

## **LOYAL WIVES OR JUST CONCUBINES..?**

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**Abstract:** The well known Heroon at the Toumba cemetery consist of a shaft housing of two very rich and apparently simultaneous burials, a male cremation and a female inhumation, assumed as the woman being the warrior's consort probably sacrificed during his husband's funerals. In this paper I argue is that if we can trust the anthropological identification and the simultaneity of both depositions, then we can consider these women as concubines better than wives, if we compare this evidence with contemporary archaeological funerary sites and the with the ancient Greek oral and literary tradition.

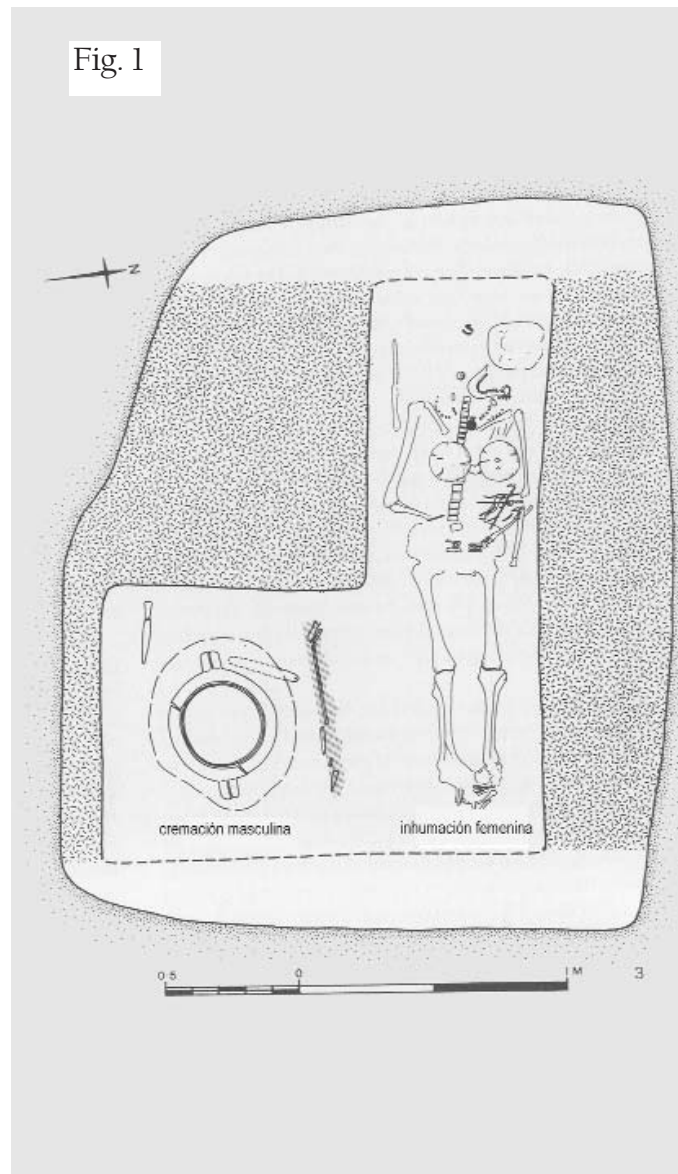
**Resumen:** La famosa tumba del Heroon de Lefkandi consiste en un pozo que alberga dos enterramientos muy ricos y aparentemente simultáneos, una incineración masculina y una inhumación femenina, que ha sido asumida como la correspondiente a la esposa del guerrero incinerado y que había sido probablemente sacrificada en el transcurso de los funerales del marido. El argumento que defiende es que, si podemos fiarnos de las identificaciones antropológicas de las tumbas y de la simultaneidad de los enterramientos dobles, entonces no puede tratarse de esposas, sino de concubinas, si los comparamos con otros yacimientos funerarios contemporáneos y con la tradición oral y literaria de la antigua Grecia.

**Resum:** La famosa tomba de l'Heroon de Lefkandi consisteix en un pou que hostatja dos enterraments molt rics i en aparença simultanis: una incineració masculina i una inhumació femenina, assumida aquesta com la corresponent a l'esposa del guerrer incinerat i probablement sacrificada durant els funerals del marit. L'argument que es defén aquí és que, si podem fiar-nos de les identifications antropològiques de les tombes i de la simultaneïtat dels enterraments dobles, llavors no pot tractar-se d'esposes, sinó de concubines, en comparació amb d'altres jaciments funeraris contemporanis i amb la tradició oral i literària de la Grècia antiga.

### Introduction: Double graves and sacrifices

The well known *Heroon* at the Toumba cemetery, dated at the MPG (1000-950 B.C.), consists of a shaft housing two very rich and apparently simultaneous burials, a male cremation and a female inhumation. Four horses were sacrificed during funerary rites and deposited in another shaft close by. Male's ashes were placed inside a Cypriot bronze amphora, which was an *antique*, together with his weapons and accompanied by the inhumed corpse of a female. She was wearing impressive jewels, among them a gold pendant, which was also an *antique*, at least 900 or 800 hundred years older than her last owner. The double burial was placed inside a monumental building, perhaps the warrior's household that was deliberately destroyed during his exequies. Because the women's arms were folded, her hands and feet crossed and an iron knife with ivory pommel was laid beside her head, Mervin Popham

(Popham *et al.* 1993; Popham 1994; Lemos 2002: 167), assumed that the woman was the warrior's consort and that she was probably sacrificed during his husband's funerals (Fig. 1). Thus the archaeological record suggests a simultaneous burial, that is, both of them were buried at the same time. *The heroon* stood up on a prominent point of



the landscape, and it gave birth to the burial area of a ruling class in its neighbourhood.

