomposition cannot be characterised as a process perceived as inherently pollutant and repulsive, but rather one which allowed an engagement with human remains in a range of forms, on a spectrum from decomposing, fully articulated bodies, to whole, decomposing body parts, to completely skeletonised and disarticulated material.

As Triantaphyllou (2017:285, my emphasis) highlights, more recent osteoarchaeological results suggest that in contrast to anthropologically-influenced models of revulsion, fear and avoidance, burial processes in Prepalatial Crete are characterised as those in which ‘small or large social groups would aim for continuous physical contact with the dead body’. Furthermore, the preliminary results from ongoing excavations at sites such as Petras and Sissi indicate that the dead ‘body’ in this instance may not have been interacted with as the ‘whole’, individualised entity such a term might initially imply. Rather, there is increasing evidence for Minoan engagement with *parts* of the body, made more mobile by their ongoing decomposition yet perhaps still retaining some element of a ‘familiar’ flesh. Semi-articulated remains deposited or moved in ‘fresh’ condition then, have been posited as ‘incomplete but identifiable’ elements of the body (Triantaphyllou 2017:286), interpreted as evidence for a Minoan engagement with literal pieces of people, or, in other words, parts of a ‘person’.

This partiality raises questions about conceptions of the body and personhood post-mortem in the Prepalatial period and merits consideration in reference to scholarly discussions of partibility, fragmentation and dividuality in funerary contexts elsewhere. As mentioned in Section 3.4, Triantaphyllou (2017:286) invokes Fowler’s (2004:8) discussion of ‘dividuality’ in her argument for the purposeful fragmentation of the dead through the burning of their physical, fleshed remains.³⁸ While highlighting that the human body in the Minoan material record is most frequently approached as a collection of bones, Simandiraki-Grimshaw (2015:273) similarly invokes bodily partibility as a means of interpreting the evidence for body parts from Bronze Age funerary contexts. Speaking of bodily ‘zonation’, she argues that anatomical zones were ‘undone’ by the dead’s biological dismemberment, allowing the living to confront, enhance and reconfigure their own

³⁸ Surprisingly, her reference to Fowler (2004) is made to introductory comments relating to the redefinition and reproduction of western individuality on p.8. It is thus unclear as to which part of his later (e.g. pp. 14-30) discussion of dividuality she refers.

constituent parts, stating that Fowler's (2008) model of fractal personhood, 'may enhance our understanding of fragmentation and dismemberment of biological and represented Minoan human bodies' (Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2015:273, footnote 143). She cites a range of evidence from Bronze Age Crete in support of this statement, with mention of the incompletely decomposed skeletons from Pseira (McGeorge 2008:578), but largely referencing disarticulated, defleshed and redistributed skeletal remains.

In light of both Triantaphyllou and Simandiraki-Grimshaw's reference to Fowler's (Fowler 2004, 2008) discussion of fractal personhood as a means of interpreting fragmentation in the Cretan archaeological record, it is worth highlighting a crucial aspect of his argument, especially due to the recent evidence for Minoan physical interaction with body parts in various states of decomposition. He highlights that discussions of bodies in fractal relations have most frequently focused on the *fragmentation* of the body into *parts*, emphasising that in this narrow focus, such interpretations acknowledge only one aspect of fractal relations and only one way in which past bodies were treated, understood and experienced. More importantly, he asserts that this focus on (and indeed, the construction of) the binary opposition of whole forms versus parts has had real effect on how we perceive fractal personhood, stating 'it has tended to gloss over the messy, substantial, growing and *decaying matter of the body*' (Fowler 2008:48, my emphasis).

Following Fowler, then, I argue that in this focus on the *fragmentation* of (predominantly skeletal) human remains in discussions of bodily partibility in the Early Bronze Age, we may risk overlooking considerations of the decay, disintegration and decomposition of the body. In comparison to the 'sudden' fragmentation of skeletal remains described in the archaeological literature of Prepalatial Crete (e.g. in their disarticulation, burning, breakage, cutting, grinding, scattering, movement, arrangement), the potential of bodily partibility through natural processes must also be acknowledged. While not as immediate or archaeologically visible as bones broken or transported elsewhere through human agency, I believe the gradual, inevitable and, ultimately, *decomposing* process of decomposition should similarly be included in interpretations of fractal personhood in early Bronze Age Cretan contexts. It is in this acknowledgement that we may begin to move away from socio-culturally instilled conceptions of 'body parts' versus a 'body whole', which hinder attempts to posit fractal personhood as a potential means of interpreting the Prepalatial funerary record. While used terminologically in technical osteological reports, it might be argued that the designation 'body parts' itself –

essentially fragments of a conceptualised 'whole' – ignores the messy, ephemeral and archaeologically invisible processes of partibility through decomposition.

This is not an omission which we can afford to make, as it is in relation to this perceived messiness that archaeological interpretations of symbolic pollution have been constructed. The smell of bodily decomposition, as something which involuntarily exudes from the dead body and invades that of the living, has been characterised as inherently negative and pollutant, an unruly and unwelcome aspect of funerary practice which necessitates strategies such as 'fumigation' for its negation. The colour white, whether in the form of prepared floors or bone, has been earmarked by scholars as somehow symbolically exceptional, in that it represents purity and the conclusion of periods of ritual and practical uncleanliness. Recent archaeological evidence for Minoan physical interaction with body parts in various states of decomposition contradict previous anthropologically-influenced interpretations of secondary deposition in Prepalatial Crete, which have neglected to consider experiences and potentialities of 'messy' bodily dissolution as a central, and one could argue, *celebrated*, aspect of funerary practice.

In essence, the archaeological interpretations related to smell, colour and 'clean' bone are all value judgements made on the basis of our socio-culturally specific pollution behaviours. As evident from our current funerary practices (Chapter 2), we perceive bodily decomposition as disorder, as pollution, as mess: a process central to the dissolution or maintenance of our conception of personhood, located in a whole, individualised body. Like modern funerary practices then, the archaeological interpretations of symbolic pollution in Prepalatial Crete betray a discomfort with the transgression of perceived bodily boundaries and aim to identify specific, static moments in time at which a divide between living and dead became concrete. Drawing once again on the anthropological models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner, nowhere clearer is this scholarly attempt to employ osteoarchaeological remains to pinpoint the conclusion of this final rite of passage than in interpretations of ancestorhood.

Chapter 5: Ancestors and anthropological thought: Prepalatial Crete

5.1 Introduction

Ancestors have long loomed large in archaeological and anthropological thought, most notably in interpretations of funerary practice. The scholarly discourse surrounding the Prepalatial tombs of Crete is no different: the ancestors are consistently invoked in discussions of secondary depositional activity and ritual practice at the tomb sites, as well as the cemeteries' wider social and 'religious' significance. Yet 'ancestorhood' remains as elusive as it is seemingly attractive as an interpretative category. It is rarely defined or elaborated upon as a concept when applied to the archaeological record, and the conceptualisation (and substantial interpretative influence) of the 'ancestors' in Prepalatial Crete is largely taken for granted.

Ancestors are thus presented in interpretations of the Prepalatial funerary record as essentially paradoxical in nature: they are simultaneously both static in their widespread application as an apparently universal interpretative category and frustratingly fluid in their variety (and often, lack) of definition. This strange state of ancestors – as entities which are at once central and peripheral to the archaeological interpretation of Prepalatial Crete – may be seen to have been fundamentally influenced by the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz. Following on from my discussion of transient personhood in Chapter 2, I demonstrate here that the tripartite models of transition postulated by Van Gennep and Hertz, in which ancestorhood is framed as the final stage, have contributed to the conceptualisation of ancestors and their subsequent interpretation in the funerary record of Prepalatial Crete.

Through reference to the archaeological evidence from Prepalatial Crete – for example, the increasing visibility of infant and child burials or the 'curation' of skulls in both domestic and funerary contexts – it will become evident that invocations of 'ancestors' bring with them many questions. They are those of inclusivity/exclusivity, materiality/immateriality, fragmentation and manifestation, all challenging the validity of entrenched anthropological models which posit ancestorhood as the end point of a linear post-mortem transition between physical and metaphysical domains. As such, alternate anthropological perspectives on ancestors and ancestorhood will be explored, recognising that while the models of Van Gennep and Hertz have contributed to the pervading

interpretation of ancestorhood as the conclusive state of being, their understandings of the concept are anything but final.

5.2 Ancestorhood in archaeological thought

‘There are too many ancestors...’ wrote Whitley (2002:119) in his self-admittedly provocative article on interpretations of ancestorhood in the archaeological record, ‘...and they are being asked to do too much’. Whitley’s call for archaeologists to recognise and re-evaluate the ubiquity of ancestors in archaeological interpretations was prompted by what he argues is a ‘spectre haunting...British archaeology’, in the form of the ‘universal ancestor, [who] has gone from being a suggestion to being an orthodoxy without ever having had to suffer the indignity of being treated as a mere hypothesis’ (Whitley 2002:119). Whitley’s oft-quoted article expressed his concern about the influence of prehistoric British archaeology (and thus, uncritical ancestor-based models) on the interpretation of archaeological contexts elsewhere, predicting the future attraction and application of such models to Bronze Age Crete and Prepalatial funerary archaeology specifically:

‘Ancestral rites’ are to be performed at Mesara tholos tombs, as they might have been in the collective tombs of the Cotswold Severn variety ... The principal attraction of such all-purpose interpretations is that they circumvent the tedious business of undertaking contextual analysis, or testing specific models against the available evidence. This is what tends to happen with orthodoxies, and for this reason it becomes an urgent task to subject this orthodoxy to some kind of critique.

(Whitley 2002:120)

Whitley’s challenge to the prevalence and validity of theoretical models of ancestorhood makes it clear that interpretations related to the ancestors are far from universally accepted. His reference to Cretan material is both interesting and apt, as I would agree that – just as he argues for Neolithic Britain – interpretations of ancestorhood have become part of the ‘theoretical unconscious’ of Prepalatial funerary archaeology, in a framework that is ‘omnipresent but rarely discussed’ (Whitley 2002:120). However, while he briefly attempts to trace the origins of the ancestor hypothesis in prehistoric British archaeology

through focusing on the influence of the Saxe/Goldstein hypothesis,¹ I would argue that the prevalence and potency of theories of ancestorhood in Prepalatial Crete has been influenced to a considerable, albeit underestimated, extent by the import of the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz.

The subsequent sections will thus take up Whitley's (2002:120) challenge to test 'specific models against the available evidence', through analysing applications of theoretical models of ancestorhood to the very archaeological context he predicted would become subject to such a methodological approach. This sustained, self-reflexive critique is timely and necessary, as Minoan conceptualisations of ancestorhood may be seen to have been interpreted from an overwhelmingly Hertzian standpoint, in which clean, dry, 'curated' skeletal material is posited as evidence for both the manifestation and veneration of the undefined Prepalatial 'ancestors'.

I purposefully use the term 'undefined' here, as the definition of 'ancestors' remains an ongoing question in both anthropology and archaeology, with disagreement as to whether a definitive description may even be possible. While 'ancestors' in colloquial use might refer to the 'people from whom you are descended' (Collins English Dictionary), scholars have problematised this definition, regarding it as a designation that essentially frames ancestorhood as synonymous with biological descent.² Insoll (2011:1043) points out that this definition of ancestor is overly simplistic and does not address 'the complexities that are denoted by a belief in the ancestors within the frameworks of religion and as the focus of ritual practices'. This rejection of biological descent as the primary criterion for ancestorhood is echoed elsewhere, by scholars who express concern over the uncritical ubiquity of both the term and the concept in anthropological and archaeological thought (Fortes 1976:3; Kuijt 2008:174; Croucher 2012:121; Hageman and Hill 2016:43; Déderix et al. 2018:26).

Indeed, Fortes (1976:3) highlights that, although every living animal must have had ancestors in the 'broadest biological and social sense', such a definition is of little use in interpretations of ancestors and ancestor worship specifically:

¹ See later discussion in this section for a brief description of the Saxe/Goldstein hypothesis and its use in Prepalatial funerary archaeology.

² Interestingly, this concept of a shared biological ancestry is invoked in publications which seek to elucidate and combat nationalistic ideologies in funerary archaeology. Nikita and Triantaphyllou (2017:70, my emphasis), in particular, argue that larger scale multidisciplinary human osteoarchaeological projects will 'provide a better understanding of *our ancestors*, rendering the Greek past less open to manipulation by political forces'.

Truistic as it may sound, it is nevertheless important to state that ancestors receive recognition insofar as their descendants exist and are designated as such. *This does not mean that the recognition of demonstrable ancestry invariably predicates ancestor worship.* This needs to be stressed to draw attention to those components of ancestor worship that transform the mere recognition of ancestry, however it may be institutionalized, into a “branch of religion”.

(Fortes 1976:4, my emphasis)

The inability of biological descent alone to confer ancestorhood is an argument thus made in tandem with another: that ancestors must be linked to the living through ‘rituals that emphasize the idea of continuity’ (Whitley 2002:122), or, as above, worshipped in a ‘religious’ sense (Fortes 1976:4; Insoll 2011:1043).

This is an important acknowledgement, as ‘ancestors’ in the interpretation of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete are invoked in this manner, in that archaeological remains such as skull ‘nests’ are interpreted as indicative of ‘ancestor worship’, ‘ancestor veneration’ or the ‘cult of the dead’. While subsequent discussion will highlight that these designations are employed almost synonymously in scholarly discussions of funerary practice in early Bronze Age Crete, my focus here is not to determine the archaeological criterion necessary for the interpretation of ancestor ‘worship’, ‘veneration’ or ‘cult’ at the Prepalatial tomb sites, but rather to investigate the scholarly conceptualisation of ‘ancestors’ in and of themselves and the potential influence of anthropological thought on such a characterisation.

However, it is important to note here that the distinction between ancestor worship and ancestor veneration is not one made in all cases, with Harrington (2016) using the two terms interchangeably in her brief (and, arguably, very generalised) overview of ancestor cult, in which Minoan funerary archaeology is specifically referenced:³

While the Minoans have been categorised as “an ancestor worshipping society” on the basis of evidence for skull retention, secondary burial with associated ritual, household and tomb altars, feasting with the dead in private and communally, it has been noted that only

³ Harrington (2016) makes explicit reference to Soles’ (2010) article on evidence for ancestor worship in Minoan Crete.

collectively can such markers be considered as definitive indicators of the presence of ancestor veneration.

(Harrington 2016:51)

Yet the scholarly distinction between ancestor worship and ancestor veneration is secondary to the attention given to distinguishing between ancestor worship and the cult of the dead, whereby we may observe explicit differentiation between the 'ancestors' and the 'dead' more generally. This differentiation is of primary importance to our present discussion, as in distinguishing between the two disparate entities, we begin to discern how ancestors have been conceptualised in archaeological and anthropological thought, a characterisation which inevitably affects the subsequent interpretation of the funerary record.

