A Comparative Study of Burials in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Late Bronze through Early Iron Age

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A Thesis Submitted to the University Honors Program In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With Upper Division Honors

Department Of Anthropology

By

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DeKalb, Illinois

May 2011
Capstone Title (print or type)  
A Comparative Study Of Burials in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Late Bronze through Early Iron Ages

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5/2/11
During the Bronze Age, a complex regional system of trade catalyzed by the Mediterranean Sea arose and connected distant lands. The Eastern Mediterranean and Near East made up the core of this system. The system collapsed at its apex in ca. 1200 BCE. Through a diachronic study of burials during this transitional period, a better understanding of the effects of this collapse had on the people can be found. Mortuary practices are a representation of social identities and through the study of these practices in the generalized areas of Egypt, the Levant, Anatolia, Cyprus, Crete, and Mainland Greece reaffirms the uneven collapse in the Eastern Mediterranean. Each region exhibited a distinct style of burial in the Late Bronze Age with a noted shift in most regions from individual burial practices to group burials in the Early Iron Age. This indicates a shift in identity, possibly with an increase in importance of group identity. An overall decline in grave goods represents the system collapse, while the transformation of burial practices indicates a change in social perceptions.
The cyclical pattern of opposing dualities is readily apparent in the world. With life comes death, the sun is followed by the moon, and so on. The same cyclical pattern can be seen in history as civilizations rise and collapse. The Bronze Age in the Mediterranean was a time in which a Mediterranean regional system developed into an extensive network of interaction and when at its peak collapsed. This collapse was seen throughout the Mediterranean and to varying degrees. The system collapse led into the Iron Age. In its earliest stages, the Iron Age was a so-called 'Dark Age' for many areas. It is my purpose to look at this transitional period of the Late Bronze Age (LBA; ca. 1700-1200BCE) through the Early Iron Age (EIA; ca. 1200-800BCE) to more fully understand the effects of a system collapse. (See Figure 1 for chronology)

The Mediterranean Sea promoted interaction between distant lands because of the many islands that could serve as "stepping stones" and lessen the effects of distance (Knapp 1992, 54). However, island life also involved a degree of insularity. Since small, isolated populations would have difficulty in maintaining their subsistence without supplementary imports, they would experience pressure to develop relations with external links. The shipping and commerce in the Mediterranean during the Bronze Age resulted from geographic and resource diversity and cultural, economic, or ideological factors, such as technology, mindset, and the accessibility to interregional systems of trade (Knapp 1992, 55). Around 2,000 BCE the East Mediterranean and the Near East made up the core of the larger regional system (Friedman 2005, 51). This system was held together by trade which was fueled by the dependence on bronze and thus the need for tin and copper (52). Towards the end of the LBA the core region had developed unevenly. When the regional system collapsed in ca. 1200 BCE, it affected
Crete, Greece and Hittite Anatolia more severely than Egypt and Assyria. There was a noted loss in complexity, movements of people, a breakdown of the state system, and in the 1st millennium BCE, regained development with iron (which was locally more common) (54).

Since the system collapse had a great effect on the societies, so too may it have affected their culture. Through examining burial practices across this transitional time and throughout the major civilizations of the Mediterranean network, it may be possible to view the social and cultural consequences this collapse had for the people experiencing it. One aspect of a culture that can be viewed in a time of recession is death practices, because death cannot be averted and is very often surrounded by ritual.

**Death-Ritual**

Mortuary ritual is an uncertain field for modeling past societies. It involves a complex interaction between ritual, environmental, and social factors. When these rituals are transmuted into the archaeological record they are further complicated (Tainter 1978, 109). There are some ways of disposal which are difficult, if not impossible, to view archaeologically, such as burials at sea, in rivers, or in trees. But, as Tainter (1978) suggests, it is possible to use negative conditions such as absence of burials to obtain information, for example absent sex classes from a population or absent age groups may reflect social factors. Burials serve as indicators of social phenomena (110). Through death rituals the individual’s social identities are more fully represented than during any occasion in their life. Therefore, death rituals should exhibit the vastest range of social identities of the past society archaeologically.
Morris (1992, 1) states that burial is a part of a funeral by which the living deal with the death through rituals. As such, the analysis of burials is the analysis of ritual action. During rituals, the use of symbols makes explicit the social structure. It should be kept in mind that “the ‘meaning’ of any ritual is within certain limits open for interpretation by the observer” (Morris 1992, 15). Archaeologically we can only view the material remains of the death ritual (13). While this may not be the most important part of the ritual it can still be used to identify patterns in what remains of ancient rituals (14). While mortuary ritual may reflect aspects of social structure, it does not create a mirror image (Morris 1987, 38). A social structure is an ideal model of the positioning of individuals in relation to others created through socialization and rituals (39). Social organization is an empirical distribution of relationships from everyday experience. The social organization is not necessarily reflected in the social structure. Groups may stress or understate their status. Mortuary evidence may reflect the self-perceptions of the community (43). As Morris (1987, 41) argues, social structure exists before the individual is a part of it since they are born into a living society, but through participating within this social structure they contribute to its transformation. Through the study of burials, “the archaeologist can hope to be able to follow the development of structures through time, and to identify points of structural revolution (Morris 1987, 43).”