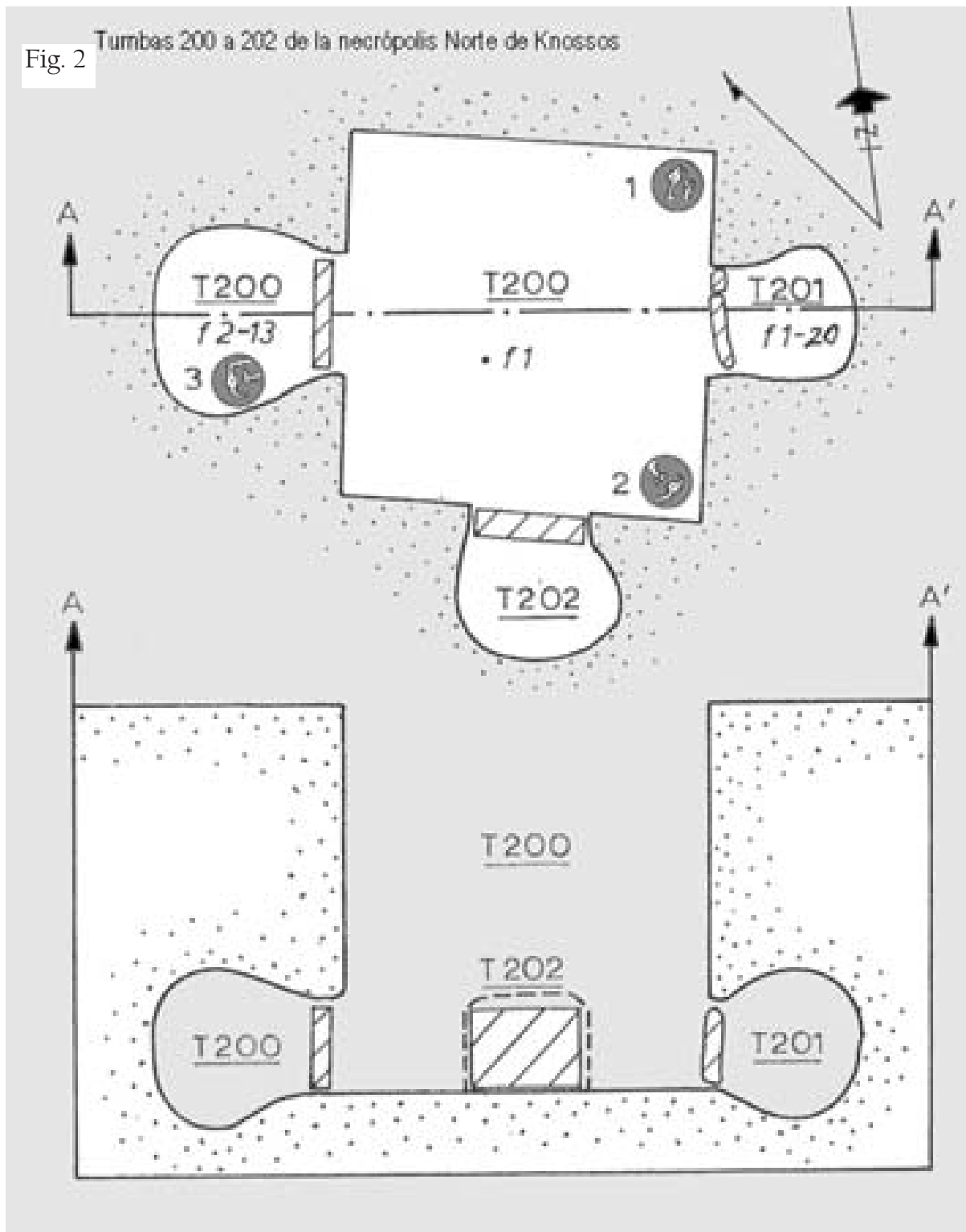
In tune with Popham's view, Catling (1994: 125; 1996a: 517-537) interpreted the Submicenaean (1075-1025 B.C.) Knossos cemetery cremations 200 to 202, belonging to a warrior male and to two female adults plus a baby respectively, as a single funerary unit (Fig. 2). Pit 200 was the cremation of a young non-sexed adult, but considered to be probably a woman, in view of the jewels included as grave goods. Among them one bronze dressing pin with wheel-shaped head of Italian type, so that the cremated person could have been a foreigner. Pit 201 contained a great amount of cremated bones, more than 2.3 kg, that were attributed by the anthropologist to two adults -male and female, plus a possible baby. Grave goods consisted of weapons, a Cypriot wheeled stand, an ivory quiver and a boar's-tusk helmet, which was an *antique*, a probable heirloom. Eventually pit 202, contained nothing apart from some small fragments of cremated bones. Catling (*ibidem*) interpreted the three pits as parts of the same funerary unit, and speculated with

the possibility that pits 200-201 were simultaneous cremations. He even suggested that the man died first and the two women and the baby could have been thrown to the male's pyre during his obsequies.