While Fortes (1976:3) asserts that ancestor worship is often incorrectly 'subsumed in the more general category of cults of the dead' due to the lack of recognition of ancestorhood as an achieved status, Harrington (2015:74) argues that 'ancestor cult' should be distinguished from the 'cult of the dead', on the basis that they involve different entities, which she identifies as 'ancestors' versus the 'collective deceased/ affinal (non-linear) ancestors'. Harrington's distinction is interesting – albeit somewhat underdeveloped⁴ – as it raises questions as to the relationship between ancestorhood and issues such as individuality, memory, biological descent, placation and benefaction, all of which are invoked in scholarly discussions of funerary practice at the Prepalatial tombs of Crete. Ancestors, she asserts, may be defined as 'people within one or two generations of their living successors – parents, grandparents, and at most great-grandparents', individuals who are 'addressed by name, typically asked ... for assistance in domestic matters'. In contrast, the collective deceased/affinal (non-linear) ancestors are 'responsible for otherwise inexplicable negative events...and to whom proprietary offerings are made or against whom execration rites are performed' (Harrington 2015:74).

In this particular definition then, ancestors are characterised as specific individuals within living memory, from whom linear biological descent is recognised. They retain their individuality to the extent of retaining their nomenclature and are perceived as possessing positive agency on a household level due to their inherent benevolence towards the living,

⁴ Harrington's (2015:74) distinction is made as part of a brief entry in *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion*.

except in situations of filial neglect. Those non-linear ancestors who are the focus of the ‘cult of the dead’, however, are defined by their collectivity, lack of individuality and recognised descendants. In their namelessness they are framed as fundamentally malevolent, entities who must be placated in order to prevent their active negative intervention in the concerns of the living. Harrington’s definition is not only one of motivation then, but of justification, a distinction between different categories of ritual relationship with the dead made on the basis of the recognition and remembrance of biological descent and individuality.⁵

It is imperative to acknowledge that this is not the view taken in the archaeological interpretation of Prepalatial Crete, in which – influenced by the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz – ‘ancestors’ are presented as a singular group, an anonymous collective to whom offerings are made and are generally benevolent, their liminal malicious streak seemingly neutralised after the dissolution of their material and social personhood through the processes of bodily decomposition and secondary depositional activities. However, Harrington’s distinction foreshadows the inconsistencies apparent in the application of such models to the Prepalatial archaeological record, where anthropologically-influenced constructions of the collective, metaphysical, unindividuated and universal ancestors conflict with scholarly interpretations of embodied individuality, materiality and the legitimisation of the social order through the recognition of lineal descent.

Nevertheless, there are certain points which are widely agreed upon by those who have reflected on anthropological and archaeological interpretations of ancestorhood, namely that ‘death by itself does not confer ancestorhood’ (Fortes 1976:7), “‘ancestors’ and the ‘dead’ are not equivalent terms’ (Hageman and Hill 2016:43) and ‘ancestorhood is an achieved status’ (Whitley 2002:122). In other words, the dead are not necessarily ancestors and the ancestors are not necessarily dead.

The latter statement, that (our conception of) death is not necessary for the achievement of ancestorhood, may seem unconventional, but if we truly accept that ancestorhood is a status achieved rather than an inevitable, ‘final’ state of being post-mortem, then we must recognise that *how* this status is achieved is culturally dependent.

⁵ Similarly, Déderix et al. (2018:26) define ancestor cult on the basis of motivation, characterising it as when ‘ancestors are worshipped because they are capable of intervening actively in the affairs of the living’, essentially differentiated from ‘the ordinary dead and forebears’ by ‘their positive social significance for society or people’.

For instance, Fowler (within/in response to Kuijt 2008:189) highlights that the *living* might be perceived of as embodying ancestral spirits or energies, ‘through the blood, flesh, and bone that the ancestors contributed to their bodies’. Similarly, Harrington (2015:73) has suggested that the terms ‘ancestor’ and ‘ancestor worship’ may be ethnocentric, echoing Kopytoff (1971:140) in his rejection of culturally-specific definitions in his discussion of living elders as ancestors in African cultures:

The term ‘ancestor’ sets up a dichotomy where there is a continuum. By conceptually separating living elders from ancestors, we unconsciously introduce Western connotations to the phenomenon thus labelled and we find ourselves having to deal with the paradoxes of our own creation.

(Kopytoff 1971:140)

In the case of interpreting prehistoric conceptions of ancestorhood, it is difficult to know how a model like Kopytoff’s could be discerned from archaeological remains. Yet such a possibility encourages us to consider that who may become an ancestor varies across time and space, and contextual definition thus plays an important role in interpretative discussion (Whitley 2002:122; Croucher 2012:132). In acknowledgement of this, Hageman and Hill (2016:43) argue that invocations of the ancestors in archaeological interpretation must involve both ‘the restricted use of the term to refer to a select category of the deceased’ and ‘a definition or description of what constitutes an ancestor within the particular region or society under study’. However, as shall become apparent in the subsequent sections, interpretations of the Prepalatial funerary record largely lack such a definition and, due to the influence of the universalising models of Van Gennep and Hertz, ancestorhood is largely postulated as a state of being solely achieved through the dissolution of material, social and individualised personhood.

Yet it is the corrolating acknowledgement – *that not all the dead are ancestors* – that should have significant impact on anthropologically-influenced interpretations of the funerary record. This is not, however, a position that is common in archaeological interpretation, with Robb (2007:293) highlighting the propensity of interpretations of funerary contexts in particular to frame the interred ‘dead’ as inherently ancestral:

Studies of the burial as meaningful practice, however, have tended either to be narrowly particularizing, focusing exclusively on one group, or to apply one-size-fits-all

interpretations such as *the equation of burial with ancestors without methodological underpinning*.

(Robb 2007:293, my emphasis)

Thus, just as death alone does not confer ancestorhood, it is argued that neither does the provision of burial rites. Indeed, this is the crux of Whitley's (2002:122) argument in reference to archaeological interpretations specifically, in which he emphasises the extensive conflation of the burial of the dead and the veneration of the ancestors, stating 'it is still too often simply assumed that the place of burial will also be the place where ancestors are venerated'.

The interpretative equation of place of burial and the location at which veneration of the ancestors took place is arguably one which has its roots in processual archaeology, most famously in Saxe's (1970) influential eighth hypothesis. Drawing on cross-cultural ethnographic data from the Philippines, New Guinea and West Africa, Saxe (1970) argued that where valuable resources are limited and access to them is determined by lineal descent, formal cemeteries will be maintained in spatial association with those resources. This argument for the inherent association between burial, ownership and inheritance was later developed by Goldstein (1976:60-1), who stressed that the more formal and structured the cemetery, the more likely the disposal area is to be linked to a corporate group whose access to resources is determined by linear inheritance. Thus, the 'ancestors' (in this case defined as the linear antecedents of the corporate group) are both spatially associated with their place of burial and the limited resources to which their perceived descendants are granted access.

As shall be demonstrated in the subsequent sections, the Saxe/Goldstein hypothesis is one which has found continued expression in interpretations of ancestorhood in Prepalatial Crete, particularly in spatial evaluations of tomb location and discussions related to the demographic of tomb users. However, the basis for such an argument – that the physical place of burial is intrinsically equal to the place/veneration/worship of the ancestors – is one which is investigated with far less frequency. This definition of ancestors as inextricably associated with the physical remains of the dead, and the structures which contained them, is at odds with the anthropologically-influenced models which posit ancestorhood as achieved through the transcendence of a physical form and entry into an anonymous, almost spiritual collective. It similarly fails to acknowledge alternate models

of ancestorhood, in which, as highlighted by Insoll (2011:1046), ancestors ‘can be beliefs, materialized in many contexts, of recurring complexity and ontological importance’ or to recognise that, as Parker Pearson (1999b:30) argues, ‘relationships to ancestors go considerably further than simply establishing functional relationships to land’. Following Déderix et al. (2018:26), it should thus be continually acknowledged that collective tombs cannot be assumed to contain *only* the remains of ancestors, as it is entirely possible that ‘they may host no ancestor at all’.

What scholarly reflection on the invocations of the ‘ancestors’ in anthropological and archaeological thought betrays then is a sense of frustration, a methodological discomfort with static, overly simplistic constructs of ancestorhood and their uncritical employment as a seemingly universal category of interpretation. It is also an issue which is perhaps more apparent in one discipline than the other, with Insoll (2011:1044) highlighting that although analogical frameworks for reflecting upon the validity of ancestor-models are usually sought in anthropology and ethnography, ‘the complexity in configuring ancestors also need recognizing by archaeologists and sometimes it is not’.

Through focusing on a particular archaeological context of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete – on the interpretations of a prehistoric society which is designated as ‘ancestor-worshipping’ in encyclopedic and specialised reports alike (Harrington 2016:51; Soles 2001:233) – it is this very act of searching for validity in anthropological theory which will be investigated. Consequently, this analysis of anthropological influences will work to address a number of aforementioned concerns surrounding the use of ancestor-based models in archaeological discourse. It is through reference to specific archaeological data, in addition to questions of materiality, inclusion, memory and manifestation, that my discussion will begin to problematise the static, universalising and arguably uncritically-applied constructs of ancestorhood which have characterised anthropological and archaeological thought to date.

5.3 Becoming ancestor, becoming other

But mass clearances of bones as indicated by these examples could only take place long after the initial burial ceremonies, *when the bodies were completely de-fleshed*. By then, attitudes to the dead individuals which these bones represented may have changed dramatically, *for they would have passed through the period of transition and now be ready for incorporation into their new state as ancestors*. The clearance of bones is almost

certainly related to *the third and final stage* of the funerary process, and indicates that we are looking at the results of secondary burial activities.

(Branigan 1993:122, my emphasis)

Discussing the evidence for multi-stage funerary processes at the Mesara tholoi, it is evident from the vocabulary used by Branigan – in his discussion of the transgression of a ‘period of transition’, eventual ‘incorporation’, and a ‘third and final stage’ – that the anthropological models of Van Gennep (1960) have influenced archaeological interpretations of secondary depositional practices and Prepalatial conceptions of ‘ancestors’ specifically. As highlighted in Chapter 3, Van Gennep’s tripartite model is again incorporated with that of Hertz (2004[1960]), in that the dead’s achievement of the ‘new state’ of ancestorhood is posited as reliant upon the complete dissolution of the flesh, whether that be through natural (i.e. decomposition) or artificial (i.e. de-fleshing) means. While neither model is cited in reference to this particular passage, it is important to acknowledge that their influence is made explicit in the preceding discussion, in which Branigan (1993:119-21) briefly notes the ‘brilliant pioneering papers of Hertz and Van Gennep’ in relation to funerary practices, in addition to Metcalf and Huntington’s (1991) exploration and extension of them (*contra* Bloch and Parry 1982:5).⁶

Although dealing with much of the same archaeological data and interpretative discussion as his 1970 publication *The Tombs of Mesara*, it is thus in Branigan’s 1993 publication *Dancing with Death* that we first see an explicit reference to the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz.⁷ Despite the clear, albeit implicit, influences in his earlier interpretations related to the transience of embodied personhood (see Section 3.4), it is important to acknowledge that this is the first time in which Van Gennep and Hertz are explicitly referenced and it is in relation to the stages through which the dead must progress to achieve ancestorhood.

In this case, the third and final stage of the funerary process – the clearance of skeletal material – is directly associated with the achievement of Van Gennep’s third and final state of being. This final state is that of ancestorhood, accomplished through the dead’s reincorporation into the social order of the living. This correlation is highlighted in

⁶ Bloch and Parry (1982:5) argue that Metcalf and Huntington (1991) do not expand upon Hertz/Van Gennep’s models, but rather highlight ‘what is valuable in a number of earlier contributions’.

⁷ See Introduction for a discussion of Branigan’s (1993:119) comments on Van Gennep and Hertz.

Branigan's preceding (1993:121) description of Van Gennep's rites of passage model, in which the clearance of de-fleshed bones is posited as 'symbolising the act of incorporation and the completion of the funerary process'. This interpretation of Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief is therefore firmly based in the structured anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz, in which ancestorhood exists as a state which is no longer dependent on the maintenance of bodily integrity or corporeally embodied, individualised personhood.

It is important to outline the ubiquity of such an interpretation, as it appears so frequently in discussions of Prepalatial funerary practice and belief that it has almost become an orthodoxy. Indeed, in some cases it is literally mapped out, as seen in Girella and Todaro's (2016) discussion of secondary deposition and group identity in the Pre- and Proto-palatial cemeteries of Crete, in which the influence of Van Gennepian/Hertzian models of interpretation is particularly evident (Fig. 12).

While Girella and Todaro's model has four stages – with the fourth involving the reintroduction of skeletal material into the funerary sphere as part of 'ancestor worship' – within it we may again discern the tripartite structure of Van Gennep's (and to some extent, Hertz's) formulations. Although the dislocation of the skull as the first stage of a 'rite of passage' is particular to this particular interpretation,⁸ the overall structure is one which we can clearly recognise: a loss of individual identity associated with the dead body's physical manipulation, in addition to actions of manipulation/disarticulation/relocation of skeletal material interpreted as (re)producing corporate identities both for the living community and the dead. The corporate identity of the dead is of most interest to our present discussion, as an identity which is interpreted as ancestral, achieved through the dead's reincorporation into the social sphere after the cessation of their individualised identity and an intermediary period of mourning and taboo.

⁸ As discussed in Section 5.5, Girella and Todaro's (2016) interpretative focus on the removal of skulls is explicitly influenced by archaeological interpretations of Near Eastern and Levantine Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B plastered skulls.

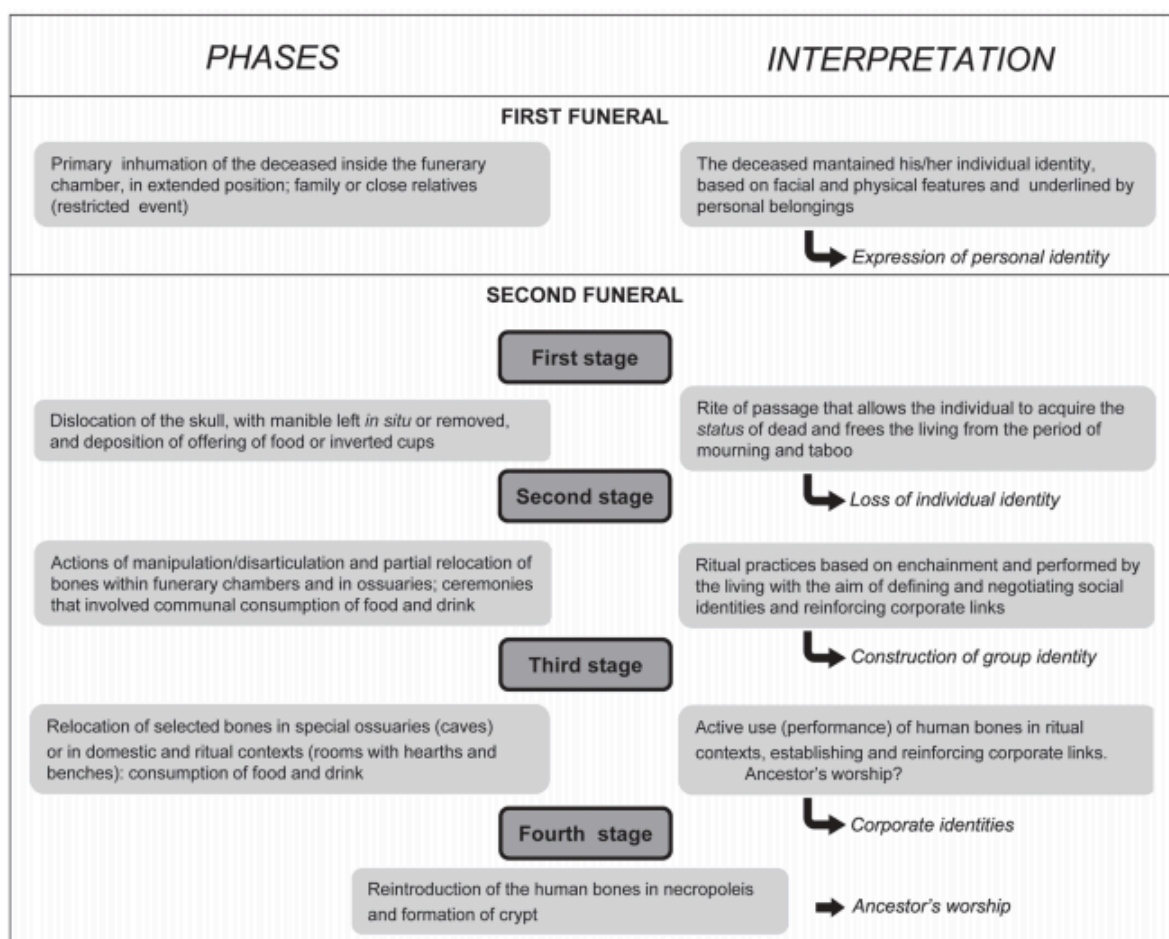


Figure 12: Girella and Todaro's interpretation of the phases, archaeological indicators and possible interpretations of secondary burial practices in Pre- and Protopalatial Crete (Girella and Todaro 2016:176, Fig. 22.3).