Pearson (1982, 100) states that social systems are made by recurrent social practices, not of roles. It is important to understand why certain roles are expressed in death and to understand to what extent they are used as social advertisements between competing social groups (101). In death, the deceased is susceptible to manipulation by certain groups which may use the mortuary ritual to enhance or reassert their influence.
The deceased are still an important part of the present. As Morris (1987, 29) put it, "very often, when you're dead that's anything but the end of you." Pearson (1982, 110) states there are two interconnected relationships which explain the symbolism of death ritual: the categorization of the dead by the living and the way the dead may be used as a social advertisement between competing groups. Pearson (1982) suggests mortuary practices can be studied by looking at certain relationships: the spatial and topographical relationship of the living and the dead, the relation between the abodes of the living and the dead, differentiation among the dead, artifacts only associated with the dead, artifacts found among the living but restricted for the dead, and the relationship of the disposal contexts in regards to other forms of death-related expression. Furthermore, funerary ritual may serve to reinforce or preserve traditions that may not have bearing on real life (Gilmour 2002, 115).

Therefore, the study of burials is important in understanding the social structure of the society, the relationship and rank of the deceased in this society through the perspective of the survivors, the use of the dead as social advertisement, and possibly reveals information about conceptions of the afterlife. It is important to note the distinction between cremations and inhumations. While inhumations keep the body intact, cremation does not dictate a lesser treatment of the body. The ceremony surrounding a cremation may be very elaborate and extensive, such as the funeral pyre of Achilles told by Homer. When cremated remains are buried, that means someone would have to gather the remnants and place them in a specific vessel. This does not indicate a poorer treatment of the body. In some societies, the body is seen as continuing on after death and is provided with food and drink and other equipment.
Therefore, cremation indicates a disbelief of the body continuing on, but does not mean there was no belief in an afterlife. Cremation can also be utilized to prevent the spread of disease and sickness.

My study will begin with Egyptian burial practices and sweep north to the Levant, and continue to Anatolia, Cyprus, Crete, and Greece (See Figure 2). This pattern was chosen to geographically flow around the core societies of the extensive exchange network that was at its zenith in the Late Bronze Age. While peripheral areas were an integral part of this network, they are not included in my study because they were not located in the highly concentrated network arena.

**Egypt (Figure 3)**

Rock-cut tombs were the popular form of elite burial in the Second Intermediate Period (Taylor 2001, 151). In Thebes during the early 18th Dynasty (ca. 1550-1295 BCE) new tombs developed from the *saft* tombs (containing a large court, a corridor leading to a small chapel/shrine, and a passage to the burial chamber) of the previous period. The *saft* was altered by changing the long narrow space behind the façade into a self-contained transverse hall (152). The walls were painted and sometimes carved in relief, depicting the world the deceased had lived in. The burial chamber was subterranean and accessed via a shaft. Tombs originally contained goods deemed necessary for the afterlife, including servant figures, canopic jars, amulets, funerary masks, chest and foot covers, coffins, models, and everyday items such as makeup and games (David 2000, 16). After the 18th Dynasty there was a shift in the concept of the tomb from a commemorative function to an emphasis on its religious role. Wall paintings
concentrated on a single subject/scene on one wall (Taylor 2001, 152). The tomb of Horemheb (ca. 1323-1295) at Saqqa exhibits characteristic features of the tombs, such as a pylon entrance, colonnaded court, chapel, and more elaborate subterranean parts (153). Non-royal persons began using pyramids on a smaller scale, the style previously except by the royals having been abandoned. The majority of the population was buried in simple graves on the edge of the desert (David 2000, 9). Cemeteries commonly arose around royal burial places, which were near the ancient capitals.

In Deir el Medina during the New Kingdom period (1550-1070BCE) this shift to a more religious role is evident (Meskell 1999, 181). Meskell (1999) argues that the shift was from a representational focus on the living in the 18th Dynasty (ca. 1550-1295 BCE) to an emphasis on the next world in the Ramesside Period (1295-1070 BCE). The site of Deir el Medina was founded during the New Kingdom to house the workers or the royal tombs. The settlement was largely abandoned but was used for religious and mortuary practices as late as the Christian and Islamic times. In the 18th Dynasty, the eastern necropolis was reserved for poorer individuals and included many women and adolescents, and also newborns and young children. There appears to be markedly equal expenditure on burials for men, women, and children. While most often young children were buried economically, they were still accompanied by jewelry and other burial goods typical of adult burials. The western necropolis was reserved for wealthier individuals. Individuals, couples, or small family groups were interred with a vast array of individual variation in expenditure with males possessing the greatest burial wealth (182).
The focus on representations of life in the 18th Dynasty is evidenced by the types of burial goods. Work equipment, including hammers, adzes, scales, scribal equipment, etc. was prominent in tombs as were clothing and toilet items in both male and female burials (Meskell 1999, 185). Other goods include a variety of local and foreign ceramics, a higher percentage of models of food and ceramic miniatures than seen in the later periods, food, and flowers. The predominant tomb structure was the single-vaulted tomb, but multi-vaulted tombs and tombs with superstructures were also used (188). The bodies were typically simply wrapped rather than embalmed as in the later periods. The viscera were not removed (191). During the 18th Dynasty the beginnings of many dominant trends in the Ramesside period are seen.