The aforementioned author (Catling 1994:126) further proposed the same explanation for the male/female cremation n°40 at the Cypriot cemetery of Kourion Kaloriziky, dated to Late Cypriot IIIB (1125/1100 B.C.) and the male/female inhumation tomb XXVIII of Tiryns, and made the point that all of them were foundational graves, erected on significant sites connected both with the past and the future, and that they were not reused, but gave way to a graveyard widely used afterwards.

Anyway these two last examples seem to be less straightforward to me. Thus, the Kourion n°40 tomb was partially plundered by tomb looters robbers and later on dug up by McFadden of the Pennsylvania Museum Expedition (McFadden 1954). It consisted of a shaft containing a bronze urn filled with cremated bones, belonging after the anthropologist, to a woman

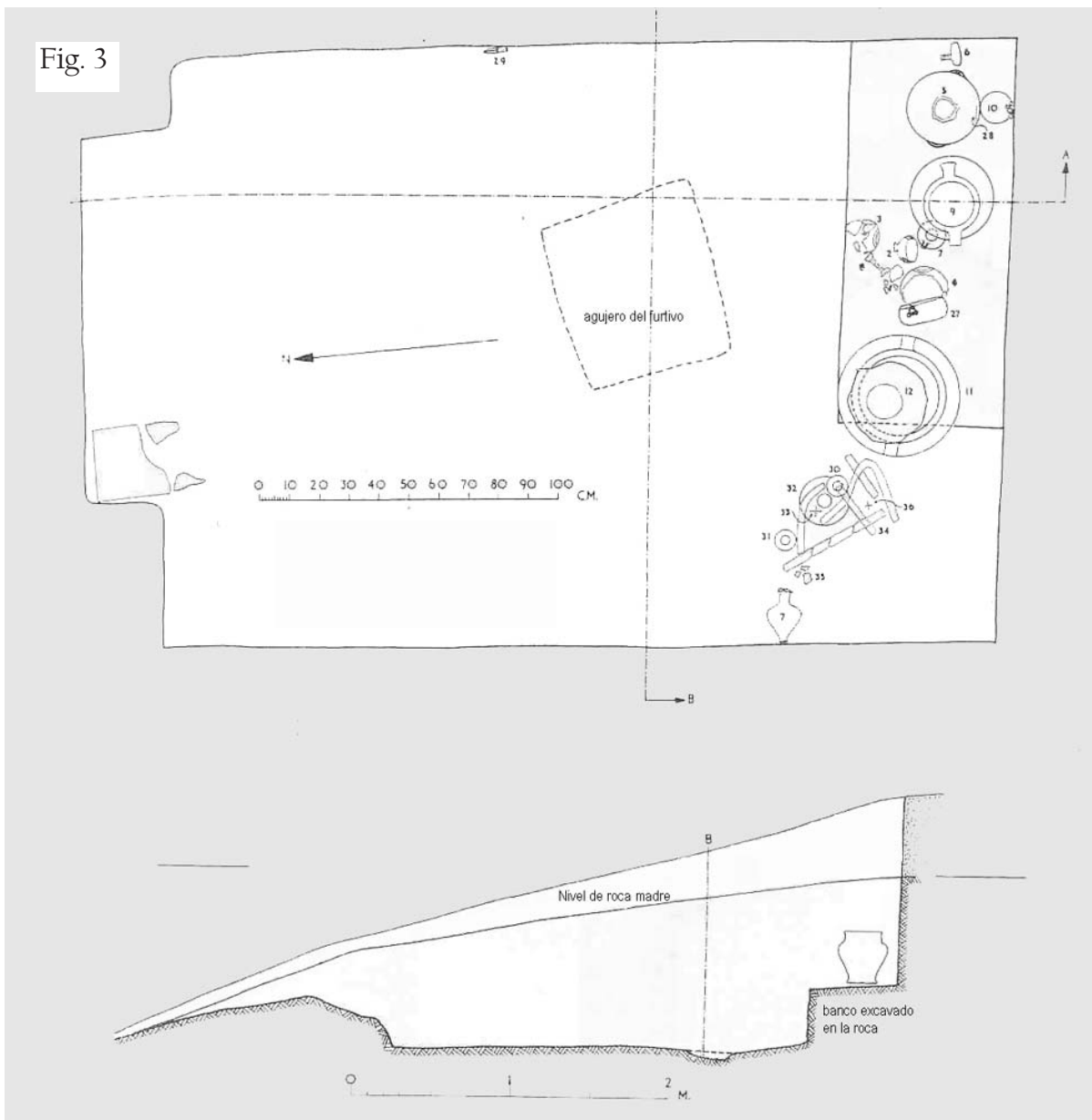
between 50 and 70 years of age. An urn similar to that of the woman's cremation had been previously confiscated to one of the robbers,



together with a magnificent gold sceptre, which was an *antique* (*ib.* 1954:134), and two bronze tripods. After one of the robbers' testimony, some cremated bones, apparently human were found inside. So, McFadden (*ib.* 1954:134), assumed that there were two people, a man

and a woman laying at Kourion 40, and, due to the lavish grave goods an the exceptional sceptre, they were surely a king and his queen (Fig. 3).