Neither Hertz or Van Gennep are cited in relation to this model of interpretation, although the authors reference Driessen (2010:109) in his Hertzian assertion that the EM-MM tombs were 'places of transition that served for the decomposition of bodies' (Girella and Todaro 2016:171). They also make a rather vague reference to Metcalf and Huntington's (1991), and by extension, Hertz's, influence on anthropological investigations into secondary mortuary practices, in which 'identity and personhood become mutable' (Girella and Todaro 2016:171). It is evident, however, that the achievement of ancestorhood is interpreted as being inherently associated with the disarticulation of the body and the circulation and/or relocation of its various components across time and space. Therefore, whilst Girella and Todaro's first stage references a 'rite of passage' from living to dead, their interpretations invoke those modelled by Van Gennep and Hertz, during which the individual transitions from possessing personal identity to a state of corporate ancestorhood.

Another explicit invocation of Van Gennep and Hertz's models of ancestorhood is made in reference to EM I-II funerary rites, in which they are cited – along with publications which examine them (Bloch and Parry 1982; Metcalf and Huntington 1991) – in relation to 'the metaphysical aspect of the funeral' (Vavouranakis 2014:215). Within his broader analysis of funerary pithoi in Bronze Age Crete, Vavouranakis (2014:215) discusses the 'ritual passage' of the dead towards an other-world, perhaps 'the realm of the ancestors, heaven and hell, or the underworld'.⁹ Despite later emphasising the social dimension of these rites of passage in the EM III-MM I period, he asserts that EM I-II funerary rites 'favoured the metaphysical aspect of burial', in that the secondary manipulation of both humans remains and accompanying grave goods 'revolved around the treatment of the dead body and *its passage to a metaphysical state of being*' (Vavouranakis 2014:215, my emphasis). In essence, it is an interpretation of Prepalatial ancestorhood which is explicitly influenced by the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz. Ancestors are thus associated with 'an order out and beyond of the world as we experience it' (Vavouranakis 2014:215), an interpretation which frames Prepalatial understandings of ancestors as entities who have transcended physicality through the enactment of secondary depositional activities on their formerly human remains, subsequently existing in another, *spiritual* dimension (Branigan 1970b:112-3; Soles 2010:335).

An osteoarchaeologist would perhaps argue that the phrase 'formerly human remains' is a misnomer, as the skeletal material recovered from the Prepalatial tombs will, and always will be, defined as 'human remains'. Yet the application of such anthropological models of ancestorhood – which argue for the transcendence of the human, physical form and subsequent collective, metaphysical state of being – raises questions as to the conceptual standing of such skeletal remains after the 'conclusion' of secondary depositional activities and indeed, the perceived 'humanity' of the ancestors.¹⁰ In their discussion of collective burial practices and their interpretation, Schmitt and Déderix (2018:201) certainly take a strong position on the latter issue, an argument which is supported through direct reference to Van Gennep and Hertz:

⁹ Similarly to Soles' (1992:237-9,249) discussion of tombs as 'family chapels' or 'limbo' in Prepalatial eschatological belief, Girella and Todaro's (2016:172) reference to 'family chapels' or Branigan's (1970b:109) invocation of ideas of tomb 'sanctity', it is in Vavouranakis' reference to 'heaven and hell' that we may again see the introduction of tropes associated with Christianity into interpretative discussions of Prepalatial worldview.

¹⁰ See Sections 5.4 and 5.6 for a discussion of the potential significance and categorisation of skulls.

In other words, it is only when the funerary cycle is completed that the deceased dies socially, at least as a human being. Afterwards, the living may continue to interact with the dead who, however, then take the form of *non-human entities such as ancestors*.

(Schmitt and Déderix 2018:201, my emphasis)

Schmitt and Déderix posit ancestors as non-human then, as entities who have achieved such a status through the ‘completion’ of a funerary cycle. Whether the enactment of secondary depositional activities may be defined as truly cyclical remains to be seen,¹¹ but what Schmitt and Déderix’s preceding comments emphasise is the explicit influence of the models of both Hertz and Van Gennep on the interpretation of multi-stage funerary practices and subsequently, archaeological conceptions – and, arguably, *projections* - of ancestorhood:

There is a period of transition during which the deceased are considered neither dead nor alive. This period of transition defined the funerary cycle, in the course of which the deceased die socially, the corpse disintegrates, those left behind mourn their loss, and society undergoes reorganisation (Hertz 1907, Van Gennep 1909).

(Schmitt and Déderix 2018:200)

Thus Van Gennep and Hertz are directly cited in reference to a seemingly universal ‘funerary cycle’, in which ancestorhood exists as a final, static state of being. In addition, the definition of ancestors as ‘non-human’ raises many questions about the ways in which such anthropological models have influenced archaeological conceptions of ancestorhood in terms of physicality, individuality and identity.

As the question of ‘what it means to be human’ is one which has occupied great minds for millennia, the exact definition of a ‘non-human entity’ will not be explored here, beyond acknowledging that it is the category in which ancestors are interpretatively placed after their perceived transgression of an anthropologically-influenced transitory stage. However, what is important for our present discussion is that this loss of humanity is argued

¹¹ I.e. if the transformation of the dead into ancestors is posited as truly cyclical (occurring in a repeated process), then there would technically be no point of ‘completion’. This is a matter of phrasing, but a point made in line with the argument of the authors, who emphasise that ‘the absence of consensus on vocabulary is a major cause of misunderstanding and over-interpretation’ (Schmitt and Déderix 2018:195).

from an explicitly Hertzian and Van Gennepian standpoint. Within this framework, ‘non-human’ ancestors are thus posited as lacking recognisable corporeal form and their former individualised social agency, suggesting that the living’s perception and subsequent interactions with them would be on a collective level, activities not necessarily involving physical remains of the deceased. In effect, whilst Schmitt and Déderix (2018:200) do not go as far as Vavouranakis (2014:215) to suggest an essentially metaphysical state of ancestorhood, the explicit use of the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz frames ancestors as those which have moved away from their former individualised, corporeal, socially active and changing human selves, toward an anonymous, homogenous and static collective.

This is also a perspective found in the scholarly discourse surrounding Prepalatial funerary archaeology specifically. For instance, the influence of a Van Gennepian framework of interpretation of ancestorhood may be discerned in Driessen’s (2010:115, my emphasis) description of the final stages of the Prepalatial funerary process, a time at which ‘individuals were gradually depersonalised into a *general category of ancestors* and [*sic*] transforming him or her into the collective memory, a first step into the *eventual re-incorporation* into the society of the living’. Driessen’s argument that this transition from deceased individual to collective ancestor was enabled through the selection and retention of skulls will be discussed in detail in the following section, but his use of concept and vocabulary – a shift from individualised identity to that of an ancestral collective later *reincorporated* into society – is recognisably reminiscent of both Van Gennep and Hertz’s anthropological models.

This anthropologically-influenced interpretation of ancestorhood in Prepalatial Crete is similarly echoed by Murphy (2011b:39, my emphasis) in her discussion of the tomb groups at Mochlos and Lebena, and in her particularly Hertzian assertion that the manipulation and/or movement of skeletal remains post-decomposition ‘had the effect of negating individual status in favor of a *common identity* among the dead or the ancestors’. However, it is interesting that Murphy does not distinguish between the dead and the ancestors as divergent entities (see also Murphy 1998:34), especially in light of the similarities between models of ancestorhood and her later discussion of the tombs’ memorialisation of ‘the long-term *corporate identity of the anonymous dead*’ (2011b:41, my emphasis). This Hertzian conception of ancestorhood in the Prepalatial Crete as defined by a shared, homogenous ancestral identity after the enactment of secondary depositional

activities is recognisable elsewhere in scholarly discussions of Prepalatial tomb use, in this case framed by Hamilakis in terms of ‘remembering and forgetting’:¹²

many of these practices which resulted in the mixing, covering, destruction, deformation, and fragmentation of bones and objects signal that this was the time for forgetting, so that positively valued space for new remembering can be generated...we are thus witnessing in the mortuary arena a series of material practices which may signify efforts *to forget individuals as active social agents in order to remember them as member of the collective of ancestors*

(Hamilakis 2013:155, my emphasis)

This essentially Hertzian interpretation – that collective skeletal assemblages indicate a Prepalatial conception of collective ancestorhood – is also paralleled in Kiorpe’s (2018:5) assertion that physical engagement with the human remains in House Tomb 2 and 5 at Kephala Petras may be seen as ‘vehicles for the symbolic transformation of the dead into ancestors through the creation of commingled and collective assemblages’, as well as that made by Betancourt (2011:96), who similarly refers to a ‘collective group of ancestors’ of which the dead became a member post-decomposition in his interpretation of Tomb 4 at Pseira. It is in this way that ancestors are both posited as recognised entities in the Prepalatial period in scholarly discourse and are subsequently defined by their collectivity, anonymity and decreasing reliance on corporeal forms. Through the invocation of the theoretical frameworks of Van Gennep and Hertz, the same conceptions and characterisations of ancestors are thus continually put forward in interpretations of Minoan funerary practice. It is a picture of a homogenous, static group, a state of being which, once achieved through the enactment of secondary depositional activities on the deceased’s body, seemingly remains constant and unchanging.

However, I would argue that what this construction of Prepalatial ancestorhood within such a strictly structured framework inevitably brings with it is interpretative staticity. By positing ancestorhood as a static, anonymous, and collective ‘final stage’ according to Van Gennep and Hertz’s models, we leave little room for interpretations of ancestors who may undergo change, who may retain some element of

¹² See Caloi’s (2015:260) discussion of the later MM IIB phase at the Kamilari cemetery for a similar interpretation of the role of secondary depositional practices and the ‘remembering’ of the ancestors.

individuality or who still physically occupy the ‘world of the living’. Indeed, we need only consider the skull excavated from a domestic context at Myrtos to recognise that ancestors may have been physically manifest (temporarily or otherwise) in the dwelling spaces of the living, thus eliding the static categories of material/immaterial or physical/spiritual. Tentatively interpreted by its excavator as indicative of ancestor worship,¹³ the skull fragments were dubbed ‘the strangest find from the site’ due to the absence of any other human or animal remains (Warren 1972:83). In addition, the fragments, seemingly belonging to an adult male, were excavated in close association with the so-called ‘Myrtos Goddess’, which was found in the nearby ‘Shrine’, Room 92 (Fig. 13).¹⁴ Citing the substantial evidence for prolonged Minoan interaction with skeletal remains and skulls specifically, Morris (2017:664) highlights that it is surprising that serious discussion of Warren’s ancestor worship hypothesis has only recently emerged (i.e. Driessen 2010; Goodison 2012). Indeed, she argues that, in this context, ‘a ritual involving the ancestors makes good sense’ when we consider the find-spots of other hollow vessel figurines in anthropomorphic forms, which are found in contemporary tombs or burial caves across Crete (Morris 2017:662-3).

In addition, by making the claim that responses to death across time and space are ‘essentially universal’ (Branigan 1993:119) and by directly associating the clearance of skeletal remains with the achievement of Prepalatial ancestorhood, we are in danger of making the ethnocentric equation of which we were previously warned. We must thus again acknowledge that *not all dead are ancestors* and that the burial of the dead (or subsequent secondary depositional activities) should not be uncritically conflated with the conferment of ancestorhood.

It follows that strict adherence to these anthropological models in the archaeological interpretation of the Prepalatial record – in which the clearance and/or curation of skeletal remains is posited as representative of the dead’s transition into ancestorhood – denies questions of inclusivity and exceptionality. If we accept that ancestorhood is an *achieved* status, reconsidering the interpretatively restrictive structure of anthropologically-influenced models of ancestorhood allows us to explore questions of

¹³ Warren (1973:83) does not elaborate on the ‘possibilities of ancestor worship’ suggested by the skull fragments, although he briefly suggests that the nearby hearth feature ‘had a ritual function’ and that ‘the skull would have had some function in the rites’.

¹⁴ See Section 1.4 for a discussion of the ‘Myrtos Goddess’ in interpretations of female deities.

both *who* could accomplish such a new state of being and *how* we might interpret such an ontological shift in the funerary record.

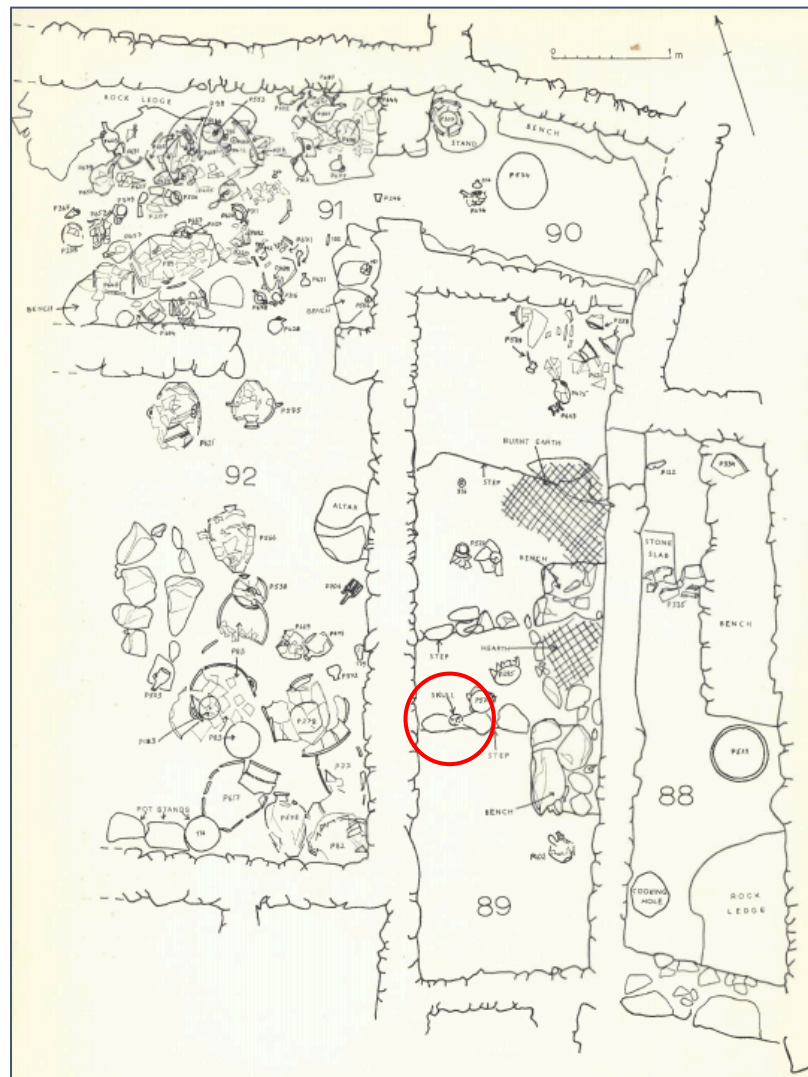


Figure 13: Plan of Rooms 88-92 at Myrtos with floor deposits. Note the location of the skull (indicated) in Room 89 (after Warren 1972:82, Fig. 28).