The shift in focus during the Ramesside period centered on magic and ritual (Meskell 1999, 184). Scented earth, colored stones, lime powder, parts of animals, and 'idiosyncratic objects' such as miniature sarcophagi with wrapped insects began to appear prior to this period (185). In the Ramesside period there was an increase in shabtis, shabti boxes, libation vessels, stone vases, statuary, canopic jars, and limestone stelae as well as the use of funerary sledges, anthropomorphic coffins, stone coffins, cartonnage, mummy decorations, and funerary amulets (186). The objects used were more specialized in nature with magical texts more often found in burial contexts. Post-fired polychrome amphoras with a funerary theme began to be produced and many specifically for tombs (187). Tomb structure shifted from the majority being single-vaulted in the 18th Dynasty, to becoming the minority in the Ramesside period (188). Instead, multiple vaults, chapels, courtyards, and pyramidion become the prominent structure. A shift also occurred in who was interred in these tombs. In this period many
individual and extended families could be found in a single tomb (191). Bodies were often embalmed in natron with the viscera removed and preserved separately in canopic jars (192). However, Meskell (1999) argues that embalming was an individual preference and not used by any particular group.

In the Post New Kingdom, new construction of tombs declined (Taylor 2001, 154). Older tombs were reused in the Third Intermediate Period and there was an increased tendency toward group burials. Some new tombs were built but most had modest chapels, and small undecorated burial chambers. Stelae in the New Kingdom, which were very tall and round-topped, were placed in private tombs (160). During the Third Intermediate Period there was a reduction in the scale and complexity of tomb superstructures and simplification of the stelae (161). Statues were important aspects of burial customs as they were regarded as the physical embodiment of the individual (162). Statues were commonly placed in the chapel of private tombs of the 18th Dynasty (167). Many burials were in family vaults or previously built rock-cut tombs, usually without a chapel after the New Kingdom (168). During this period rectangular and anthropoid rishi ('feathered') coffins were used in Thebes. A modified version of the rishi continued to be used in royal burials (224). Kings were placed in multiple anthropoid coffins (225) and later this method was used in private burials (226). “The conceptual link between coffin and tomb became less overt as iconography emphasized more strongly the coffin's role as a replica of the divine body (Taylor 2001, 226).”

Standardization continued, with two anthropoid coffins being the norm for high status individuals and mummy-masks being replaced by cartonnage placed directly over the mummy (229). The designs on the coffins continually changed. A revival of earlier
traditions was seen in the 25th and 26th Dynasties. High-ranking individuals were interred in 'palace tombs' within stone sarcophagi. Other individuals continued to be buried in large groups and reused older tombs. Burial practices varied; catacombs were used in Alexandria and in some places mummies were place in large pits (155).

The Levant (Figure 4)

Syro-Palestine was an important crossroad in the Bronze Age as it connected the major polity of Egypt to other powers in Mesopotamia and Anatolia (Brody 2002, 71). In the LB IA (ca.1570-1480 BCE) of Palestine, many tombs were shaft tombs from earlier eras (Leonard Jr. 1989, 12). These were partially cleared and reused. The associated funerary assemblages were dated based on the presence of ceramic fossils of this period. It is impossible to know anything about funerary cults of this period due to disturbances in most of these tombs. Leonard Jr. (1989, 9) suggests this was a time when small city-states were joining alliances against the perceived threat of Egypt. In the LB IB (ca. 1480-1412BCE), Tuthmosis III attacked Megiddo in the beginning of the period (12). After gaining control over Palestine, Tuthmosis continued his military campaign in Syria (13). During this period, there is a noticeable gap in occupation at many important sites, including Megiddo, Taanach, Tell Beit Mirsim, and Tell el-Far'ah which may be “attributed as much to our lack of knowledge of pertinent subtleties in changes in material culture as to the radical depopulation of the countryside (Leonard Jr. 1989, 14).” Problems with dating LB I deposits without including ceramic wares from the IA leaves the funerary evidence severely lacking (16). In Jerusalem in the early LBA there is a large family tomb with many grave goods, and another tomb with many imported vessels of Egyptian, Cypriote, and Mycenaean type (Rahmani 1981 231).
Three types of burials are classified as indigenous; multiple cave burials are common in the central mountain regions and foothills of Palestine, individual pit burials in cemeteries are common later in the period and jar burials are found at four sites within urban limits (Gilmour 2002, 112).

In the LB IIA (ca. 1412-1320 BCE) Egypt lost most of its empire in Syro-Palestine (Leonard Jr. 1989 16). This was a period rich with funerary evidence. Multiple burials in large, reused sepulchers contained a rich array of material wealth reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of the period (22). Cave 10A at Gezer was most likely dug as a cistern and used for funerary purposes throughout most of the 15th century BCE. It contained more than one hundred complete local and Cypriot vessels among other goods. A shaft tomb, Tomb 8144-8145 was cut into the bedrock in Hazor and contained more than 500 vessels both local and imported from Cyprus and the Aegean (23). Imported luxury goods are also found at Tel-Dan. In Tomb 387 a structure contained a mixture of 45 burials of men, women, and children with an array of offerings including gold, silver, bronze, ivory, and an imported Mycenaean “chariot vase”.

In LB IIB (ca. 1320-1200 BCE), Egypt and Syro-Palestinian rulers were defending their territories from attacks by the Sea Peoples. In this period the burial customs were “strange and varied” (Leonard Jr. 1989, 32). In two tombs from the cemetery at Tell es-Sa‘idiyeh the deceased were wrapped in cloth and coated with bitumen, which Leonard Jr. (1989, 33) believes to be in imitation of or substitute for Egyptian mummification. Also in this cemetery was a tomb with a very rich assortment of grave goods. During this period locally produced sarcophagi with depictions of the deceased are also found, similar to the middle-class burial practice found in Egypt.
during the New Kingdom. Inside these coffins are grave goods of an international nature. This practice continued to the 12th and 11th centuries BCE. Pithos burials corresponding to an Anatolian practice are found at some sites (Brody 2002, 74).