Yet, extraordinary as the Kourion nº40 tomb is, there is not archaeo-



logical certainty, either that there were two people of different sex buried together, or that the woman would have been sacrificed during her husband's funerals.

The last case mentioned by Catling, was that of the tomb XXVIII by Tyrins (Verdelis 1963:10 and followings), dated at the Submicenaean/ Protogeometric transition (ca. 1025-1000 B.C.). It was a cist grave, excavated close by

Acropolis, i.e. on a prominent place, and held two inhumed people, one of them with warrior's grave goods, and a second corpse without grave goods and laying at a lightly deeper level, that was interpreted as having been buried at an earlier time. Although no anthropological identification of the corpses took place, Verdelis (1963:55), thought the second corpse could belong to a woman and the first one, who was buried with weapons, to a male. Anyway,



it should be highlighted that the two burials were not simultaneously done (Fig. 4).

A further case of a double and simultaneous grave comes from the Erechteion Street, south of the Athens Acropolis, where fourteen burials were discovered. One of them was a double cremation inside the same urn and dated to the EPG. (ca. 1025-1000 B.C.) Anthropological inquiry identified the remains as belonging to a couple of male and female teenagers, around eighteen years of age. Although the excavator thought that they could have been a brother and a sister who died together, nevertheless Lemos (2002:154), in view of the *Toumba Heroon*, considers that a kind of *suttee* could not be ruled out.

In Italy, Peroni (1996:485-7) and Pacciarelli (1998:38), took as well that view. The first author (cited by Bartoloni 2003:97), mentioned the cases of some double (male/female) or triple (including a baby) tombs dated to the 9th century B.C. from the Villanovan necropolis of Quattro Fontanili and Grotta Gramiscia, where a great amount of cremated bones

have been anthropologically identified (Berardinetti & Drago 1997; Bartoloni *et al.* 1997:89-100). Bartoloni (2003:97-98) objects on the contrary, that there are not proofs enough of human sacrifices in the course of princely funerals. She further suggests that in the case of Grotta Gramiccia tomb 60, the presence of two different pits, holding respectively a male and a female cremations inserted in a unique shaft grave, could be better explained by the reopening of a familiar grave in order to rejoin a couple in the same tomb. There are many other cases of graves' reopening, well attested archaeologically at the time as L'Osteria del L'Osa (Bietti-Sestieri 1997), Este (Vanzetti 1992:158), or the Villa Bruschi Fagari necropolis (Trucco 2006:97-98). Anyway, even at Villa Bruschia, there are four cases where after Trucco (*ib.*:98-99), a sacrifice could not be ruled out (Fig. 4). They happen to be male/female cremations, with their bones mixed and having a similar colouring, what means that they were cremated at the same temperature and, surely on the same pyre. Tomb 130 is extremely interesting, since the bones were identified as belonging to an old man around

35/45 of age and to a young woman of about 18 to 25 years old. Bartoloni herself admits (*ib.* 2003:98) that some cases as the one of a female cremation superimposed to a male one at the exceptional Vetulonia's shaft grave 1, could not be excluded as a sacrifice, in view of the sceptre and other emblems of rule that accompanied the deceased man, although it could also be a later, secondary deposition.

### **Wives and concubines**

My point is that if we can trust the anthropological identification and the simultaneity of both depositions, and if we can exclude from a forensic point of view natural causes for the simultaneity of both deaths, as for instance, accidents or plagues, then we should consider these women as concubines better than wives, because from the Bronze Age on, we have funerary evidence of high status women compatible with the existence of a system of dowry and complex agriculture (Goody 1973, 1976; 1984 and 1990; Ruiz-Gálvez 1994). In such a way, warriors and rulers would have married high status women, belonging to an equal or

even higher rank families and able to transmit rights to their offspring's on their familiar property, including sometimes claims to the ruling office. Therefore it seems to me very improbable that such noble women, that sometimes as in Athens exerted as priestesses (Langdon 2005), could ever have been sacrificed.

In several books Goody (1973, 1976; 1984; 1990) has dealt with the differences between simple and complex agriculture and their relation with either a bridewealth system, where women neither inherit nor transmit property rights to their offspring and a dowry system into which, women transmit rights to their descendant on the familiar heritage, or could even inherit it in absence of a male heir. He (*ib.*: 1990) maintains that there are archaeological as well as literary proofs that, at least since the Bronze Age, a system of dowry was at work in Eurasia and, what is more important, that the development of a complex agriculture, including the plough, irrigation and/or specialized livestock raising, promoted differences of richness and rank and the use of endowed daughters to sign up



alliances among rich families and to join land properties. Of not lesser importance is the fact that such women could inherit and transmit the right to the ruling office. Such were the cases of Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine and Guyènne, Countess of Poitou and Queen consort of both France and England, who transmitted to the English Crown rights on her French possessions; or Maria de Molina, first Queen consort and then Queen regent of Castile and León and owner of the lordship of Molina de Aragón, which through her became part of the Castilian Crown; or Isabella of France, Queen consort of England and member of the House of Capet, from whom Henry the III of the house Plantagenet derived his claims to the Crown of France, which resulted in the so called Hundred Years' War; or, finally Marie Thérèse of Austria, Queen consort of France and grandmother of the first Bourbon King of Spain, Philip the Fifth, whom she transmitted the right to the Spanish Crown.