This return to the material record – the fundamental basis of our archaeological interpretations – highlights the inconsistencies in applications of theoretical models to the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete. This is largely due to the conceptualisation of ancestorhood as a state of being which was perceived as other than, or opposite to, physicality and materiality, as seen in Murphy's (1998:34) contrast between 'the living, physical, secular world and the world of the dead, of the ancestors, of the sacred'. This is an interpretative perspective that we find similarly echoed in Soles' (2010:335) discussion of ancestor worship in Minoan Crete, specifically in his assertion that secondary

depositional practices (in association with 'offerings') enacted a fundamental shift in existence:

In a society that collects skulls like the Minoans becoming an ancestor would require at least the amount of time between death, *decomposition of the corpse ... and disarticulation when the skull is removed from the skeleton and the bones of lesser importance* are discarded. If an offering in a conical cup or any other medium were to occur at this point in Minoan Crete, it would constitute a ritual act of the sort that accompanies a decisive point in becoming an ancestor when *the deceased has finally been released from its earthly existence to join the spirit community... expunged from the world of the living in his human embodiment and eventually reincorporated among them in his ancestral and spiritual capacity.*

(Soles 2010:335, my emphasis)

While Soles' focus on the skull's removal as a critical part of ancestor worship will be discussed in the subsequent section (5.4), it is clear from this passage that ancestors in Minoan Crete are interpreted as having been perceived as essentially spiritual in nature, a state of being achieved through their transition from embodied, corporeal form to a seemingly metaphysical existence outside or other to the 'world of the living'.

Although it must be acknowledged that not all scholars explicitly interpret ancestorhood in the Prepalatial era as essentially metaphysical, the description of the ancestors' existence in other 'worlds' (Branigan 1970b:104; Soles 1992:226; Murphy 1998:34; Betancourt 2011:96; Cadogan 2011:114), 'realms' (Vavouranakis 2014:215; Murphy 1998:35), 'new states' (Branigan 1993:122) or domains (Branigan 1970b:101) does imply a scholarly assumption that ancestors were perceived of in the Prepalatial era as inhabiting some form of otherworldly, non-physical, spiritual state of being.

This implication, however, is not solely based on observations of repeated interpretative tropes or vocabulary, but is rather supported by the anthropological frameworks within which interpretations of Prepalatial ancestorhood are placed. As outlined, the models of Van Gennep and Hertz posit a fundamental transition from individual to ancestor, a progressive transformation which (in the Hertzian model specifically) is achieved through the severance of ties with the material world of the living. It is this severance which we must bear in mind when we consider further interpretations related to ancestors in the Prepalatial funerary record. This is an important endeavour, as

although the achievement of ancestorhood has been posited as occurring due to the disassociation of identity with physical human remains, at the same time certain recurrent features of the material record have been extensively interpreted as physical representations and/or manifestations of ancestors. This interpretative tension between anthropologically-influenced frameworks of ancestorhood and archaeological arguments for its material expression is particularly evident in scholarly discussions of skulls.

5.4 Ancestral skulls?: questions of materiality and manifestation

Are skulls special? It is an important question to consider, yet not one which is exclusive to the study of the Prepalatial tombs of Crete. Archaeologists working in a range of contexts have mused over whether the skull should be considered of particular interpretative importance, especially in circumstances in which it appears to have been involved in secondary depositional activities. Yet scholarly judgements as to the interpretation (and interpretative potential) of skulls inherently rely on their ontological situation. That is to say that the extent of skulls' interpretative exceptionality depends upon how they are categorised. This categorisation depends on whether bodily decomposition and disarticulation are viewed – in keeping with the Hertzian framework so readily applied to the Prepalatial archaeological record – as having enacted a disassociation between the skull and the individual to which it once belonged:

Was the detached head, skull, or decapitated body viewed as an object or a human, a symbol of an individual, once living and associated with a particular person, or of a more complex, fractured, and collective identity, now linked to death, the larger realm of deceased ancestors or some other liminal world?

(Talalay 2004:155)

Although I would argue that the equation of the 'liminal' with ancestorhood – a state of being achieved *after* the transgression of the liminal period – is problematic,¹⁵ the open-ended question Talalay poses encapsulates many of the issues facing archaeologists when they encounter skulls in both the funerary and domestic contexts of Prepalatial Crete:

¹⁵ This is based on the acknowledgement that the term and concept of the 'liminal' originates in Van Gennep's tripartite 'rites of passage' model. See Section 2.5 for a discussion of the term 'liminal' and its uses in archaeological interpretation.

those of individualised versus collective identity, wholes and parts, subjectivity and objectivity. However, archaeological interpretation of Prepalatial deposits to date have largely favoured her latter categorisation, in that skulls have been associated with the presence, veneration and/or manifestation of the ancestors, conflicting with simultaneously-applied anthropological models that posit ancestorhood as reliant on the disassociation between ancestors and their former physical, bodily states.

Before exploring the relationship between decomposition of the flesh and skulls in relation to personhood, ancestorhood etc., however, we must first acknowledge its importance in terms of archaeological terminology and subsequent interpretation. Indeed, Knüsel (2014:35) highlights that although the term ‘skulls’ is often used in archaeological reports when reporting the presence of crania, two elements – the cranium and the mandible – make up the skull. It is a simple distinction, but as Knüsel and Robb (2016:657) argue, an important one, as the incorrect use of vocabulary causes ambiguity across disciplines and fails to discern between the fleshed body and its skeletal components.¹⁶

However, while current archaeological (and more specifically, archaeothanatological) terminology highlights the difference between crania and complete skulls – in addition to the role of soft tissue in the deposition of the latter (Knüsel and Robb 2016:657; Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris in Kuijt 2008:187) – we must bear in mind that older, or perhaps less terminologically-focused, publications may not make such a distinction. Knüsel (2014:35) illustrates the importance of supporting photographs in such cases, emphasising the difficulty in determining whether ‘skulls’ mentioned in archaeological reports are indeed technically skulls (i.e. crania plus mandibles) in the absence of supporting visual sources.

In regard to the evidence for Prepalatial ‘skulls’, however, we must remain aware of both the turbulent excavation history of many of the tomb sites and the particular methodological foci of early archaeological fieldwork, during which skeletal remains were not afforded the same level of attention as manufactured, ‘prestige’ goods (see Section 2.4). Bearing this in mind, the special place of skulls in the archaeological imagination is perhaps alluded to by Xanthoudides’ (1924:Plate LIX) inclusion of a photograph of ‘skulls from the Mesara tholoi’ in his 1924 publication of a selection of the circular tombs (Fig. 14).

¹⁶ Knüsel (2014:38) also highlights that references to the cranium in descriptions of cardinal directions invite confusion (for example, burials ‘facing’ to the west), as while they may be intended to denote solely the orientation of the head, orientation of the body is inadvertently implied.



Figure 14: Six crania excavated from the Mesara tholoi by Xanthoudides (Xanthoudides: 1924:Plate LIX)

Although it is not stated from which tholoi in the Mesara these examples originated, it is important to acknowledge that it is the only photograph of skeletal material in Xanthoudides' publication, representing six of the only eight 'skulls' excavated by Xanthoudides from fifteen tombs and an estimated 1000 burials overall (Xanthoudides 1924:92).¹⁷ They are referred to as skulls both in the photograph's caption and in the body of Xanthoudides' text, yet when we examine in closer detail the photograph in question, we may observe that they are not skulls at all, but *crania*, all having lost their correlating mandibles at some point in their deposition or excavation history. This acknowledgement is not an attempt to hold Xanthoudides accountable for a discrepancy between his description of 'skulls' and those of archaeological terminology over 95 years later, but

¹⁷ Branigan (1987:48) notes although that no published photographs from early excavations exist to illustrate the grouping of skulls at the Mesara tholoi, Xanthoudides (1924:7,92) describes similar concentrations at Koumasa and Platanos within the text.

rather to emphasise that when 'skulls' are attested in the funerary record of Prepalatial Crete, they may not necessarily correspond to our current definition or take into account the role of soft tissue in the skulls' removal, transport or deposition. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that even when such considerations are made, they may not be reflected in the use of terminology, as seen in Soles' (2010:331) retention of the term 'skull' in his description of the two 'skulls' found in domestic shrines at Myrtos and Mochlos, despite interpreting their missing mandibles as 'a good indication that both skulls were removed from their respective skeletons after the decomposition of the flesh'.

Xanthoudides' inclusion of this singular photograph of skeletal remains also raises further questions as to the extent of, and influences behind, scholarly attention towards skulls in the Prepalatial funerary record. Skulls excavated from both tholoi and house tombs are dutifully referenced and counted in secondary archaeological literature, with the nature of their concentration (if one exists) described as either a 'nest' (Branigan 1987:47), 'heap' (Xanthoudides 1924:7,92; Alexiou and Warren 2004:16; Branigan 1970b:113), or the more general definitions of 'group' or 'collection'. It is perhaps easy to forget that these concentrations of skulls are frequently accompanied by collections of 'curated' long bones, arrangements that are equally the result of consciously-enacted secondary depositional activities.

Indeed, it appears that although both skeletal components are frequently deposited and thus excavated together, skulls take centre stage in terms of interpretative discussion, in which they are framed as representative of ancestors and/or ancestor veneration. This is certainly a point emphasised by Crevecoeur et al. (2015:296), who highlight the special scholarly attention to, and subsequent quantification of, skulls in archaeological reports such as that of Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis (1997) at Archanes-Phourni, who they argue perpetuate an imbalanced methodological and interpretative approach in which 'skulls receive most attention and are quantified, while long bones are only mentioned in passing without any more detailed information (regarding quantity, orientation, taphonomy)'. The relative prominence of the skull in archaeological interpretations – especially in relation to discussions of identity, embodiment and ancestorhood – must thus be considered, in addition to the acknowledgment that, following Branigan (1987:48), while other bone types do not usually attract the same level of scholarly attention, 'we should not assume that such groupings were either rare or of less significance'. Certainly, in cases like that of Ossuary 1 (Space 106) at Myrtos Pyrgos, it

is clear that particular effort was expended in order to arrange the long bones as well as the skulls, with the former being placed vertically within a pithos above five skulls 'like a crown of lamb' (Cadogan 2011:108).

The reasons behind the seeming exceptionality of skulls in discussions of secondary depositional activities and interpretations of ancestorhood is perhaps due to both methodological and ontological factors. As highlighted by Branigan (1993:151) the visibility of the skull (most especially the cranium) in the archaeological record is relatively high in comparison to smaller, more uniformly shaped bones,¹⁸ a physical characteristic which may increase the likelihood of their recovery, especially in earlier excavations during which skeletal material was not subject to thorough investigation. It is also important to note that although the removal of skulls is suggested by both their under-representation in comparison with other skeletal components at a range of Prepalatial tombs and their presence in non-funerary contexts (Branigan 1987:48-9; Warren 1972:266; Driessen 2010),¹⁹ their enumeration – or 'skull count' – is employed as a means to estimate longevity of tomb use, number of burials and population units (e.g. Soles 1992:251-4).

While it is important to acknowledge the difference between a fleshed head and that of a dry-bone skull, in that they 'undoubtedly provoke different reactions and feelings' (Croucher 2012:146; see also Croucher and Campbell 2009), I would argue that the skull is arguably 'recognisable' in more ways than one, as it exists as a structure which accommodates both the brain and the sense organs of the face, in addition to acting as the entity to which facial muscles and soft tissue adheres. In essence, the skull is the basis for the 'recognisable' face: something we look, speak, listen to, and something – or *someone* – that looks, speaks and listens back.

I stress 'we' here, as the status of the face and/or brain as the primary locus for the communication/reception of information is culturally determined, but I would argue that is important to bear in mind our own perception – and indeed, *personification* – of the skull in archaeological practice, in order to better understand our subsequent interpretation(s) of their significance in the Prepalatial era. Indeed, facial features, in particular, have been discussed in the context of Prepalatial funerary practices as associated with individualised 'recognisable' identity and its subsequent dissolution, with Betancourt (2011:96, my

¹⁸ This is dependent on the level of fragmentation of the cranium itself. Visibility and subsequently, the probability of recognition, of crania is substantially reduced when considerably fragmented.

¹⁹ See Soles (1992:247-251) and Girella and Todaro (2016:172-5) for sustained discussion of the evidence for skull removal, retention, circulation and 'curation'.

emphasis) arguing that it is when ‘the individual characteristics of the deceased (*like facial features*) are no longer visible’ that the dead individual becomes part of the collective group of ancestors.

Certainly recent research projects which create facial reconstructions on the basis of archaeological skull dimensions remind us that a skeletal ‘something’ is never too far away from a recognisable ‘someone’ (Face Lab n.d.). In addition, the current special status of the skull in relation to the rest of the skeleton is unfortunately highlighted when it is specifically targeted by looters and vandals (Gleeson 2015). Whether interpretative or illicit, this focus on the skull brings us back to the same questions posed by Talalay (2004:155): whether a skull may be considered as ‘object or human’ and why the skull in particular is subject to such an ontological quandary. Certainly the skull is discussed in the archaeological literature relating to Prepalatial funerary practices as an entity of particular importance, due to its appearance in the archaeological record in ‘curated’ concentrations and its frequent under-representation relative to other skeletal components, but also as a marker of symbolic significance and eschatological belief.

This particular importance is emphasised by Branigan (1970b:113), who, referencing the concentrations of skulls found at the tombs of Koumasa B, Platanos A and Ayia Triadha A, suggests that they are representative of a Minoan perception of the skull as ‘intimately connected with personality and identity’. Interestingly, this understanding of the skull as inherently associated with individualised identity is framed within Branigan’s (1970b:112-3) broader inquiry into the ‘particularly difficult question of the Minoan attitude to a spirit existence after death’, in which he posits that the decomposition of the flesh heralded the simultaneous destruction of ‘the physical home of the spirit’. However, it is apparent that even within this Hertzian framework of interpretation – i.e. that the process of decomposition severed the ‘spirit’s’ connection with both the human body and the physical world of the living – the skull is still treated as an interpretative exception, as a physical entity which seemingly retains its association with the personality and identity of the deceased.