A closer look at these foreign burials can reveal the nature of the foreign populace within this society. As stated previously, funerals are opportunities for social advertising. A subgroup may use a burial to evoke its differences with the larger community (Gilmour 2002, 112). The converted cistern, Cave 10A at Gezer contained a large number of individual burials and a larnax burial on a bench. According to the excavator Seger (1988, 115), inside were multiple burials of mostly children (Gilmour 2002, 113). This larnax was a Cretan design locally made. Skeletal analysis does not show any distinguishing characteristics that deem this group different from the rest of the population. The grave goods were mostly imports but none from the Aegean (114). This tomb required labor and planning. The physical evidence suggests this group was not of high social rank. Therefore the tomb may signify social status based on other means, most likely an idealized identity linked with Crete.

In the cemetery in Acco are five undisturbed burial pits with local, Cypriote, Mycenaean, Minoan, and Egyptian items, including vessels and weapons (115). A bathtub-type larnax burial was found which was frequently used during the LMII and LMIII on Crete. The cemetery is typically a Canaanite type except for the larnax burial. It is suggested that this grave contained an assimilated family. This burial exhibits a larger amount of energy expenditure suggesting a higher social ranking or in fact a different social status.
At Tell es-Sa'idiyeh there is a variety of burial types (Gilmour 2002, 117). The finds are uniform and they include items from Syria and Cyprus and especially Egypt. The burials range from plain pits to cists to Egyptian-style stone and brick lined tombs. Double-pithos burials (in which two pithoi were joined at the shoulder) were found, indicative of an Anatolian population, most likely refugees after the collapse of the Hittite empire in the 13th century BCE. These burials were not found in a specific area in the cemetery and are not believed to be related (118). They were uniform in terms of grave goods and energy expenditure.

During the Iron Age in the southern Levant, there were two cultural responses to death (Bloch-Smith 1992, 214). First was a cluster of burial types along the coast in Shephelah and in the Jezreel, Beth Shan, and Jordan River valleys. Pit, cist, and jar were the main types. Usually one to three clothed individuals were buried together. Mycenean and Cypriot grave goods accompanied the deceased in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE. Local, Phoenician, Cypro-Phoenician, and Assyrian goods were found in the 10th through 6th centuries BCE. A wider range of goods were present in the earlier burials. Bench tombs were first found in lowland sites from the LBA (215). The second response was found in the highlands of Judah and Israel (216). These burial types were cave and bench tomb burials. In the LIA the bench tomb was the Judahite form of burial. There is no suggestion of change in treatment and provisioning for the dead during the IA (217). The beginning of the 9th century BCE was when there started to be variations in wealth when extravagant individual tombs were cut in Jerusalem and Gibeon for a select group of individuals. In the cave tombs, skeletal remains and grave goods were moved to make room for more burials in the center. In the highland, cave burial was the
main burial type in the LBA and carried on through the EIA. The tenth century BCE marks the transition in popularity from the cave tombs to the bench tombs.

Neither type of tomb exhibited any sex or age differentiation (Bloch-Smith 1992, 217). Bloch-Smith (1992) postulates these tombs contained family burial because of Biblical evidence, but there is no osteological evidence for this conjecture. Local and imported pottery, tools, household items, and personal possessions similarly accompanied cave and bench tomb burials (218). A large amount of foodstuffs as well as an array of jars and jugs suggest nourishment was very important in the afterlife. Ceramic vessels were the most prominent grave good, followed by jewelry.

Anatolia (Figure 5)

Anatolia can be divided into roughly two regions during the LBA: the Hittite empire in the central and eastern portions, and the western Aegean interface. As an imperial and political force, the Hittite empire united different cultural groups of central Asia Minor under its domination (Sagona and Zimansky 2009, 253). The Hittites expanded as far as Syria, competing with other powers such as Egypt and Assyria. The western interface was not included in the Hittite kingdom and I have separated it based on the close interactions with the Aegean polities.

In the 2nd Millennium BCE, several types of burials were used including inhumation, cist graves, and pithos graves (Emre 2001, 1). In Kültepe there are a number of rich cist graves and poorer graves. At Alaca Höyük, extramural burial and cremation burial was practiced (2). This practice was seen throughout north-western Central Anatolia. Illegal diggers claim that the bodies in the Kazankaya cemetery were
covered with broken pottery shards which were covered with rubble and then earth (3). Lack of evidence of cemeteries, as well as problems with looting during this period are problematic for the study of burials (7). The Hittite Empire was in its second period of monarchy ca. 1400-1200 BCE (Sagona and Zimansky 2009, 259). Cuneiform documents state the King was cremated during a long ceremony after which his remains were place in a silver urn (Emre 2001, 7). Textual evidence also informs us that the Hittite kings did not distinguish themselves in creating royal tombs, but rather placed their cremated remains in a “stone house” (289). “Eternal peaks” served as memorials to kings. Outside of the capital, Hattusa (modern Boğazköy), across an eastern gorge is a necropolis at Büyükkaya (Lloyd 1956, 138). Two thirds of the graves were cremation burials in earthenware urns. According to Lloyd (1956, 138) there were “no funerary gifts of any great value.” This indicates that funerary goods accompanied at least some of the burials, although not “rich” goods. There is much evidence of animals sacrificed and buried to accompany the dead at the royal tombs in Alaja, especially horses and oxen. Some burials are found in open cemeteries but caves and recesses in rocks are crowded with graves. Lloyd (1956) suggests a possible association with a chthonic deity, however there is no indication of chthonic deity worship and the location of the burials should not be assumed to be linked with deities. It is more plausible that these caves and recesses were used as a less expensive mode of disposal or were linked to a previous practice.