Unfortunately we do not have written records for that period in Europe. Nevertheless we do have them for the Second and First

Millennium B.C. Near East (Liverani 2003:257-64; 1987). There we learn that royal intermarriages were preceded and, sometimes followed by political agreements, the nature of which varied depending on whether both partners were equals or not, or whether one of the kingdoms was a vassal or an ally. But even if the bride would not have a political role in her groom's kingdom and sometimes would spend her life confined in the royal harem, she in a way was left as a pawn of the brotherhood between her native and her adopting country. So coming back to my point, I can hardly imagine these royal wives being sacrificed at their husband pyre.

### Suttee and Hecatomb

Regarding to the *suttee* hypothesis proposed by Popham in the case of the Toumba *heroon*, we do not have written proofs of such a practice neither in the Near East texts nor later, in the Greek or Roman ones. According to Goody (1990:48-49, 184-187), although the *suttee*, that is, the immolation of the faithful wife in her husband's pyre, existed in some parts of China and India, nevertheless, it has always been very

rare, and was eventually abolished in India by the British in the 19th century. On the contrary, it was a usual practice both in China and India, that high status widows seldom would marry again. That was due to the fact that they not only retained their dowry in widowhood, but they have a right of being economically supported in charge of the estate. Even in the seldom cases they would marry a second time, although they would lose their dower, they would still retain their dowry (Goody 1990:48-49; 202). The aforementioned author (*ib.*: 117, 184,198 and 203) pointed out that the female widowhood was morally sanctioned as well by the Neoconfucianism, that considered a second wedding nearly an adultery, as for the *'sâstra*, the Hindu's orthodox law. In Tambiah's words "in India the gift of a virgin accompanied by a dowry appears to be associated with the ideal of monogamy, an ideal that is symbolized in the notion of husband and wife being a united and inseparable pair which reached its ultimate elaboration in the institution of suttee" (Tambiah 1973:65). Very interestingly, Goody (*ib.*:117 and 187), wrote that those rules concerned the rich widows but not

the poor ones who, usually married again. And the reason was quite straightforward: while rich women were endowed by their father, the poor ones received an indirect dowry from their groom's family. Thus the dowry was linked to the female's rights of property, inheritance and rank, while it was not so with bridewealth (Tambiah 1973: 64). So it seems to me quite open why moral law sanctioned the high rank wife's perpetual monogamy, thus the dowry which belonged to the widow and not to her late husband, would be alienated from their offspring in case she married again. I even wonder whether there were not economic reasons behind most of the *suttee* self-immolations. Thus, even for certain rich families, the commitment of perpetual support from the familiar estate to a woman, who will never be pregnant again, but should retain her rank and living standards while keeping her dowry, and that could in a future alienate it by getting married again, could have been perceived as a risk for the familiar patrimony. So, it might have happened that some widows were persuaded by their own families to join their late husband pyre as a proof of loyalty and heroism sanctioned by the

divinity. This is, of course, my hypothesis, not Goody's. So if you disagree, it is me not him, the one who should be blamed for it.

On the contrary, concubines, even if they descended of a noble lineage enjoyed a lower status. Although the children of a concubine could inherit and even become enthroned, in cases of polygyny as happened with some Asian kings, wives and concubines were hierarchically ranked and enjoyed differentiated rights both on the property and on the succession (Tambiah 1973:65). Some concubines were slaves or as it were the case both of Homer's Briseis or Cassandra, became concubines as a result of an arm conflict, were considered war's booty and therefore turned into commodities, alienable things, trophies or objects of display, but were not seen as human beings. Therefore they could have been sacrificed in a display of richness and power, i.e. a *hecatomb*, by the members of an emergent lineage who needed to make their claims to succession to the political office.

Thus, as Gregory explains (1982:71), *gifts* are inalienable things exchanged among relatives, while

*commodities* are alienable things exchanged among strangers. That is, and translating Gregory's ideas, bridegrooms are gifts, inalienable people slaves are commodities, and therefore, alienable things who could be sacrificed in a hecatomb, a public display of power and richness even if as Cassandra or Eumaeus, were descendant of royal families.

### Warriors and husbands

Let's have a look to Homer's texts in order to strengthen my point. At the *Odyssey* we come across with real women, of blood and flesh, as Penelope, Eurycleia, Helen or the young Nausicaa, all of them loved and respected by Odysseus. So much so, that in 19th century, a certain Samuel Butler claimed a female authorship for the Poem, and suggested that she could have been a poetess from Trapani in Sicily, who might have self-depicted as the character of Nausicaa. Even the writer Robert Graves took in the 20th century the same view in his novel "*Homer's daughter*" (Olmos 2003:297). As Olmos points out (*ib.*:295-326), women are prominent in the book; Calypso and Circe represent female's seductive

powers; Helen and Penelope are faithful wives and efficient housekeepers and weavers. Nausicaa means the youth and the innocence. Finally, Eurycleia, the old Odysseus' nanny, is a most affectionate character. The Poem, for the good or the bad, is plenty of feminine points of view.