The personification of the skull and the importance of the head in funerary practice is also emphasised in Dierckx’s (2017:198) interpretation of a quern from House Tomb 3, Room 4 at Petras, which was excavated in association with a skull and subsequently interpreted as ‘a “pillow” for the deceased’, providing ‘extra support for the head’. In addition, in reference to the depositions of skulls in Burial Buildings 6,7,9 and 18 at

Archanes-Phourni, Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis (1997:250, my emphasis) make the argument that the Minoans perceived skulls as something other, or more than simply a skeletal component, stating ‘the preservation mainly of the skulls is a phenomenon also attested in other tombs in Crete, and *reflects the belief that the head represents the whole body*’. As Bienert (1991:20) highlights, this interpretation – that skulls acted as *pars pro toto* – is one which is found with great frequency in both archaeological and anthropological discussions of ritual ancestor worship, in which skulls are posited as symbolising the deceased members of a family or clan.²⁰ Indeed, it is one which finds further expression in relation to Prepalatial funerary practices, with Driessen (2010:114) arguing that ‘more and more indications are forthcoming that skulls were...considered as *pars pro toto* for the entire skeleton’.

The interpretation of skulls as either symbolising or existing as the material manifestation of ancestors is one which is continued in the discussion of the funerary practices of Prepalatial Crete. Perhaps the most sustained and explicit association of skulls and ancestors is that made by Soles (2001), who begins his argument for the ‘reverence for dead ancestors’ with the assertion that:

The Minoans who founded the Archanes cemetery belonged to *a very old, ancestor-worshipping culture*. Perhaps the best evidence for this is the *careful retention and veneration of skulls* in the Early and Middle Minoan tombs. At Mochlos Richard Seager reported “parts of at least thirty skulls” *carefully tucked away* in one corner of Tomb Chamber I ... Tomb II at Gournia contained as many as 24, the tomb at Myrtos, Pyrgos, as many as 65, Palaikastro Tomb VII as many as 97.

(Soles 2001:233, my emphasis)

In this passage we may again observe the invocation of concepts of ‘care’ discussed in Section 3.2, in which deposits of skulls and long bones are juxtaposed with the ‘careless’ concentration of other types of disarticulated skeletal material. This is stressed in Soles’ (2001:233, my emphasis) later description of the skulls recovered from the Archanes cemetery specifically, ‘where the excavators found hundreds of skulls *carefully stored* in vases and sarcophagi’. It is also important to consider Soles’ emphasis on the longevity of

²⁰ Bienert (1991:20) notes that ethnographic analogies drawn largely from Oceania are employed as the basis for the majority of such interpretations.

ancestor worship as a Prepalatial cultural practice, seemingly achieved through the creation and maintenance of skull deposits, which are quantified on an ascending cross-site scale. Indeed, this is a view echoed by Murphy (2003:280), who argues that the theory of ancestor worship 'is supported by the storing of the skull and long bones and the maintenance of formal disposal areas'.

Interestingly, although Soles (2001:233) highlights that the Archanes skulls 'belonged to the recent dead, but also to those who had died centuries before', no distinction is made between those which may retain some element of individualised identity due to their relatively recent decomposition/disarticulation/deposition and those which had achieved ancestral anonymity over time. Rather, in this instance the initial death of the individual and the subsequent retention of their skull alone is interpreted as representative of their achievement of ancestorhood, as suggested in the description of Gournia Tomb I, where a pit dug in MM IA to store the skulls from the ruined EM II Tomb I contained 'the *remains of ancestors who had died* at least 600 years earlier' (Soles 2001:233, 1992:8-9,31). However, despite acknowledging the non-universality of ancestor worship as a practice, it is in Soles' (2001:229) reference to Fortes' (1976:7) discussion of ancestors and the 'material vehicles of their presence' that we can most clearly discern a direct association between skulls and the ancestors. From the above passage and his citation of archaeological evidence for the offering of food and/or vessels alongside relocated skulls at Mochlos and Gournia (Soles 1992:247-50, 2001:233), it is clear that Soles interprets skulls as a material manifestation of ancestors at the Prepalatial tomb sites. He argues that it is this materiality – this acknowledgement of *physical* conduits of ancestral presence – that is a 'feature of ancestor worship that allows us to identify the phenomenon in the archaeological record' (Soles 2001:229).²¹

Interestingly, Cadogan (2011:108) does not invoke 'ancestor worship' in his interpretation of the tomb at Myrtos Pyrgos, which was used from the period EM II to LM I and at which the ossuaries (both of Pyrgos II date) were integral parts of the cemetery plan. In reference to Ossuary 1 (Space 106), he describes an oval pit tightly packed with the bones and a standing pithos, within which approximately 51 skulls were arranged along the pit wall or pithos, interpreting the 'carefully arranged' deposit as 'clear signs of *skull*

²¹ It is important to note that Soles (2010:337) makes explicit elsewhere that skull retention is only one criterion for the identification of ancestor worship in the archaeological record, along with secondary burial with associated ritual, household and tomb altars, and feasting with the dead in private and communally.

veneration' (Cadogan 2011:108, my emphasis).²² It is unclear whether Cadogan equates veneration of the skull with the veneration of the ancestors, but his later assertion (2011:114, my emphasis) that the burial complex's '*liminal location*' at the west corner of the living area positions it as a *gateway to the next world*' certainly implies both a Van Gennepian framework of interpretation with the (albeit misguided) use of the term 'liminal' and the association of the curated skeletal remains with the dead's journey from one plane of existence to another.²³

One of the most prominent ways in which skulls are directly associated with ancestors is in scholarly arguments for the use of tombs and/or human remains as a means by which Prepalatial communities laid claim to both social status and limited resources. With explicit reference to both Saxe's (1970) eighth hypothesis and Van Gennep's theoretical framework, Murphy (1998:27-32), in particular, argues for a Prepalatial perception – and manipulation of – the ancestors:

From the architectural changes, the changes in ritual, and the location of the rituals, I argue that the growing élites in the later phases of the Prepalatial period used the tombs to legitimize their power by manipulating the rituals and *by controlling access to the ancestors* thereby sanctifying their authority.

(Murphy 1998:27, my emphasis)

This control of access to the ancestors is posited in decidedly *physical* terms, in that – drawing on the anthropological analogies of the Tsembaga Maring culture of New Guinea and the Ashanti of West Africa – the tombs' locations and viewsheds over fertile areas and access routes to the sea are argued as purposeful, a conscious situation of the tombs at certain points within the landscape to link the living and the ancestors. While the theoretical implications and inconsistencies of arguments for ancestral viewshed are discussed in Section 3.4, it is important to consider Murphy's (1998:31, my emphasis)

²² See Section 3.2 for a discussion of invocations of 'care' in archaeological descriptions of skeletal deposits in the Prepalatial era.

²³ As discussed in Chapter 2, I would argue that the concept of a 'liminal location' is paradoxical, in that it equates a state of being (i.e. spatial location) and the anthropologically-defined state of unbeing (i.e. liminality). In this case, a distinction must be made between that which is marginal and/or peripheral (i.e. the location of the cemetery on the edge of the settlement area) and that which is liminal in the anthropological sense of the concept. After all, the liminal is not inherently marginal but central, as the intermediary stage in rites of passage and as such, should not be conflated with more general ideas of spatial peripherality or exceptionality.

assertion that the Prepalatial Minoans held a belief – like the Ashanti of West Africa – that the land belonged to sacred ancestors and thus, ‘*due to their lineal descent from the ancestors*, the living inherit the right to use the land, but also the obligation to guard and defend it’ (see also Murphy 2003:357).

This particular interpretation raises two salient issues: firstly, the invocation of *lineage* (i.e. the acknowledgement of direct descent from a single ancestor) in the control of resources and secondly, the categorisation of ancestors as (or as associated with) *physical* entities purposefully and permanently fixed in the landscape. In regard to the former, we must bear in mind that Murphy’s discussion of ‘ancestors’ is explicitly framed in reference to Van Gennep’s model, in which the physical decomposition of the body heralded the deceased’s loss of individual identity and incorporation into a collective, anonymous ancestorhood. It is thus surprising and essentially inconsistent that lineage is invoked, in that it requires the recognition of linear descent from a *singular* ancestor and an understanding of ancestors which is inherently biological, rather than an achieved status through the completion of a rite of passage. It is also arguably an overly simplistic, economical conception of the relationship between the living and ancestors, as suggested by Parker Pearson in reference to the Cretan tombs and the ancestor/resource control model in general:

[In this equation]...the treatment of the ancestors is relegated to an economic activity in which the ideological basis of reverence is mainly to ensure a sufficient supply of food... To reduce the significance of the ancestors and tombs to a function of subsistence management is to relegate human aspiration and motivation to wondering where the next meal is coming from.

(Parker Pearson 1999b:137)

However, Murphy’s interpretation of the importance of a recognised, ‘ancestral’ lineage is echoed in other interpretations of the Prepalatial funerary record, in which ancestors are posited not as anonymous members of an unindividuated collective, but as individualised entities who maintain (or gain) the status of ‘ancestral founders’ (Maggidis 1998:95). In his discussion of Burial Building 19 at the cemetery of Archanes-Phourni, Maggidis (1998:94-5) interprets the location of certain burials within the tomb and in relation to internal

architectural features as representative of expressions of social hierarchy, in this case people of particular significance in relation to 'lineage':

The *most important burials* of the tomb, however, were those deposited in the southeastern corner in Layer 2...The importance of these individuals is also indicated by their position in the tomb upon and around an internal altar – a location undoubtedly reserved for *distinguished individuals*...[they] *may be identified as the ancestral founders of this lineage*, for whom an altar was set up inside the tomb.

(Maggidis 1998: 94-5, my emphasis)

It is in this way that the 'ancestral founders' of the lineage are explicitly equated with 'distinguished individuals', entities who are interpreted as having a socially recognised – or rather, *revered* – individualised identity (see also Alexiou and Warren 2004:11,15,141; Murphy 2011b:40). There is, therefore, a distinct difference between this use of the term and concept 'ancestral' and those in which ancestors are both characterised and created by their *loss* of individual identity and personal social agency. The adjective is thus misleading in interpretative discussion, as 'ancestral' in reference to a socially recognised lineage or its 'distinguished' founders has far more in common with the colloquial use of the term indicating biological descent than the anthropologically-defined category of 'ancestors' which we find applied in the archaeological literature, in which they are generally defined as a homogenous, anonymous collective.

In the context of anthropologically-influenced models of ancestorhood then, invocations of 'ancestral lineage' – and thus the 'ancestors'' maintenance of individualised identity – are somewhat paradoxical, as they are made in tandem with Hertzian arguments for the dissolution of material and social personhood through secondary depositional activities. This is illustrated in Triantaphyllou's (2017:286, see also Triantaphyllou 2016:777) discussions of burial processes in Pre- and Protopalatial Crete, in which – while arguing from a Hertzian standpoint that 'incomplete but identifiable body parts were transformed through fragmentation and burning into non-individual bones' and that 'personal identities would gradually have broken down' – she also states that:

the human remains would have been transformed into *physical entities or even material objects* which would have been employed then by the living community as mnemonic

devices and *means to link the present with the ancestors (lineage) and the communal past.*

(Triantaphyllou 2017:286, my emphasis)

While the juxtaposition between human remains and physical entities/material objects will be discussed shortly, it is Triantaphyllou's association of the ancestors with a 'lineage' which is most relevant here. It is unclear whether she includes ancestors within the framework of a 'communal past' or as separate from it, but her conflation of ancestorhood with the recognition of identifiable, individualised antecedents (i.e. a lineage) would imply the latter, a perspective which conflicts with the anthropologically-influenced framework of interpretation in which ancestors are anonymous and unindividuated members of a collective group.

However, Triantaphyllou's mention of *physical* entities brings us back to the second issue at hand: the association of ancestors in the Prepalatial era with the distinctly material, despite their widespread categorisation within anthropological frameworks as having transcended the physical world of the living. Indeed, Murphy (1998:35) makes an explicit argument for the distinctly physical presencing and subsequent social importance of the ancestors in her discussion of the tholos tombs of the Mesara:²⁴

The presence of the ancestors was represented in the tombs through the retention of the skulls and long bones over the period of a millennium. This stability and continuity of the ancestors in the tomb paralleled the stability and continuity of the associated settlement.

(Murphy 1998:35, my emphasis)

Skulls are thus posited as the *physical* representation/manifestation of the ancestors, entities whose retention within the tombs were – according to Murphy's interpretation – subsequently socially manipulated by their purported (linear, biological) descendants in order to control access to limited resources. Therefore, despite their discussion within an explicitly Van Gennepian framework, ancestors are not posited as having transcended physical, or even corporeal forms, but rather are interpreted as having retained some ontological connection (albeit collectively) with certain types of skeletal deposits.

²⁴ This interpretation – that ancestors were perceived of as physically present in a specific area – is one which is echoed in Driessen's (2018:18) statement that in the case of multiple cemeteries on Crete such as Malia, Sissi, Gournia, Mochlos, Petras and Palaikastro, 'before reaching the settlement, one paid respect to the gathered ancestors'.

This is not to say that I am opposed to such an interpretation of Prepalatial ancestors as entities which could be both transcendent, non-corporeal and, in another sense, present, immanent or symbolically linked to skeletal remains. Yet it is important to acknowledge that it is not an interpretation that is made through explicit statement, but rather inadvertently through theoretical inconsistency. This may be indicative of what Peatfield (2016:5) has identified as an archaeological hostility to the idea of existential dualism,²⁵ but considering the extent of anthropological influence on ancestor models, it is far more likely to exist as a consequence of the uncritical application of the theories of Van Gennep and Hertz.

However attractive an interpretation, I would argue that the archaeological interpretation of skulls as intrinsically associated with the ancestors is theoretically inconsistent with these anthropological models, despite their extensive application to the Prepalatial funerary record and subsequent influence on the manner in which Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief has been understood. So widespread is their invocation that we perhaps lose sight of the fact that they are fundamentally just that – *models* – structured designs which inevitably invite staticity and often complacency into interpretative discussion. Yet, when we choose to employ them, especially explicitly, they must at least be applied consistently to the archaeological record. Just as their anthropologically-influenced paradigms are relied upon to support interpretative conclusions, so too must their conceptual implications and limitations be acknowledged and adhered to. In other words, if the secondary depositional activities of the Prepalatial Cretans are interpreted within an explicitly Van Gennepian and/or Hertzian framework – in which ancestors are posited as an anonymous collective severed from the material, corporeal world of the living – the immediate interpretative equation of deposited skull with ancestor(s) is theoretically inconsistent.

I stress '*intrinsic* association' or the '*immediate* interpretative equation' of skull and ancestor here, since, as will be discussed shortly, skulls – along with other two or three-dimensional forms – may represent/exist as ancestors, but an automatic equivalence of the two without qualification should be avoided. By extension, the interpretation of collective deposits of skulls at Prepalatial tomb sites as indicative of ancestor worship should equally be examined on a case-by-case basis. This is a point raised by Crevecoeur et al. (2015:295-

²⁵ Peatfield (2016:5) defines this as an opposition between 'the material physical world and the spiritual metaphysical world'.

6) in reference to the cemetery at Sissi, who state that although collections of skulls are attested at Locus 1.11 and 1.10, no associated deposition of cups has been discerned, thus characterising the evidence for ancestor worship/veneration there as 'suggestive but not unequivocal'.²⁶ They make clear their position that 'the gathering of skulls should not automatically be considered as evidence of ancestor veneration' (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:296), echoing Soles (2010:334) in his assertion that 'skull collection alone is insufficient evidence for ancestor worship'. However, skull deposits are not exclusive to the Prepalatial funerary record but existent in archaeological contexts elsewhere, the interpretation of which may be seen to have had considerable influence over the conceptualisation of those from Bronze Age Crete.