On the western interface of Anatolia, including the Aegean islands, there is evidence of Minoan influence during the LBI-II (Mountjoy 1998, 33). Lack of excavation and the loss of excavation notebooks in World War II leave us largely in the dark about
sites in the LHIIC period on the Interface (53). This gradually decreased as Mycenaean influence took over in the LMII/LHIIB period, evidenced by chamber tomb cemeteries on Rhodes and Kos (34). Hittite texts mention the Ahhiyawa, possibly based on the west Anatolia Interface (47). At lalysos the grave goods were wealthy, with some gold and silver and Warrior Burials (35). Two possible Cypriot burials are also present as well as Cypriot wares found in other graves. During the LHIIIB there are fewer burials at lalysos but there is still wealth in the tombs. On the Anatolian coast, excavations of a tomb group at Klazomenai-Limantepe and Menemen-Panaztepe illustrates the “hybrid nature of the Interface.” Pottery from tombs found on the Interface contain a mixture of vessels decorated in a Minoan and Mycenaean fashion (36). In the LHIIIB there is a marked decline in burials at the chamber tomb cemetery at Müsgebi. At this site cremations were found along with inhumations. Two graves and possibly two chamber tombs at Müsgebi have LHIIIC pottery, suggesting continuity of the population at these sites (Mountjoy 1998, 53).

Mountjoy (1998, 37) sees the presence of Greek Mainland goods as an increase in acculturation in the Aegean islands, as opposed to Mycenaean colonization. Cist tombs, cremation urns, and pithos burials are found in the northern Interface. In the central Interface a mixture of chamber tombs, pithoi, and small tholoi with cremation and inhumation are found. The Eleona-Langada cemetery on Kos and lalysos on Rhodes shows an increase in the number of burials in the LHIIIC as well as an increase in wealthy burials. This is countered by the seemingly depopulation of the rest of the island.
After the Hittite capital Hattusa (Boğazköy) had been destroyed in ca. 1200BCE, the Urartian state rose in the east. The Urartian burial practices were various, indicating a culturally diverse population (Zimansky 1995, 109) although cultural unity is seen throughout various regions in cemeteries (Sagona and Zimansky 2009, 318). According to Ögün (1978) grave architecture was numerous and ranged from conspicuous multi-chambered rock-cut tombs to simply urn cremations with individuals in a single jar and no grave goods (Zimansky 1995, 109). Zimansky (1995) suggests the most elaborate tombs are tied to the state due to inscribed evidence associated with each tomb. Again looting has been a major problem and few legitimate excavations at chamber tombs leave much information missing. The Urartian archaeology has been mostly of fortresses, leaving much to be discovered (104). One intact chamber tomb at Adilcevaz is thought to be a family burial. Cremation was used, with the remains placed in urns. The remains along with the grave goods were pushed to the back to make room for the most recently deceased (110). Grave goods consisted of belts, metal bowls, silver pins, bronze bracelets, and golden fibulae. Rectangular subterranean burial chambers contained multiple burials, with previous bones pushed aside to make room for later interments (Sagona and Zimansky 2009, 319). There does not appear to be exclusion based on sex or age. Necklaces of semi-precious stones and small but elaborate metal offerings are present. Weapons, bracelets, pins, and rings were made of iron, not bronze.

At Adil Cevaz, there is a cemetery of rock-cut chamber tombs (Mellink 1972, 176). The chamber tombs consisted of a short entrance leading to a chamber. Both inhumations and cremations were found inside, with the cremation jars placed in niches.
In one chamber wooden furniture was found. The grave goods at this site were rich and varied, consisting of bronze and iron bowls, bronze bracelets with lion's head finials, stamp seals, carnelian and glass beads, iron knives, bronze horsebits and fibulae, one of which was made of gold and had very fine granulation (177).

At the Norş Untepe citadel mound there is an Iron Age cemetery of stone cist graves (Mellink 1972, 177). Buff, wheel made 'hittitizing' ware is found as well as handmade incised and punctured wares. In one stone lined shaft two horse skeletons were found in a confronting position. A third horse was found below with a vertebrae fractured by an iron axe. One of the horses above was pierced by an iron spearhead. These are thought to be Scythian due to the accompanying goods: an iron spearhead, iron knife, two bronze bits, a bronze rein ring, and two bridle pieces with griffin head finials.

In Iron Age Phrygia (north central Anatolia), the characteristic burial type was in tumuli (Lloyd 1956, 198). The Phrygian phase was ca. 950-900 BCE (Sagona and Zimansky 2009, 355). A tumulus with a wooden tomb chamber and painted wall decoration was found at Afyon (Mellink 1972, 178). This tomb was reused through the Roman period and partially remodeled. In Yazilikaya, a gabled tomb chamber was found in the cliff on the west side of the citadel.