If we turn now our sight to the *Iliad*, we will notice that female characters do exist as well. Yet..., just by the Trojan side; Andromache, represents the best of wives, and is tenderly loved by Hektor (*Iliad*, VI.369, 390,440); Hekabe, Hektor's mother, is always fearing about her sons' fortune in the battlefield (*Iliad* VI. 243,263,286,293; XXII.90 and 429); Helen, Priam's beloved daughter in law... (*Iliad* III.161), complains against her husband Paris' cowardice (*Iliad* III. 421, 423)... There are other minor female characters, as for instance, the Trojan women (*Iliad* VI.243), or Teanus, Ciseus' daughter, and an Athena's priestess (*Iliad* VI.297), or Etra and Climene, Helen's ladies in waiting... (*Iliad* III.47), etc.

Nothing similar could be seen by the Achaian side, where there are

not female characters, not female human beings, just commodities (Vidal-Naquet 2002: 75-82). Excepting for the Goddesses, only two female characters are described by the Achaian side and both of them are foreigners, either Trojan or from a Trojan ally kingdom: Criseis and Briseis. We know very little about the first of them. Just that her father is a prominent Trojan citizen and an Apollo's priest, and that Agamemnon, her master and owner, to whom she was assigned to him as a war's booty, should bring her back home, to prevent God's anger. And he complains about taking that measure, not because he loves her or at least likes having her in his bed, but because he thinks is loosing a part of his owed booty. And the same happens to Achilles, who cries bitterly after having been taken his female booty, Briseis, by Agamemnon (*Iliad* II.345), not because he missed her, but because he has been dishonoured and humiliated by having been dispossessed of a part of it was owed to him (Vernant 1982:46). Just once in the whole Poem we listen to Briseis speaking, and we even know that there are other nameless captive women in the Achaian camp. In

Iliad XIX.282-309, Briseis and the other female captives cry Patroclus' death and for their own bitter destiny. Briseis cries also due to her own memories about her husband's death, of her family death and of Achilles devastating her land and looting her city. Patroclus, in Briseis own words, was her only comfort. The one who promised her that Achilles should wash her outraged honour by marrying her one day. Yet... nothing let us think that Achilles got any plan of marrying her slave... Because, as I have already conveyed, Briseis as well as Criseis and the other anonymous captives were commoditized things... not human beings. And commodities as the slave were considered could have been thrown into their master pyre as Achilles did with the twelve male Trojan captives sacrificed into Patroclus's pyre (Iliad XXIII.161).

### Heroes tombs and house societies

Summing up, we have revised several cases -the Toumba Heroon, the Knossos cemetery tombs 200 to 202, the Erechteion Street in Athens, four tombs of the Villa Bruschi Fagari necropolis and, the

Vetulonia's shaft grave 1, were we can suspect that a double or triple and simultaneous burial could have taken place, and that it could have included human sacrifices.

What similarities could we find out among them? First, that they are located in prominent points on the landscape; second, they were located in family plots or, as it were the cases of the Toumba *heroon* and Knossos 200-202, they were the oldest tombs in the necropolis and gave way at its funerary use afterwards; third, they were usually very rich and prominent graves, and in them males were buried with lavish grave goods, including the characteristic insignias of a warrior and a ruler; and four and more important, they appeared in a moment -the Protogeometric period in Greece and the Villanovan/ early Etruscan Period in Italy, when a new social structure was emerging, one that from an anthropological point of view did neither fit with a Chiefdom nor with a State.

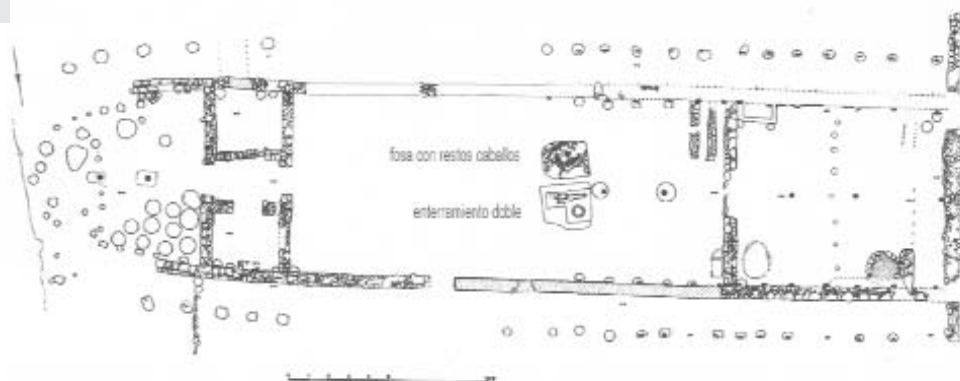
González Rubial (2006) has recently used a model taken from the French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss, to define the political structure of some Iron Age Iberian

societies. It is the so-called *house societies* model, developed by the French anthropologist to define a kind of hierarchical society that it is neither patrilineal nor matrilineal, and therefore defies classical models of anthropological classification. Thus in them it is not the lineage but the house, or rather, the *household* the basic axis on which the social organization is built. It is the focus of ritual and sacrificial activities and the arena for competition, and is reflected in the emphasis on the house monumentality and richness, as well as on power symbols or family relics and inheritances that perpetuate the symbolic capital of the lineage through the *household*. And I think that it could have been the case of Toumba, the burial area of a Greek elite of warriors and traders, that emerged around a *heroon* (Popham 1994), which recycled an apsidal

building, perhaps the *household* of a new divinized ancestor (Fig. 6). Thus not only the couple buried under the apsidal building, but most of their rich descendants buried close to them, included lavish grave goods as weapons and fine *antiques* in their burials. It is also the case of some sub-Mycenaean Cretan warrior-graves, not only from the Knossos cemetery (Kanta 2003), that emulate Homeric rituals, have *antiques*, either inheritances or products of plunders and sometimes were buried in chamber tombs imitating buildings (Catling 1994, 1996b; Coldstream & Catling 1996). Lastly identical features are found in Cypriot graves of the same age (Yon 1971; Karageorghis 2000).