5.5 Anthropological influence through archaeological analogy: Neolithic Jericho

The extent to which this inherent association between skull and ancestor is made in the archaeological literature relating to Prepalatial Crete may be seen to have been influenced by scholarly references to archaeological contexts elsewhere, in particular the plastered skulls of Neolithic Jericho. Hageman and Hill (2016:42) emphasise the prominent and arguably pioneering position of the Near Eastern and Levantine Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B skulls in archaeological discussions of ancestors, highlighting that 'the ancestral dead made an appearance as early as 1953, when Kathleen Kenyon identified Neolithic skulls from early Jericho as possibly those of venerated "tribal or family elders"' (see also Croucher 2012:93). While archaeologists often utilise analogy in scholarly discourse, the frequency with which these particular Near Eastern skull deposits appear in the discussion of Prepalatial ancestorhood suggests that they have gained significant currency in the conceptualisation of archaeological skulls and subsequently may be seen to have impacted on the interpretation of skull deposits from Bronze Age Crete, despite their dissimilarity in chronological and geographical context.

Following the excavators Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakelleraki's (1997:250-2) description of remains of plaster associated with skull deposits at Archanes-Phourni, Soles (2001:233; 2010:334) suggests that the skulls 'may have been smeared with plaster like the famous examples from Jericho'. Similarly, as part of his discussion of the Myrtos skull and

²⁶ Crevecoeur et al. (2015) use the terms 'ancestor worship' and 'ancestor veneration' interchangeably.

his brief suggestion of ancestor worship, Warren (1972:83) invites the reader to make a comparison with the 'plastered skulls of Neolithic Jericho'. Although not in reference to remains of plaster but rather concentrations of skulls in and of themselves, this is an analogy which is further explored by Girella and Todaro (2016:177). Referencing the EM II ossuary at Myrtos and the pits excavated at Tomb I at Gournia, they suggest a conceptual and interpretative link between the plastered Jericho skulls and those from Prepalatial contexts:

they could have been conceptually similar to the caches of modified and unmodified skulls that, in Near Eastern and Levantine contexts, were re-buried after having been "actively used" for the construction of social memory and corporate identities (Kuijt 2008).

(Girella and Todaro 2016:177)

While more general scholarly discussions of skulls, skull cult and ancestor cult also make reference to the plastered skulls from Jericho and the wider Levant (Bienert 1991; Parker Pearson 1999a:10), it is of note that Girella and Todaro cite here the scholarship of Kuijt (2008), who argues against the interpretation of the Jericho skulls as representative of ancestor worship. Instead, he posits that Neolithic funerary practices involved systems of memory and embodiment, whose focus shifted over time from the remembering to the forgetting of the dead:

When first removed from their bodies, the skulls of the deceased would have been associated with specific individuals and households. With the passing of generations, the nature of the memories and relations would have changed from experiential and personal to abstract and referential. It is through this process of the intergenerational manipulation of the body that identity and memory were transformed from named persons to a symbolic collective.

(Kuijt 2008:177)

Thus, the removal, modification and collection of skulls is interpreted by Kuijt (Fig. 15) as representative of a gradual loss of individualised, recognised identity, after which named

persons were forgotten and entered into a symbolic collective, and the skulls which were once ‘theirs’ were cached.²⁷

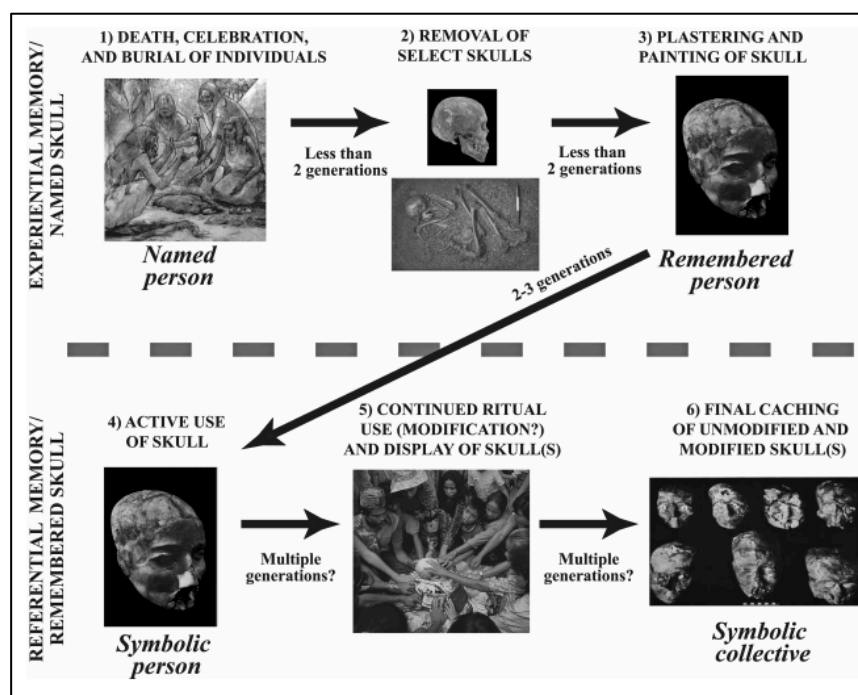


Figure 15: Kuijt's interpretation of the timing and significance of Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period mortuary practices (Kuijt 2008:178, Fig. 4)

This is an interpretation which is explicitly echoed in considerations of Prepalatial secondary deposition practices, as exemplified in Driessen's (2010:115) discussion of the skull excavated from a domestic context in EM IIB Myrtos (Fig. 13), who, citing Kuijt (2008:177,185), states:

It would be *through the selection and retaining of skulls* that the identity and memory from named persons was transferred to a symbolic collective. Skulls represent at the same time *a process of de-individualisation and an ascendance to a new status of a collective ancestor*.
(Driessen 2010:115, my emphasis)

Following Kuijt (2008), Driessen (2010:115) therefore argues that skulls from Prepalatial contexts are not only *representative* of ancestorhood but a means *through* which it was achieved, in that their retention facilitated a dissolution of individualised personhood, 'transforming him or her into the collective memory'.

²⁷ See Croucher (2012:151-2) for a criticism of Kuijt's invocation of memory, on the basis of his use of modern analogies and experiences.

Despite referring to Kuijt's model of remembering and forgetting, we may again discern in Driessen's above statement many hallmarks of Van Gennep's theory, in the dead's hypothesised tripartite transition from named individual to part of a collective ancestorhood. In tracing the origin of this interpretative framework, it is in this case that the ubiquity of the theoretical models of Van Gennep and Hertz in archaeological interpretations of funerary remains across geographical and chronological contexts becomes most apparent. Indeed, when we look more closely at Kuijt's (2008:175-6) article on 'symbolic remembering and forgetting' in Neolithic Jericho, we notice that both Van Gennep (1960) and Hertz (1960) are cited in his discussion of secondary deposition practices and social memory, with Hertz (2004[1960]) further cited in his assertion that 'secondary mortuary practices are often viewed as enriching ties to ancestral lines, responsibility to the deceased and beliefs about universal orders' (Kuijt 2008:176). We are thus reminded that even when Prepalatial scholarship seeks to move beyond static models of ancestorhood and/or its physical manifestation(s) – as seen in both Girella and Todaro's (2016:177) and Driessen's (2010:115) emphasis on the impact of the fragmentation and circulation of human remains on social memory and meaning – the models they draw on (i.e. Kuijt 2008) are explicitly influenced by anthropological frameworks, particularly those of Van Gennep and Hertz. While its anthropological influence is perhaps less immediately obvious, 'remembering and forgetting' the dead – as used elsewhere by Hamilakis (2013:155, 2018:324) in reference to the Mesara tholoi – is simply another way of expressing an essentially Van Gennepian model of transition, through which an individual becomes an anonymised part of a collective ancestorhood.

However, Kuijt (2008), Driessen (2010) and Girella and Todaro's (2016) emphasis on the purposeful removal, mobility and circulation of skulls in both funerary and non-funerary contexts prompts us to return – for the final time – to a certain aspect of Talalay's (2004:155) question: in her quandary as to whether the disarticulated, mobile skull was perceived as an 'object or a human'.

5.6 Skulls as objects

Scholarly discourse related to Prepalatial funerary practices has raised issues as to subjectivity and objectivity, with Vavouranakis (2017:390) emphasising that 'funerary contexts highlighted the fluid boundaries between people and the material world'.

However, this fluidity – the transition from subject to object – is posited as a one-way progression, as seen in his subsequent description of the function of the funerary process and secondary deposition activity in particular:

It takes a person, namely *a social subject that has died, out of the world of people and turns her/him into an artefact or an object*, since the living participants of a funeral manipulate the dead body in its final resting place.

(Vavouranakis 2017:390, my emphasis)

People, or subjects, are thus argued to be turned into objects through the enactment of secondary depositional activities, echoing Triantaphyllou's (2017:286, my emphasis) assertion that during Pre- and Protopalatial burial processes 'human remains would have been transformed into physical entities or even *material objects*'. However, it is interesting that in later discussion of these very activities – namely the fragmentation of the body – Vavouranakis (2017:391, my emphasis) refers to the 'contrast between dead bodies and things, both of which became fragmented and/or discarded'. The suggestion of a 'contrast' between disarticulated human remains and 'things' somewhat undermines his previous statement, in its implication that they exist as two separate entities, with 'dead bodies' *not* having achieved the status of 'object'. This continued ontological distinction between human remains and artefacts/things/objects is made even more clear in Vavouranakis' (2017:392) subsequent statement that – in cases such as pithoi or ossuaries tightly packed with human remains – 'human remains fused with the built environment and with artefacts and created what are dubbed "mixed hybrids"'. While a 'hybrid' is indeed a changed entity through its amalgamation, it must be acknowledged that it is fundamentally defined not by the transformation of one entity (i.e. subject) into another (i.e. object), but rather a combination of two *distinct* elements.

In more general descriptions of the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete, scholars largely adhere to such a differentiation, in that skulls are referred to as entities that are ontologically distinct from other material forms.²⁸ For instance, when describing the contents of Archanes Tholos Tomb Gamma, Hamilakis (2018:322, my emphasis) refers to 'the collection of body parts *and* objects', as part of which 'three skulls from EM IIIA

²⁸ Interestingly, this is not a distinction which is made in archaeological discussion elsewhere, as seen in Croucher's (2012:150) subtitle 'Skulls and Other Objects'.

burials were collected and deposited carefully, *together with objects and artefacts*, in a fissure of the bedrock'. This is also evident in Driessen's (2010:114, my emphasis) reference to the role of 'body fragments *and* objects' in the embodiment of social relations. In listing parts of the deposited body – skeletal or otherwise – as other, or in opposition to, objects and/or artefacts, human remains are thus framed in scholarly description as occupying a distinct ontological position, echoing Robb's (2007:287) argument that humans and bodies are recognised as fundamentally different to other categories of objects in the modern era, both before and after death.

Questions related to the ontological standing of skulls in scholarly discourse are relevant for our current discussion of ancestorhood in the Prepalatial era, as they provide important insight into the consistency with which the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz are applied to the archaeological record. That is to say that if – as per the model of Hertz – the dissolution of social and material personhood has taken place through secondary deposition activities, then there exists no obstacle to a skull being perceived *as an object* distinct from its original association with a named individual. In addition, the characterisation of the ancestors in the Prepalatial era in accordance with the model of Van Gennep – as an anonymous collective unbound to the material world of the living – further undermines any inherent association between 'their' human remains (i.e. skulls) and representations/manifestations of ancestors.

This is not an interpretative position which is particularly comfortable, especially in the context of our own perception of the skull as inextricably associated with individualised identity, and current movements in archaeological ethics which actively oppose the objectification of human remains. Yet the potential interpretation of skull-as-object in the Prepalatial era is one which is argued from logic, in that it is theoretically supported by the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz which have been so extensively invoked in discussions of Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief. It is a point of theory, a recognition of the implications of the consistent application of these anthropological models. Yet it is one which highlights the inherent contradiction in arguing for a disembodied, immaterial, spiritual state of ancestorhood, whilst simultaneously presupposing that the material skull – as a seemingly exceptional skeletal component – existed as the entity through which the ancestors manifested and/or were represented. Multiple scholars have pointed out that there is no reason why collections of skulls from Prepalatial funerary contexts should be automatically interpreted as associated with the

ancestors (e.g. Soles 2010:334; Crevecoeur et al. 2015:296), but it is important to recognise that if the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz are *consistently* applied, then the only way in which ancestors could be associated with skulls is within a framework in which skulls are fundamentally disassociated from their former state of being (i.e. as associated with an individual, the body) and are instead perceived of as *objects* through which ancestral presence was made material.

However initially unpalatable such a theoretical constraint might be, the acknowledgement that the human skull must be categorised as an object in these circumstances does encourage alternative perspectives on the potential presence and/or presencing of ancestors in the archaeological record. As Hageman and Hill (2016:62) highlight, although human bone is an ‘especially potent material expression of ancestorhood...ancestors may be represented in two- or three-dimensional form; symbolized by some class of artefact, such as a pot or tablet; or embodied by a technological process’. By de-centring – or perhaps de-exceptionalising – skulls in discussions of Prepalatial ancestorhood we might thus come to recognise evidence for other, non-skeletal manifestations and/or representations of ancestors in the archaeological record. Indeed, following Insoll (2011:1048), in his assertion that ‘a universally object- or iconographic-centred approach to ancestors is flawed’, it is important to consider that these ancestral manifestations/representations themselves may not even be material, a possibility which naturally causes difficulty for a discipline which fundamentally relies on physical remains:

The potential immaterial element of ancestors, a contradictory position for an archaeologist, should also be remembered...because of the nature of archaeological evidence the default position can become an emphasis on materiality to the exclusion of recognizing (even if they cannot be reconstructed) less tangible associations, beliefs, and immateriality.

(Insoll 2011:1051)

The ancestors may thus exist or be invoked through the enactment of processes, during which meaning is constructed and changed, a point raised by MacGaffey (2000:20) in his discussion of entities (including ancestors) in the forest regions of Central Africa, which he describes as:

not primarily an object or even necessarily a definite personality, but a ritual process whose material infrastructure may include amulets, calabashes, carved figurines, masks, rocks, graves, shrines, and human bodies ... among which enabling metaphors endlessly cycle.

(MacGaffey 2000:20)

The identification of immaterial manifestations/representations of ancestors in the archaeological record is thus a problematic endeavour, but one which we must nevertheless consider as a viable possibility, especially within anthropologically-influenced frameworks which characterise the ancestors as essentially metaphysical, having severed their ties to the physical world of the living. It is important to note that I have thus far purposefully referred to the manifestations *or* representations of the ancestors, discussing their existence *or* invocation through material or non-material means. This is purposeful, since, as highlighted by Hageman and Hill (2016:62), 'the distinction between object *as* ancestor and an object *representing* an ancestor may be fluid or non-existent'. This is in recognition of the complexity of discussing issues of objectivity/subjectivity in relation to ancestors, as some ancestor 'objects' may indeed be 'ontological subjects, possessing agency and personhood, animacy and generative capacity' (Hageman and Hill 2016:62). Defining a skull as an object, as an entity which has – in keeping with the anthropological models applied to Prepalatial funerary practices and eschatological belief – lost its *inherent* association with physical personhood/ancestorhood, does thus not negate its subsequent *subjective* ability to embody ancestors or enact their presence.