Cyprus (Figure 6)

Cyprus was important in the Bronze and Iron Ages as it was a rich supplier of copper and it was strategically located near the major Eastern Mediterranean polities (Knapp 1992, 58). In the MBA-LBA, there were exceptional distinctions in social status.
seen through the variety of burial goods (60). Keswani (2007, 512) argues Cyprus was not a unified polity during the LBA but rather consisted of a number of competing polities with different organizations and exchange networks involving wealth and staple finance (514). Enkomi shows an emergence of elite burials by the mid-15th century BCE (515). There is evidence of some extramural cemeteries and tombs serving as communal burial grounds of varying scale (517). At Enkomi the earliest tombs were clustered around architectural complexes suggesting a diminished sense of community and an increasingly close relationship with the household. Unlike the other eastern M-LC sites, there are no elaborate tombs or collective burial celebrations. However, there is a difference in the types of ceramic wares in the early burying groups (520). Closed shaped vessels, particularly small juglets, dominated some tombs while others exhibited a more balanced assemblage of vessels. This domination may distinguish certain social identities. It is assumed that these juglets are not gender or age specific (522).

The LCII was characterized by a rise in two different power groups indicated by two different burial types: ashlar tombs, and rich chamber tombs (Keswani 2007, 525). Many burials contained prestige goods of varying richness (524). In Tomb 17 was found a gold diadem and mouthpiece, silver pin, local pottery, a gold bowl, and a Mycenaean pictorial crater depicting chariots, a balance pan, and oxhide ingots. In French Tomb 2 were three individuals interred on benches with goods including silver bowls, one with a bull head niello inlay decoration, a gold signet ring engraved with a sphinx, two gold frontlets stamped with similar sphinx imagery and a Mycenaean crater decorated with bulls (525). Conspicuous consumption is seen in both as well as different complexes of symbolism. Comparison between the grave goods of the different types of tombs shows
an equal range of prestige goods. Keswani (2007, 526) argues that the ashlar tombs emulate the prestigious Near Eastern burial practices by the local elite or as Van Wijngaarden 1999) suggested, it may indicate the presence of an international trading community. The members of this community may have stressed dual identities, shaping their local prestige complexes and asserting their international affiliations.

Burials from the beginning of the Early Iron Age, LCIIIB (1100-1050 BCE), are very elusive, but there are a number of single-phase burial grounds in the period (Steel 1996, 287). The Bamboula cemetery of the Kourion area shows little activity before the 16th century BCE and small scale activity into the LCIIIB (290). The cemetery at Kaloriziki is considered to succeed Bamboula but appears to have been abandoned by the CG period (1050 BCE). There is a noted gap in ceramic sequences at this site during the LCIIIB period (292). The ceramic evidence shows limited reuse in the CG IB (1000-950BCE). Multiple burials are evident in the tombs, often with earlier burials and grave goods being brushed aside to make room for later ones (292-299). In some cases burials were disturbed and the bones were placed in kraters and amphorae. Looting of the tombs complicates analysis of burials. Tomb 40 has been associated with a group of bronze items that were looted and confiscated by the Larnaka police (297). It contained local pottery as well as one imported flask (298). This tomb is unlike the others in that it was a rectangular shaft grave with a rock-cut bench. There is evidence of at least one female cremation burial in a bronze urn. The grave goods of this tomb are considered to be the most impressive in Cyprus during the Iron Age. Tomb 39 was one of the wealthiest with bronze vessels and 3 iron weapons (297). Other tombs include cremation burials, chamber tombs, a simple pit burial (presumably for a child burial),
and pottery, many with early characteristics (292-299). Only one tomb can be dated to the LCIIIB (300). This is characteristic of the disruptive transitional period from the LBA to the EIA as seen at other sites.

**Crete (Figure 7)**

In the Aegean, a surprisingly lower figure than expected for the number of the dead may be due to post-depositional factors or to an alternative method of disposal (Dickinson 2004, 208). The burials previous to the Postpalatial Period of the LBA were almost entirely inhumation (209). The burial seems to have been a two-stage process with evidence of multiple burials where earlier remains were moved into repositories or heaped against a wall. Cemeteries are elusive in the Neopalatial Period on Crete (Younger and Rehak 2008, 170). The material is rich and varied, with a predominance of group burial (Dickinson 2004, 212). The amount of detail is varied and the important sites often only have preliminary reports. There are two major tomb types in the Bronze Age: circular tombs (South Crete) and the rectilinear 'house tombs' (north and east). At some sites, tombs from different periods cluster around the settlement. In the later LBA there appears to be a discontinuation in using old burial areas as the cemeteries in the Second Palatial Period are generally in new areas and with new tomb types (214). The grave goods are also varied, mostly consisting of pottery but sometimes containing personal adornment, stone vessels, weapons or implements, and rarely items which symbolize rank or authority (218). In the Second Palace Period there is less evidence for burials, although chamber tombs from this period continued around Knossos and now included Poros (220). Pithos cemeteries continued in use in isolated examples.
The Archanes-Phournoi cemetery contains continuous burials from the Early Minoan to the Late Minoan periods (Younger and Rehak 2008, 171). A wide variety of practices were used, including tholos tombs, built structures, inhumation, terracotta sarcophagi, and skull collection after decomposition (172). Cave tombs were found in Mavrospelio with a half dozen pit-cave tombs with successive burials. The Odos Poseidonos tomb consists of an antechamber and 2 main rooms with built dividing walls. Semiprecious stone sealstones, an imported scarab, a gold finger ring, silver earrings, small cups, an ivory comb, semiprecious beads, and plaques from a boar’s tusk helmet were found. Younger and Rehak (2008) suggest the lack of bronze or precious metals is probably due to looters. The Leophoros Ikarou tomb is of similar form, with an antechamber and several rooms, with the earlier burials redeposited. It was used during the MMIIB-LMIB. Especially interesting is the greater number of skulls than other skeletal remains. Cups, gold signet rings, silver, bronze imported Canaanite amphora, and sealstones, as well as a wide range of personal ornaments were found in the tomb. In the LMII-IIIA sarcophagi were beginning to be decorated with images of the human figure.