It is also the kind of organization that we find in Villanovan and old Etruscan/Lacial graves (between

Fig. 6



the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC), with depositions of prominent individuals' ashes, sometimes wrapped in rich clothes and accompanied by some graters to mix cheese and wine following Homeric rituals (Ridgway 1997), placed in house-shaped urns with roof-cornices (Bartoloni 2002:188-90), or urns covered by pottery models of helmets with a house cornice on top instead of crests (Berardinetti & Drago 1997:40) (Insert 5), together with weapons and power symbols such as sceptres and batons, as well as *antiques* (Ridgway 1997; Bartoloni 2002:85, 143-44, 190, 214 and next; de Santis 2005:84, 190; V.V.A.A. 2000). All of them, Greek, Cretan, Cypriot and Italian tombs emphasize the link between death, houses, power and the Past.

I would like also to call attention to the fact that these rich graves belonged not only to powerful males or to powerful couples, but also to rich single female burials. For instance some of the most outstanding tombs from the Athens' Geometric Period (Lord Smithson 1968; Coldstream 1995; Langdon 2005), Salamis' tomb 1 in Cyprus (Yon 1971) or a handful

of Villanovan, Early Etruscan and Lacial tombs in Italy (Bartoloni 2003:115-43). Thus, as Lévi-Strauss (cited by Gonzalez-Ruibal 2006), pointed out, *house societies* are neither patrilineal nor matrilineal ones, what, in my view, matches with a dowry system which is bilateral, that is, in which both lineages, mother's and father's are equally important, because both of them transmit rights on the heritage.

#### Cremation, hero-cult, heirlooms and sacrifices

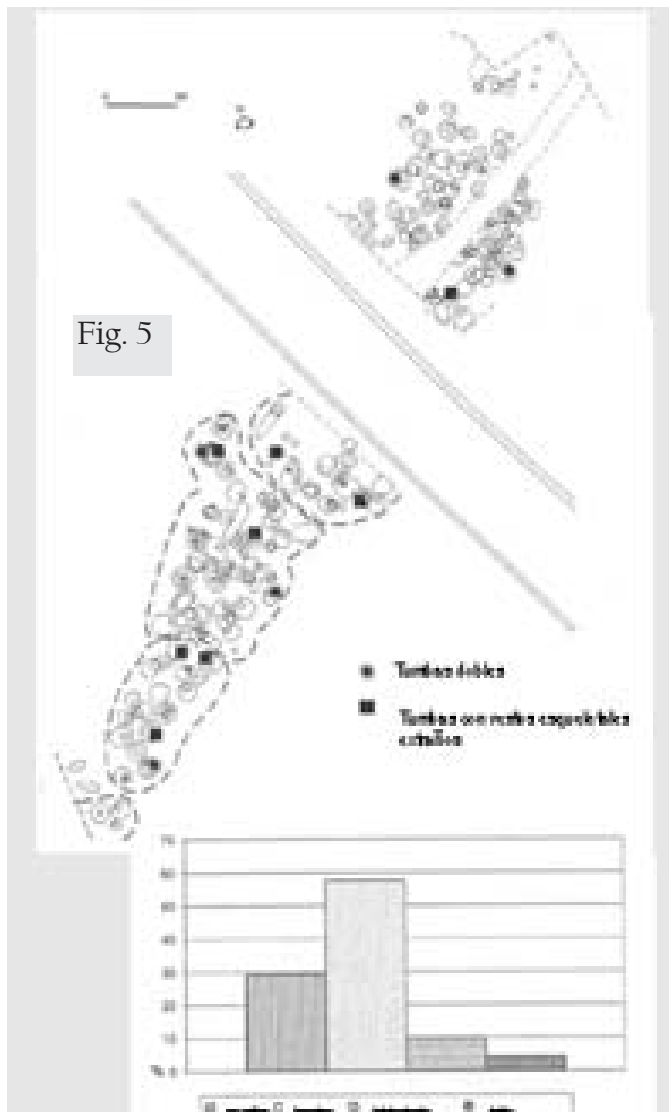
Iliad's Agamemnon, is more a *primus inter pares* than a paramount king in the sense of the Near East monarchs. Achilles, the leader of the Myrmidons, Nestor or Menelaus... are also petty chiefs, *condottieri*, soldiers of fortune, always arguing about their share in the war booty (See Iliad I and IX) and always competing among them. So, Patroclus' funerals (Iliad, XXIII) are turned by Achilles into an exhibition of his power and richness and in a challenge to Agamemnon's paramount authority (Fig. 5).