I would argue that skulls *are* special in the funerary archaeology of Prepalatial Crete, yet this exceptionality is complex and is mediated by a multitude of stakeholders. While it would be remiss to underestimate the evidence for their deposition in concentrations within the tombs in the Prepalatial era, as well as their potential circulation and/or installation in non-funerary contexts, we must consider the influence of both methodological and ontological factors in their archaeological recovery, reporting and interpretative discussion. It is in this self-reflexive exercise that we come to realise the interpretative staticity of the anthropological models so extensively applied to the archaeological record of Prepalatial Crete, in that they conflict with interpretations of the skull as exceptional due to its retention of a link with the ancestors as a part of their past physical, corporeal forms. Thus, if we are to consistently apply the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz in archaeological interpretations, it must be with the

acknowledgement that while skulls may have existed as the representation/manifestation of ancestors in Prepalatial Crete, they are not *especially* (or exclusively) associated with an ancestorhood theoretically defined by its anonymity, spirituality and metaphysicality.

5.7 An exclusive ancestorhood?: sex, age and anthropological models

It is now apparent that ancestors in Prepalatial Crete are largely posited – in keeping with anthropological models of transition – as having been perceived of as an unindividuated and anonymous collective. Yet, although ancestorhood is consistently framed as the final stage of a rite of passage through which the dead progress, little attention has been paid to the first state of being in this tripartite transformation, namely the individuals who are identified as able and/or appropriate to achieve the status of ancestor. It is in this acknowledgement that we are reminded of two important factors. Firstly, we must consider that whilst ancestors are conceptualised in the archaeological literature as homogenous, unindividuated and removed from corporeal forms, the demographic of the dead is not. People of all ages and sexes die and the biological (i.e. taphonomic) differences between osteoarchaeological remains exist for us as an important source of information in regard to which members of the Prepalatial communities were afforded interment within the cemeteries and in what manner. Secondly, it is imperative to return to a seemingly straight-forward point, but one which should not be overlooked: that *not all the dead are ancestors*.

The question therefore arises that if individuals, and thus the individualised dead, are different from one another (even on the basest biological level of age and/or sex) and not all the dead are ancestors,²⁹ then what are the criteria upon which entry into ancestorhood depends? In other words, which members of the Prepalatial communities are envisioned in interpretative discussion as possessing the capability to achieve ancestorhood through the completion of a rite of passage and who are those who are excluded? These are the questions of exclusivity/inclusivity which will be discussed here, highlighting that scholarly interpretations of the *exclusive achievement* of ancestral status in Prepalatial Crete have been influenced by the anthropological frameworks within which discussions of ancestorhood, funerary practices and eschatological belief take place.

²⁹ Determining biological sex through reference to taphonomic features is different to investigating social constructs of gender.

As discussed in Section 3.3, the achievement of ancestorhood in the Prepalatial era necessitated the dissolution of individualised identity and what has been termed ‘active social agency’ (Hamilakis 2013:155, 2018:324). Definitions of this ‘active social agency’ are absent, but we may assume that such a designation refers to the capacity of living individuals to engage with and act upon the world around them, with Hamilakis (2013:155) emphasising that even biomedical death does not necessarily herald the cessation of such an influence, but rather the individual may continue to act upon the living, through ‘the sensorial impact emanating from its decomposing corpse’. It is thus important to acknowledge that the anthropologically-influenced models of ancestorhood prevalent in the interpretation of Prepalatial funerary practice presuppose both recognised individuality and active social agency as characteristics of the individual who undergoes the tripartite model of transition from dead person to ancestor.

This is a crucial consideration, as I would argue that this presupposition has led to the exclusion of certain members of the Prepalatial communities from interpretative discussions of ancestorhood, due to the scholarly perception of their lesser (or absence of) ‘active social agency’ and thus incapability – or rather, lack of necessity – to achieve the status of ‘ancestor’. Children, in particular, are one segment of the Prepalatial population which have been thus excluded from discussions of ancestorhood, due to both methodological factors and the continued perpetuation of static definitions of ancestors in archaeological thought.

I use the term ‘child’ or ‘children’ here as it is the term most frequently found in archaeological and anthropological reports and interpretative discussion (e.g. Branigan 1987; Maggidis 1998; Alexiou and Warren 2004; Branigan 2010a; Vavouranakis 2014; Crevecoeur et al. 2015; Triantaphyllou 2016). Yet it is used in the acknowledgement that, as highlighted by Triantaphyllou (2016:160), ‘the classification of age groups in archaeological populations is highly affected by our western perceptions’, and that ‘childhood’ is fundamentally a socio-culturally specific construct and one whose implications we must continually acknowledge. However, although osteoarchaeological definitions such as perinate (late gestation to a month old), neonate (0-1 year), infant (1-6 years), child (6-12 years) or juvenile (12-18 years) may offer us a more precise alternative to referring to the general presence of ‘children’ in the archaeological record (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:287; Triantaphyllou et al. 2017:295), as it is these very implications and their

interpretative influence our present discussion endeavours to explore, the use of the term general term 'children' is purposefully maintained.

While taking care not to underestimate the emotive impact of child death, we must first consider that childhood mortality would have been a frequent occurrence in Prepalatial Crete, with Triantaphyllou (2016:161) highlighting that in prehistoric populations the rate of childhood mortality would have been at least 50%, meaning that half of any steadily growing population would be made up of living individuals under the age of 18 years old. It is interesting that both osteoarchaeological definitions and interpretative discussion use the age of 18 to distinguish between child and adult, an age threshold which aligns with our own social, cultural and legal definition of adulthood. Yet, despite the centrality of (our definition of) children in prehistoric populations and their high mortality rate, the visibility of children in the funerary record of Prepalatial Crete has only been emphasised relatively recently, both in terms of archaeological excavation and interpretative discussion.

Branigan (2010a:261) highlights that, prior to Triantaphyllou's studies of the skeletal remains from Tholos Gamma at Archanes (2005) and the tholoi at Moni Odigitria (2010), there existed very limited evidence for the burial of children in the Mesara tholoi. However, the quantity and relative proportion of sub-adult burials in Tholos A at Moni Odigitria in particular – numbering at least 34 including neonates, infants and juveniles, a quarter of the estimated minimum number of individuals (MNI)³⁰ – suggests that children were 'not so much absent as overlooked and, understandably, particularly poorly preserved' (Branigan 2010a:261). Others have come to similar conclusions, in their suggestion that the smaller size and low bone mineral density of children's skeletal remains has led to their under-representation in the Prepalatial funerary record due to a lack of preservation in comparison with more visible, durable adult remains (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:296). Indeed, the presence of children's skeletal remains in certain assemblages is used as evidence to suggest the purposeful removal of adult skeletal components rather than their lack of preservation, as in the case of House Tomb 5 at Petras, where under-represented rib cage bones, vertebrae and flat bones were excavated in association with bones belonging to neonates and infants (Triantaphyllou et al. 2017:293). The incredibly fragmentary nature of children's bones is particularly emphasised in the recovery of six jars

³⁰ See Crevecoeur et al. (2015:287) for a description of how the Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI) is calculated in reference to the osteoarchaeological evidence at Sissi.

from the EM IIA deposit from Loci 1.11 and 1.12 at the house tomb cemetery of Sissi, within which perinatal and infant skeletal remains were found (Crevecoeur 2015:289). Only recovered due to the employment of precise excavation techniques and a specifically archaeothanatological approach, the poor preservation of these fragmented and encrusted bones has led excavators to suggest that ‘empty vessels’ recovered from funerary contexts elsewhere – traditionally interpreted as grave goods and/or remnants of communal feasting – may have instead functioned as funerary containers, with their (presumably child’s) skeletal remains potentially overlooked ‘by less careful and exhaustive methods of excavation’ (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:289).

The excavations at Sissi – at which the remains of perinatal or young children were found in all attested phases of the cemetery (ranging from EM IIA to MM II) – provide further insight into the ways in which children’s remains were physically engaged with subsequent to their initial deposition. While preliminary study of the associated pottery suggests a later, Protopalatial MM IB –II date, the remains of Child 1 (3-4 years old) and Child 2 (4-5 years old) deposited in Area B at Locus 1.7 are particularly interesting, as seen in the excavators’ description of their deposition sequence:

First, Child 2 was laid out on the pebble floor and decomposed completely. Then its skeletal remains were moved and placed along the west wall probably to make space for the deposition of Child 1. Subsequent human intervention caused the displacement of the crania of both the children and their lower limbs to be mixed. Finally, after its skull had been displaced, the body of Child 1 was partially covered by two stones.

(Crevecoeur et al. 2015:292)

Although the excavators at Sissi refer to this deposition as a primary collective deposit due to the continued location of the skeletal remains in the place of initial decomposition,³¹ it is clear that children’s remains are being consciously engaged with post-decomposition, as evident in the movement of Child 2 and the displacement of Child 1’s skull. Indeed, in Locus 1.9 at Sissi, which is at earliest MM IA in date, it is suggested that children’s remains were physically engaged with during decomposition, as evidenced by the secondary deposition of extremely small and fragmentary perinatal bones (Crevecoeur et al. 2015:293).

³¹ See Introduction for a discussion of the specific terminology used at the cemetery site of Sissi and the ongoing debate around the terms ‘secondary burial’ and ‘secondary deposition’ in Prepalatial funerary archaeology.

Further evidence for children's remains being subject to the same secondary depositional activities (i.e. skeletal disarticulation, movement, removal, skull relocation) as adult burials is attested at Tomb I (Papoura) at Lebena, where the entrance has been interpreted as having functioned as an ossuary of sorts, in which nine skulls were deposited, including one of a child (Alexiou and Warren 2004:12). Similarly, during his discussion of the manipulation and grouping of skulls, Branigan (1993:124) highlights Marinatos' (1931:151) discovery of a small cooking pot at Tholos A at Vorou, within which a selection of bones including a child's jaw bone had been placed post-decomposition. The primary burial of children is also attested in Prepalatial Crete, emphasised by Vavouranakis (2014:216) in his discussion of the EM II jar burials at Nopigeia and Sissi, the EM III pithoi from Tholos Gamma at Archanes-Phourni and the MM I vessels at Apesokari A. The evidence from Burial Building 19 at Archanes-Phourni is particularly interesting, as the discovery of fourteen articulated primary burials there included eight children, many of whom were deposited with grave goods including 'usually one to three clay vases (one-handled cups, bowls, or even two-handled spouted jars), and occasionally one piece of jewellery (an earring or a necklace), or even a toy' (Maggidis 1998:91).

The provision of grave goods in this case is interpreted by Maggidis (1998:91) as representative of the children's 'birthright property, suggestive of inherited status'. This interpretation of 'status' is supported by the observation that five out of the eleven individuals afforded metal grave goods were children, thus undermining 'the notion that children were not generally furnished with prestige goods supposedly because they had not earned them in life' (Maggidis 1998:93). It is on this notion of *earned* status – of an almost accumulative perspective of active social agency – that I wish to focus, as it has significant repercussions on the ways in which we imagine children's place in the living Prepalatial communities and subsequently, their capacity to become ancestors.

Humphreys (1981:8-9, my emphasis) has argued that it is because of the place of children in western society, as entities who 'do not own property, except for toys, and have *no achieved status*', that the archaeological excavation of child burials with rich grave goods becomes interpretatively problematic. This characterisation of children as other, as possessing fundamentally lesser status and social agency due to their shorter life-span, is one which found explicitly outlined in Hertz's (2004[1960]) model of transition after death, an interpretative framework which, as previously discussed, has been extensively applied to the Prepalatial funerary record:

the death of a stranger, a slave or a child will go almost unnoticed; it will arouse no emotion, occasion, no ritual

(Hertz 2004[1960]:76)

Since society has not yet given anything of itself to the (new-born) child, it is not affected by its disappearance and remains indifferent.

(Hertz 2004[1960]:84)

Yet it is apparent from the archaeological record, however partial, that the death of a child in Prepalatial Crete – neonate or otherwise – *was* cause for occasion, as seen in the provision of burial within the tomb structures, the provision of grave goods and in some cases, the enactment – post-decomposition – of secondary depositional activities. Although there is some evidence to suggest that children (i.e. <18 years old) are under-represented in selected Prepalatial skeletal assemblages – such as at the Livari-Skiadi tholos tomb in eastern Crete, where only six sub-adults are attested in comparison with 75 adult individuals (Triantaphyllou 2017:284) – in general, the evidence appears to suggest that the Minoans did not exclude certain members of the community from burial on the basis of sex or age (Driessen 2010:111, 2015:154-5), as highlighted by Triantaphyllou (2017:284) in her study of House Tomb 2 at Petras, the Petras rock shelter and the Livari-Skiadi rock shelter (Table 3).

Skeletal assemblage	< 0	0-1	1-6	6-12	12-18	18 +
Kephala-Petras HT 2	1	2	3	3	1	27
Kephala-Petras Rock Shelter		6	12	11	7	129
Livari Tholos Tomb			2	2	2	75
Livari Rock Shelter	4	5	9	14	9	74

Table 3: Distribution of age groups in selected case study skeletal assemblages (Triantaphyllou 2017:284, Table 11).

However, the question of whether or not children may be perceived of as ancestors does not centre around specific age thresholds but rather the scholarly conceptualisations of ‘active social agency’ and ‘achieved status’ and the extent to which children are

perceived of possessing them. Harrington (2015:75, my emphasis) certainly invokes ideas of social status and agency as inherently accumulative in her assertion that children *can* be counted among the ancestors, although stating that they generally receive shorter commemorative practices 'given the subordinate status of juveniles in society and their lack of *accumulated* wisdom'. Elsewhere, definitions of ancestors in anthropological and archaeological thought actively exclude children, not on the grounds of *accumulative* social status/agency but on the basis of their incapacity to reproduce. Parker Pearson (1999a:10), again in reference to the archaeological material from Neolithic Jericho, infers biological reproduction as a key criterion for the achievement of ancestorhood in his statement that 'pre-sexual children cannot be ancestors', in keeping with Fortes' (1976) assertion that for the attainment of ancestorhood, 'the crucial step is the achievement of parenthood'. The production of recognised offspring or, as discussed in relation to Prepalatial discourse, a 'lineage', is thus framed as a critical factor in an individual's attainment of the social agency and status necessary for their later transition into an ancestor.

Yet, I would emphasise that this equation of biological reproduction and social agency is misguided. Social agency and/or status is not exclusive to those members of society who achieve parenthood and we must be reminded of Whitley's (2002:121, my emphasis) assertion that 'a *minimal* definition of an ancestor is someone who has procreated'. As highlighted in Section 5.2 then, purely biological definitions of ancestorhood are overly simplistic and hinder more nuanced perspectives on ancestorhood and the means through which it may be achieved. Despite the evidence for children having been afforded the same treatment hypothesised within anthropologically-influenced frameworks as conferring ancestorhood upon adults (i.e. the interment within tomb structures and subsequent secondary depositional activities including the movement of the skull) there has been little discussion of children as ancestors in relation to the Prepalatial funerary record.