In the latter half of the Neopalatial Period two puzzling structures appear: The “Temple Tomb” south of Knossos was partially built into a hill (Younger and Rehak 2008, 173). It was a two-storeyed ‘house tomb’ assumed to be a royal tomb (Dickinson 2004, 220). However Dickinson (2004) and other scholars question whether this was in fact a royal tomb. It contained an open courtyard which separated the anteroom from chambers with a pillar. The “Royal Tomb” north of Isopata contained a dromos (entrance passage) leading to a vaulted, rectangular chamber.
Mainland style tholos tombs were found during the LMII and become popular for high-status burials (Dickinson 2004, 230). Larnax burials were a distinguishing feature of the LMIII period, often placed in previously occupied tombs. Pithos burials with cremated remains continued in some eastern Cretan sites, which appear to be a native Anatolian practice (231).

According to Wallace (2003, 251), the EIA was a time of transition from competition for personal status to inclusive, institutionalized social and economic systems, invoking cultural reference to the past and constructed 'exotic' or 'local' identities. Wallace (2003, 268) argues there are many types of re-use and continuity found in the EIA on Crete, suggesting a notion of kin-group identity. As in the LMIII A-B, the LMIII C-PG burials were in a shared tomb of up to six individuals, in some cases couples and adults with children. Rich child burials and male and female burials in the same tomb leads Wallace (2003) to believe lineage played a role in wealth deposition. In the 9th century BCE there is a rise in tombs with long-term use and in single tombs. Re-use of tombs even occurs after gaps in time (269). Tomb types include tholos and chamber tombs and even larnakes are re-used in the North Cemetery.

Hood and Boardman (1961, 69) report on a complex of tombs outside of Knossos from the Early Iron Age. The collapsed rock-cut chamber tombs contained multiple cremation burials, inhumations and Late Protogeometric to Late Geometric vases, iron weapons, a gold pin, a gold and amber bead, and bronze trinkets (69-71). The Protogeometric B and Late Geometric periods seemingly exhibit the richest burials. In two of the three tombs excavated, the presence of skulls suggests inhumation burials
instead of cremation, although cremation seems to be the dominant form of disposal in Knossos (71).

Mainland Greece (Figure 8)

Burial practices in mainland Greece during the Bronze Age consisted of 2 main types: chamber and tholos tombs (Cavanagh 2008, 328). Chamber tombs were rock cut and consisted of a dromos (entranceway) which leads to an underground stomion (doorway) which gives access to the burial chamber. The tholos tomb is similar but with a vaulted entrance. Collective tombs carried over from the MBA and were designed to be reopened for rituals and other burials. In the LBA there were also tumulus burials. The mound contained various types of graves, from simple pits to built structures (329). Built graves were used during this period, being of rectangular, oval, or irregular shape. Shaft graves were also used during this period, and were designed to be reopened (330). The shaft grave consisted of a lower “grave” which contained the skeletons and could be built out of rock, and an upper “shaft” which was backfilled. Single graves were found, being either pit graves or cist graves lined with rock slabs. As Dickinson (2004, 228) states, “the choice of tomb-type must reflect a combination of regional or family tradition, availability of skilled tomb constructors and comparable considerations.”

Grave goods included ornaments, sealstones, metal items (including weapons), figurines, and in the richest tombs, gold jewelry, sealrings, and elaborately decorated weapons (Dickinson 2004, 228). Cavanagh (2008, 335) suggests weapons may have had a symbolic value, as some shaft graves contained more weapons than could have been used and even have been found in a child burial context in Argos. Female burials
are underrepresented while many children are not in tombs. However, some tombs were reserved for children (336) and some infants were wrapped in gold foil (337).

Burial customs in the Iron Age were also regionally diverse (Morris 1987, 18). In the Submycenaean period in Attica, single burials became the norm. In the two main cemeteries in Attica, cremations were few and the grave goods were poor. Sex does not appear to influence the grave style. Children were usually in simple pit graves or cists. Pit graves become more popular as the period progresses. Inurned cremation displaces inhumation for adults in the Protogeometric Period. There appears to be a differentiation of sex in the type of amphora used. In the Early Protogeometric, the urn was placed upright in a cut hole at the center of the trench and covered with earth. In the late Protogeometric the amphora was placed in a cut hole towards one end. Evidence for gravestones and markers arise in this period as well. Child graves were typically pit inhumations and the grave goods remain poor until around 925-825BCE (20). Around the second quarter of the 8th century inhumations returned. Burial practices varied in the countryside; cists were popular in Anavyssos, Thorikos, and Vari; cremation with the ashes dumped on the floor of the grave was dominant in Trachones. Some burials were rich, especially in pottery, but by the end of the late Geometric the quality of goods was declining.