Many authors have seen similari-

ties between the type of society that we come across with the heroic burials of the First Iron Age Greece, Cyprus and Italy and the one described in Homer (Catling 1994; Carter & Morris 1994; Ridgway 1997; D'Agostino 2000; Karageorghis 2000; Whitley 2002; Kanta 2003). On my side I have recently suggested (Ruiz-Gálvez *forthcoming*), that the change of ritu-

al from inhumation to cremation, that took place in the Eastern and Central Mediterranean at the Bronze Age/Iron Age transition, could be related with the emergence of a new ruling class, who needed make claims on their right to leadership. Because the cremation implies a way of divinization, thus it prevents the corruption of the body, and at the same time it provides to the descendant an arena for exhibiting their power by destroying richness and, in that way, claiming a divine or semi divine ancestry and their own rights to succession.

It is in such a context, that those conspicuous tombs as the Lefkandi *heroon* and many others could be, in my view, better understood. And it is also under such a context, that human sacrifices might have taken place and had a meaning. Also under that context it would make sense the frequent presence of *antiques* among the grave goods of the heroic tombs. Thus *antiques* might have been considered *agalmata*, that quoting Grannisi (2004:





126): “are objects of value that may embody at the same time a mythic and a religious aspect, but also a social inner power”. So these *antiques* could have been that part of the booty, described by Homer as “*γερραζ*” or part of the booty due to a king or chief, as a material expression of the warrior’s “*τιμη*” or honour (See also Vernant opus cit. 46).

Whitley (2002:226-227) suggested that some personal objects worn by the Homeric characters or stored in their treasure’s rooms were appreciated because they had a *genealogy*. These are the cases of Agamemnon’s sceptre (Iliad II.100), the helmet which Meriones covered Odysseus’s head with (Iliad, X.270), Achilles’ immortal horses, (Iliad XXIII.270-287), or the silver sewing basket that Alcandra gave to Helen in Thebes (Odyssey IV.112). In every case, Homer describes who made the object or bred the animal (always a God or a reputed artisan), and whom gods, kings or ancestors had it been passed on to, before being given to one of his characters. Therefore they are valuable objects since they have their own *biography* (see also Perea 2003:163). In tune

with these ideas, I have suggested somewhere else (Ruiz-Gálvez 2005 and forthcoming), that the *antiques* let as grave goods in tombs as the Toumba *heroon*, were considered as having *genealogy* and therefore would help their owners to cast an heroic, almost divine past for their lineage. This idea would match a *house society* model, and the rise of a new leading class based on war and trade, that needs to justify its right to exert the power, *inventing* a heroic past for them.

As part of the invention of a past and of claiming succession rights to the political office, could also be understood the display of public funerals, the cremation of the body in a pyre, the destruction of wealth and the sacrifice of precious *things* as the slaves were. The higher the slaves’ status were -as happened with the twelve Trojan noblemen sacrificed by Achilles into Patroclus’ pyre (Iliad XXIII.161-82)- the better for the prestige of whom the sacrifice were in charge of.

### Echoes of Patroclus in Barbarian funerals

I would like to end my paper by looking at the most distant

Mediterranean periphery, the Northern Europe where, notwithstanding, indirect contacts through the so called *Amber route* have been going on since the early Second Millennium B.C. (Shennan 1982; Beck & Shennan 1991; Sherratt 1994). These became more strengthen anyway, from the 8th century B.C., when Greek and Phoenicians established themselves in the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Etruscan evolved to an urban and State society. A long distance exchange route connected the Baltic and the Mediterranean Seas through which raw materials -metals, amber, probably wood and furs, and perhaps human beings came down to the South, and luxury products as wine and drinking sets, textiles and perhaps human beings too, went up.

In such a context, some small chiefdoms appeared in nodal areas connecting and distributing goods along the route. One of them was Seddin on the Elbe river in between Central Europe and the Scandinavian area. In 1899 a huge tumulus mound of 11 x 90 m was discovered there. It was covering a stone chamber with a false vault and walls plastered in yellow and

red clay imitating a textile pattern. In the centre of it and inside a clay pot was standing a bronze urn containing the cremated bones of a thirty to forty years old man, together with rest of a marten or ermine fur, jewels and weapons. Among his lavish grave goods stands out a bronze amphora, because it was an import and was made in an Etruscan workshop of Veii and therefore it was a rarity in the area. Other cinerary urns were accompanying it and contained the bones of at least two young women (Kristiansen 1993; Thrane 1998). A second example comes from Korshøj on South Funen (Thrane 1998), where in the funerary mound of another local chief, bones belonging at least to two women and a man were found. Although as long as I know, there is not anthropological data on the possible contemporaneousness of males and females cremations in both mounds, anyway both *barbarian* burials seem to have been following the Homeric ritual of princely exequies, and proves than along the routes, not only certain luxuries but also persons and Mediterranean ways of conspicuous consumption were arriving to the fringes of the Homeric World,

and were emulated by local leaders. In both cases, Seddin and Korshøj, human beings deposited together with the main male burial seem to have been part of his grave goods, slaves and concubines, lesser human beings than commodities, but a way of publicly showing the strength and power of the dead household.

### Addenda

In his book called *The Archaeology of death and burial*, Mike Parker-Pearson describes an outstanding funeral held in the 10th century A.D. at the trading post of Bulgar on the Middle Volga, as it was described by the Muslim traveller and writer Ibn Faldan, who witnessed it. It happened to be the exequies of the leader of a group of Scandinavian merchants and warrior based at Bulgar. The man was cremated on his boat, animals were sacrificed and one of his girl slaves joined him at death (Parker-Pearson 2000:1-3)<sup>1</sup>.

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