This interpretative marginalisation may be somewhat due to the relative scarcity of (largely recent) skeletal data related to children, but I would argue that it is encouraged to a further extent by the idea that children lack the individualised identity or 'active social agency' necessary to even begin the anthropologically-influenced tripartite journey of transition towards ancestorhood. After all, Van Gennep and Hertz's structural and linearly progressive models require a specific starting point: an individual who possesses social status and agency, an identity which is eventually lost during the intermediate stage and

subsumed into a homogenous, anonymous collective. Children are thus excluded from such discussions of ancestorhood in the Prepalatial era as they are not postulated as possessing such an 'initial' identity, as seen in Legarra Herrero's (2016:186) description of pithos burials in 'liminal places, spatially alienated from other burial places' in the Middle Minoan period:

A custom first devised to deal with the abnormality of infant burial may have developed to include other fringe or liminal social statuses, such as foreigners or repudiated women. Such people may have come part of significant identities about community, but at the same time they represented a stigmatised social status.

(Legarra Herrero 2016:186).

While the implicit influence of Van Gennep (and perhaps Turner's) concept of the 'liminal' is again evident in discussions of Prepalatial funerary archaeology,³² it is in the interpretation of infants as occupying a 'fringe' social status in which we see the characterisation of children as possessing a lesser, or perhaps stigmatised social status within the community, a status supposedly expressed through their placement in 'outdoor' pithoi.³³

Yet Legarra Herrero's mention of 'repudiated women' as a category of people who would also lack social status and agency due to their supposed stigmatisation raises another issue in the conceptualisation of ancestors in both anthropological thought and the scholarly discussion of the Prepalatial funerary record. It is interesting why it is women specifically who are 'repudiated', why one sex in particular is framed as susceptible to social rejection and stigma, an inferior status which is interpreted as having negatively impacted on their inclusion within communal tomb structures and assumedly, a collective ancestorhood. This is an important consideration, as in discussions and definitions of ancestors, considerations of sex and gender are largely absent, an omission which Insoll (2011:1054) argues leads to a situation in which 'in archaeological terms, ancestors are often 'genderless' or by implication seemingly default male'. Yet anthropology – the discipline which has fundamentally shaped archaeological conceptions and interpretations

³² See Polinskaya (2003:99-100) for a discussion of the unreliability of spatial position as an indicator of liminality.

³³ Legarra Herrero (2017:184) separates outdoor pithoi burials into three categories: pithoi outside communal tombs, pithos cemeteries and pithoi lost in the landscape.

of ancestorhood – reminds us that gender *can* be a significant factor in the attainment or the denial of ancestral status. This is evident in societies like those of the Mountain Ok groups of Central New Guinea, where the skulls of women renowned for pig husbandry are specifically preserved as ancestral relics (Insoll 2011:1054). Conversely, Watson (1982:178-9) emphasises that in rural Cantonese society, despite women's remains being afforded the same burial procedures as men, they do not become ancestors and do not become the object of commemoration or ancestral rites.

In the case of Prepalatial Crete, it is clear that women's bodies were subject to the same funerary treatment as men, and in cases like that of Tholos Gamma at Archanes-Phourni (Triantaphyllou 2005:69) and (thus far) at Sissi (Driessen 2010:112), may even have received preferential treatment, as suggested by their over-representation within the skeletal assemblages. Yet despite this increasing body of skeletal data, I would argue that the influence of anthropological conceptions of ancestorhood – as a homogenous, anonymous, essentially *genderless* collective – has resulted in the omission of gender (and that of women in particular) from discussions of ancestorhood. This is a strange omission, especially in light of recent scholarly arguments for matrifocal social structures (Driessen 2010:112-3, 2011) and Peatfield's (2016:488) suggestion that Early Minoan female vessel figurines found in funerary contexts might express the 'ultimate maternal ancestor for the lineages in each tomb'.

We must thus acknowledge and assess the effects of androcentrism in our conception of 'genderless' entities, defined as an inclination to view men as more normative or representative than women. Thus while references to 'ancestral founders' in association with biological lineage (Maggidis 1998:94-5; Alexiou and Warren 2004:11,15,141; Murphy 2011b:40) certainly invoke distinctly male stereotypes, I would agree with Insoll (2011:1054 and above) that ancestors – as a collective, undivuated and 'genderless' group – are particularly susceptible to androcentrism and therefore vulnerable to an uncritical conceptualisation of them as 'default male'. This imbalanced and, within the homogenising anthropological frameworks of Van Gennep and Hertz, *untenable* characterisation is unfortunately supported by descriptions of specifically female 'repudiated' persons like that of Legarra Herrero (2016:186 and above), women who seemingly lacked the social status to be afforded both entry into communal tombs and the collective ancestorhood.

There are many questions that remain unanswered, and will most likely remain so, in scholarly discussions of eschatological belief and funerary practice at the Prepalatial tomb sites of Crete. Yet what is certain is the extensive influence of the anthropological models of Van Gennep and Hertz in the characterisation of the ancestors in such interpretative discussion, as an anonymous, undivuated, metaphysical collective which is continually posited as the dead's final state of being after the dissolution of the flesh and the disarticulation of skeletal remains. However appealing they may be as frameworks for the interpretation of Prepalatial secondary depositional activity, it must be acknowledged that these models impose theoretical limitations, constraints which conflict with interpretations of inherently ancestral physical objects. It follows that if these anthropological models continue to be utilised and consistently applied, the scholarly exceptionalism afforded Prepalatial skulls as entities which are intrinsically associated with the ancestors comes under scrutiny. This is not to underestimate the potential potency of human bone as a symbol, or to dismiss the evidence for skulls' removal, retention and installation in both funerary and non-funerary contexts in Prepalatial Crete, but rather to emphasise that the structured, static and universalising nature of Van Gennep and Hertz's models bring with them conceptual consequences, due to which the equation of skull and ancestor is theoretically inconsistent. It is thus through the acknowledgement of these anthropological models' sustained influence on the interpretation of the Prepalatial funerary record that we may begin to ask new questions, not only whether their application still exists as an attractive methodology, but those which arise outside of their restrictive frameworks: those of changing ancestors, living ancestors, ancestors who may maintain or episodically possess social agency, materiality and identity. It is in this way that ancestors need not exist as the static end point in discussions of Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief, but rather a compelling beginning.

Conclusion

From the birth of sociocultural anthropology and Cretan archaeology in Chapter 1 to the suggestion of future interpretative frameworks for ancestorhood in Chapter 5, this dissertation conceivably both starts and ends with beginnings. A critical reader might argue that this is paradoxical, that we cannot always be 'beginning', and that at some point we must adopt an interpretative framework, however flawed, and produce analyses of archaeological remains. As archaeologists are forced to make such interpretative decisions at every turn, this is not a point that I dispute, beyond emphasising that this dissertation does not argue for objectivity but rather the very opposite, focusing on identifying the inevitable influences that shape our conception of Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief. Therefore, our 'beginnings' – disciplinary, sociocultural, personal or otherwise – must remain at the forefront of our interpretations, as points of reference to which we must self-reflexively and habitually return. We are not held back by their continual recognition and problematisation, but rather proceed with a richer sense of our own situation within the archaeological process.

My discussion thus began with an examination of the long history of discourse between sociocultural anthropology and Cretan archaeology, as fields of study whose close relationship has continued from the nineteenth-century to the present day. Despite its longevity, it is clear that in certain contexts, this interdisciplinary conversation appears to have stalled. Models advanced around the turn of the twentieth century, those of socio-evolutionary theory, 'Mother Goddesses' and 'survivals', have found continued expression in the scholarly discussion of Prepalatial tombs, despite having been subject to substantial critique in both anthropological and archaeological thought since their development over a century ago. While the anthropological underpinning of Sir Arthur Evans' interpretations has attracted substantial scholarly discussion and debate, it is evident that these early anthropological models have exerted a far wider influence on our understanding of Bronze Age Crete. Within these outdated frameworks, the Prepalatial tombs are characterised as 'beginnings' in the most interpretatively restrictive sense, posited as precursors to later 'palatial' structures, whether they be social, religious or architectural in nature. The enduring influence of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century anthropological models of development has thus encouraged a scholarly discussion of the Prepalatial archaeological record which is essentially back-projecting, reductive and teleological.

However, the difficulty of stepping outside of such established interpretative frameworks is a recurring issue, as many of their primary tenets align with our own understanding of the world and our place within it. Therefore, while we may critique early anthropological models, it is with great difficulty that we abandon the familiar paradigms on which they are based, such as the concept of linear, irreversible and chronological time. An active acknowledgement of this familiarity, however, aids us in our recognition and implementation of alternate models of interpretation, in addition to an appreciation of worldviews dissimilar to our own. A self-reflexive approach must thus be employed in any discussion of the archaeological record, during which the impact of our socio-culturally specific perspectives on our interpretations is continually evaluated. This is particularly important in interpretations of funerary contexts, as anthropological studies demonstrate that perceptions of, and engagement with, the physical body post-mortem vary considerably across time and space.

Throughout my discussion, however, it has become clear that one process is central to archaeological understandings of Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief: bodily decomposition. From a self-reflexive standpoint, bodily decomposition plays a critical role in both traditional and recent trends in funerary practice in contemporary Britain, during which it is actively avoided and contained. Even in funerary practices such as natural burial, in which bodily dissolution is a celebrated element, there is little physical engagement with the decomposing body or, indeed, the body in general post-interment. The containment or negation of bodily decomposition in contemporary funerary practice has thus contributed to a perception of the process as inherently pollutant, dangerous, and a source of fear and revulsion.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that we find these negative attitudes towards bodily decomposition repeated throughout the archaeological literature of Prepalatial Crete. The smell of decomposition is framed as intolerable and nauseating, with the archaeological evidence for floor preparation and burnt deposits interpreted as a Minoan effort to purify or cleanse the tombs from the practical and symbolic pollution associated with the decomposing dead. This particularly unfavourable perspective on the physical engagement with the body post-mortem is echoed in discussions of the evidence for secondary depositional activities at the Prepalatial cemeteries, negatively described as acts of 'looting', 'carelessness' or 'indignity'.

However, while contemporary pollution behaviours and ideas related to the appropriate treatment of human remains have encouraged the interpretation of a Minoan fear, containment and purification of an inherently pollutant decomposing dead, bodily decomposition also exists as a critical stage in the anthropological models extensively applied to the Prepalatial funerary record. Whether through explicit citation or implicit invocation, it is evident that archaeological interpretations of the Prepalatial tombs have been significantly influenced by the anthropological models of Robert Hertz, Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner. It is through the application and, indeed, frequent combination, of these transitory models that the process of bodily decomposition is framed in archaeological discourse as period of ontological precarity, during which the decomposing dead exist as a source of anxiety, danger and pollution for the living. Within this interpretative framework, features of the Prepalatial record such as undersized doorways, burial containers and architectural orientation are identified as purposeful strategies employed by the Minoans to control the decomposing dead.

Yet the substantial critique to which these universalising models have become subject in anthropological discourse has not translated to their largely uncritical application to the Prepalatial funerary record. Their unilinear trajectories of transition are undoubtedly interpretatively attractive, but have invited staticity and theoretical inconsistency into the archaeological discourse surrounding Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief. Their inherent and interpretatively restrictive rigidity is exemplified in scholarly interpretations of ancestorhood, allowing only for a particularly narrow conceptualisation of the ancestors, as entities who have irreversibly transcended their previous physical forms and individualised identities. Therefore, while Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner's anthropological models offer the archaeologist 'clean' categories through which a multitude of unfamiliar, undefined or perhaps, *unsavoury*, funerary practices may be conveniently explained, their tripartite structures are simply just too neat.

I emphasise 'clean categories' purposefully here, as the application of these anthropological models has, paradoxically, encouraged the marginalisation of scholarly discussions of the *messiness* of death. The characterisation of bodily decomposition as a conceptually dangerous 'liminal' process to be contained, controlled, sanitised and purified, has left little room for contemplations of bodily decomposition as an integral part of funerary practice. This is an important acknowledgement, as while we perceive of bodily decomposition as mess, as an unruly and pollutant process which acts in opposition to the

western paradigm of a bounded, individualised body or 'self', this perspective is demonstrably socio-culturally specific. Anthropological studies of societies which practice secondary burial illustrate that the 'mess' of bodily decomposition need not be perceived of as inherently negative, but rather an inevitable and knowable process around which to structure funerary practice. Indeed, the close consideration of secondary burial practices in modern rural Greece demonstrates that physical engagement with human remains may occur while soft tissue survives, even within eschatological ideologies in which decomposition is perceived of as conceptually dangerous and pollutant.

Therefore, while we began with sweat and dust, adopting Redfield's (1991:6-7) 'gross characterisation' to acknowledge the messy, mixed methodologies employed by prehistorians, this mess is not reflected in our archaeological interpretations. Through the application of rigidly structured anthropological models to the Prepalatial funerary record, the scholarly discussion of early Minoan funerary practice and eschatological belief has been too readily shaped by static, 'clean categories' of interpretation. As highlighted by Hamilakis (2002:13), the Minoan archaeological record itself is 'messy', and thus inconsistency is inevitable in any approach which attempts to tidy it up with the application of static anthropological models of binary oppositions. This is particularly evident in the case of the Prepalatial funerary record, in which, despite their explicit use of anthropological models, scholarly interpretations of the skeletal evidence regularly stray from Hertz and Van Gennep's rigidly defined categories, as seen in invocations of corporeally embodied ancestors.

As illustrated throughout my discussion, anthropology as a discipline has far more to offer Prepalatial scholarship than the models of Hertz, Van Gennep and Turner, however entrenched and ubiquitous they have become. As demonstrated in my discussion of ancestorhood, it is evident that when we step outside of these interpretative frameworks, alternate perspectives on the Prepalatial funerary record become apparent. These perspectives raise new and, as I argue, necessary questions about Prepalatial funerary practice and eschatological belief, such as issues of sex, age and embodiment. Indeed, alternate anthropological approaches are particularly necessary in light of the ongoing archaeological excavations at the cemeteries of Sissi and Petras, where osteological evidence for interaction with decomposing body parts during Prepalatial secondary depositional practices is not compatible with interpretative frameworks which posit bodily decomposition as a process which was actively avoided. It is to be hoped that new

archaeological techniques such as archaeothanatology, which includes the decomposition process as a crucial element of interpretation, will continue to provide insight into Prepalatial engagement with the decomposing body during funerary practice. We must, however, allow ourselves the interpretative space in which to appreciate this emerging archaeological evidence and avoid the uncritical application of the ubiquitous and, as argued here, inappropriate anthropological models that have dominated scholarly discourse to date.

To conclude, it is important to note the difficulty of moving outside of these entrenched, structured models, and to recognise that we are often interpretatively guided by what McNeal (1972:19) has called 'well-trod paths... so deepened by the tramp of three generations of scholarly feet that it is very hard to turn out of the way in search of new and unclaimed vistas'. Yet, we must acknowledge that we have been afforded new directions, with recent osteological evidence and alternate anthropological approaches existing as intriguing signposts, those which point to new interpretative paths, albeit ones less defined and perhaps more difficult to navigate. It may be an uncomfortable journey, one during which we must remain continually aware of our substantial interpretative baggage, but these are avenues that merit exploration. We need not feel anxious about taking the first step, as when we look back on the discussion of past, present and future anthropological approaches to the Prepalatial funerary record contained in this dissertation, we realise that we have already taken it. All that remains is for us to continue in earnest, an exploration to which the Cretan prehistorian is particularly suited. After all, as Redfield argues, we are sweaty and dusty already.

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