**Conclusion**

The burial practices during the transitional period of the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age varied by region. In Egypt, the extravagant royal burials would have been very labor intensive, reasserting the power of royalty through their ability to command
labor and through the reminder of their power inherent in the physical presence of the tombs. That other tombs were placed next to royal tombs indicates an effort to increase and reassert status by association with the royal tomb. The Egyptians also took great measure to prepare the dead for the afterlife with embalming. In the LBA, elites were interred in rock-cut tombs. Cemeteries were designated for certain classes, with a separate cemetery for the elite and for the lower classes. Tombs were mostly single-vaulted but included multi-vaulted and tombs with a superstructure. Mostly individuals and small groups were in a tomb, indicating a greater emphasis on the individual. In the EIA, there was a noted shift to an emphasis on ritual and magic, especially evident in grave goods. There also seemed to be a greater focus on group identity and less focus on the individual. Single-vaulted tombs became the minority and most tombs contained individuals and extended families.

The Levant shows the most indication of an international region. Burials varied regionally, with a large array of burial types. Many tombs from the earlier period were reused and contain multiple burials, possibly suggesting an importance in associating with ancestors and importance of kinship. There does not appear to be any change in treatment of the dead in the IA.

Pithos burials are the hallmark of Anatolian burial practices, but they exist among many other practices. Pithos, inhumation, cist, and especially cremation burials were used. Texts describe the royalty as being cremated. Animal sacrifice is also seen. The Aegean Interface shows much contact with the Mycenaean and Minoan societies. Cremation, pithos, and chamber tombs are typical in this region. In the Iron Age, eastern Anatolia displays cultural unity in various regions and the chamber tombs with
multiple burials indicates a possible association with ancestors. In Phrygia, tumuli were used. In Urartu the burial methods are extremely varied. Multi-burials are found, indicating an affinity with a group.

Cypriot burials in the Late Bronze Age were near major building complexes, indicating the household was very important. The rise of two new burial types is possibly due to the rising cosmopolitan nature of the island. Evidence from the Iron Age is severely lacking, especially from the earlier part of the period. However, later Iron Age burials were found that included multiple burials in tombs with the remains being brushed aside. A variety of other burial types are found as well, some even being rich. This indicates Cyprus was not severely affected by the system collapse of that ended the Bronze Age.

In Crete, group burial and tombs clustered around the settlement. Group burial suggests kinship ties were important and these groups were in competition with one another. However, a variety of tomb and disposal types were found. A distinctive Minoan practice was the use of larnakes. Mycenaean and Anatolian practices were used, indicating a foreign immigrant group, a practice brought over through contact with the east, or more likely the use of foreign burial practices as an indicator of status. In the Iron Age re-use was a dominant theme, suggesting an increased desire to draw affinities with the past.

In Greece, the practices were very regionally diverse. A variety of practices were used, however “warrior burials” are a characteristic Mycenaean practice. Grave goods varied and as did the elaborateness of the tomb type, all signs of conspicuous
consumption. Single burials were found as well, showing a break from group ties. This practice became the norm in the Iron Age. During this time, grave goods were very poor. These both indicate a uniformity of status.

It is important to note that I have divided these regions up according to modern classifications to easier access to them. All the practices vary considerably by region, as is expected due to the artificial nature of the categorization. While much may be lost because of this lumping together of regions, it proved practical to view the overall system. A study of each separate region would be too minute for a wider application. It would also be nearly impossible, as looting is a problem in most areas, as well as incomplete, outdated or absent archaeological work.

During the LBA, regionally distinct disposal methods could be seen. Embalming was the hallmark of Egypt, while cremation and pithos burials were typical of Anatolian practices. The Levant disposal methods were very diverse but multiple burial tombs were prominent and continued into the EIA, indicating some sort of group association that was important. In Cyprus, proximity to large building complexes appear to be important, indicating the importance of the household, however the island showed evidence of a cosmopolitan population. Warrior burials were the mark of Greek burials, evidencing some symbolic importance placed on swords. Larnakes were distinctly Cretan. In all of the regions except for Greece group burials are used in the EIA. A change in emphasis from individual to group burials may indicate a desired association with group membership. The associated rituals may have focused more on the group rather than the individual and may be an effect of the system collapse. Perhaps this was an idealized past or may have been a means of displaying prestige or wealth in a time
of hardship. Both cremation and inhumation involved a degree of care for the dead. Inhumation would place more emphasis on the body of the individual, while cremation might focus more on the absence of body. Cremation is no less intensive, requiring the gathering of the remains. However the focus in cremation may be more on the ceremony and the symbolic disintegration of the corpse. While grave goods are said to be “rich” or “poor” and to indicate status, they cannot be taken as entirely representative of social structure as the survivors may try to provide goods that are of high quality to exaggerate their status or they may try to downplay their status. The same is true with the structure of interment. While labor intensive structures such as rock-cut tombs and vault burials would require more labor and more money, simple cist and shaft graves may have been used by members of different social levels, though this is assumed to be a less common practice given the importance placed on commemoration and beliefs associated with death. Beliefs would also vary among individuals and thus the form of disposal may not represent the collective community.

The Iron Age marked the end of a thriving Mediterranean regional system at its apex. I have attempted to systematically go through the core of this system looking at a constant aspect of life: death. Death is surrounded with symbolism and culture, giving archaeologists a point of access into the cultures long gone. However, it is difficult to assess the damage done as the archaeological evidence is scarce or insufficient for this time. This lack of information may be from the ‘accident of preservation,’ or could very well be speaking volumes about this period. In either case, more work is needed to further understand the complex degeneration of a regional system.
Appendix

Figure 1

Figure 2
Map of the Mediterranean
Figure 3


Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6
Figure 7


Figure 8

Works Cited


