

Re-evaluating Mycenaean sanctuaries

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*On the occasion of his 75th
birthday to Jörg Schäfer*

Introduction

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL or other evidence for Aegean Bronze Age cult,¹ here precisely sanctuaries, cult activity, and religion of the Minoan and Mycenaean Ages, now as then confronts us with numerous open questions. Mainly because of the virtual absence of in any regard explicit written sources, the overall lack of factual knowledge applies especially also to the more substantial scholarly questions: as to what was going on at Bronze Age Aegean cult places; as to the meaning of the material and pictorial manifestations of the cult; and, consequently, as to the religious beliefs that were behind all that.² Further, the social setting and organizational patterns of sanctuaries and cults are still much open to discussion—a circumstance particularly conspicuous, also, in that even some new evidence from actual sanctuaries has more recently come up, adding to what was known so far; that the new observations do not combine, however, at all easily with the older

1 A short version in German of our main line of argument here also forms a contribution to the *Festschrift* for Jörg Schäfer: Albers 2001a. Thus, we wish to dedicate particularly our reappraisal, as in the following, of the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' to Jörg Schäfer. This is essentially the paper as presented at the symposium in Athens. However, in the subsequent and final discussions important questions were raised which we had not clarified in the oral version. For lack of space here comments, therefore, regarding esp. a) our perception of Mycenaean public communal cult, and b) our view on the questionable role of the Mycenaean palace, and in particular of the great court in front of the central megaron, as a location of communal cultic gatherings, have now been made in Albers 2001b. Also, an addendum is included below to explain more specifically our alternative hypotheses regarding the issue of at least four co-existing, major Mycenaean palatial sites in the Argolid (first mention of that problem made *infra* n. 66).

2 Cf. Hägg 1996:600f.

ones and thus do not prove, or at least not by themselves, entirely more conclusive.³

For further reflection on Minoan or Mycenaean sanctuaries and cult the present state of research hence permits, and in fact requires, that evidence commonly known and often referred to in various kinds of scholarly contributions is thought and talked about anew. On the basis of our work of some years ago the attempt shall thus be made, in the following, to reconsider for the Mycenaean sphere some aspects of the archaeological vestiges of what we here choose to term 'public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts'.⁴ In order, again, to recall certain aspects on which we intend to base our argument, a structured survey of the evidence may prove useful. To this purpose the evidence will be summarized by regions and, within the regional frame and as far as is possible, by the chronological periods commonly applied. For we are convinced that when further insights into Mycenaean society and eventually ideology are sought through archaeological observation, it is required to put the analysis on the regional level.

Finally, by speaking of Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts we exclude from our argument what may be termed 'private cult rooms' in houses as well as in palaces,⁵ and we also exclude 'nature sanctuaries' in the open country.⁶

As is well-known, the evidence for Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts—constituting the only category of Mycenaean cultic activity that *potentially* comes close to anything like 'temple cult', as it is commonly con-

3 I.e. first, the building complex yielding evidence of Mycenaean cultic activities at the site of Ayios Konstantinos/Methana: see E. Konsolaki's paper in this volume, and see below. Another discovery made recently on Crete raises entirely new questions as to the layout and function of built sanctuaries in settlement contexts of the final Minoan period, namely the Late Minoan (LM) III C 'temple complex' at Vasiliki Kephala excavated since 1994; for preliminary information see Rehak and Younger 1998:168f., fig. 8 (we also thank the excavator, T. Eliopoulos, for informing us in detail about those important findings in Athens in 1998).

4 Termed *Stadtheiligtümer* ('town sanctuaries') in our earlier study: Albers 1994:10. By speaking of 'public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts' we, however, here wish to use a more neutral as well as expanded term. For the Mycenaean sphere the phenomenon was first classified by Hägg (1968:57): identification of 'independent cult buildings' besides 'cult places in palaces and houses'; for this and later significant contributions by Hägg and others up to 1988, cf. Albers 1994:1–9 and refs. For our perception of Mycenaean public communal cult see now Albers 2001b.

5 Albers 1994:9f. (heading nr. 4); Kilian 1992:14–16 and refs.

6 In German: *Landheiligtümer*. A comprehensive publication of the archaeological material from a nature sanctuary is Pilafidis-Williams 1998, with analysis esp. 147–153. An overview of relevant sites, with a post-structuralist interpretation of the relationship rural cults/urban cults, has more recently been given by Wright (1994:65–76 and refs.; Kalapodi in Phokis to be added: Felsch 1981). Kilian (1992:23f.) tentatively views the nature sanctuaries as a new feature developing only in Mycenaean postpalatial times.

ceived⁷—is still remarkably scarce. The scarcity relates not only to the vast number of sites indicating Mycenaean settlement, and in many parts dense settlement.⁸ It also relates to the geographical area and to the timespan covered by genuine Mycenaean material culture.⁹ Further, it relates to the various regions which are to be considered nuclei of the Mycenaean cultural sphere: namely mainland regions of definite importance at the time—Attica, Corinthia, Achaea, Messenia, Laconia, and Boeotia as well as coastal Thessaly—are still virtually void of vestiges of such sanctuaries.¹⁰ Moreover, even in relation to palatial or other central sites which are themselves comparatively few in number, Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts appear scarce, as palatial sites like Athens, Pylos or Thebes have so far not produced evidence of the sort.¹¹ While that is certainly to be explained by, first and foremost, circumstances of preservation and/or extent

- 7 Arguments, esp. the lack of monumentality of the cult buildings, to avoid the term 'temple' for the sanctuaries under consideration have been put forward by Whittaker (1997:6, cf. 25f., 159); cf. e.g., Hägg 1993:188. The question of Mycenaean 'temples' is now discussed in Albers 2001b.
- 8 Compare, e.g., the map of Late Helladic (LH) III A2 to III B sites at the peak of Mycenaean settlement activity: Hope Simpson and Dickinson 1979:map 4; and the map of sites with secured evidence of Mycenaean cult places in settlement contexts (*including* cultic localities in palaces and houses): Albers 1994:pl. 1: sites underlined; to be added Ayios Konstantinos on Methana, be it an independent sanctuary or a mansion complex with cult facilities (see below), as well as the proposed 'house sanctuary' in the Mycenaean settlement at Dimini in Thessaly, with a large bovine figure in it: Adrimi Sismani 1996:1304, fig. 15. For the settlement pattern of the palatial period in the Argolid, Laconia, and Messenia see also the maps in Eder 1998:26, 91, 143 figs. 3, 13, 18.
- 9 For the Mycenaean territories see the map in Kilian 1988a:119 fig. 1. Depending on the conventional chronology or the scientifically based 'High Chronology', the absolute time-span of Mycenaean material culture comprises at least around 600 years, namely from the Shaft Grave period beginning in later Middle Helladic (MH) times beyond the final destruction of the palaces at the end of LH III B and through to LH III C Late: e.g., Warren and Hankey 1989:136–169, 215, table 3.1.; cf. Maran 1990:185f. Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts, as far as is known up to now, do not appear before the LH III A1 pottery phase in the early fourteenth century B.C., at the earliest, and then only at Ayia Irini on Keos, there reviving however the tradition of an earlier, 'Minoan' sanctuary. Instead, the bulk of the evidence belongs to LH III B and III C, thus covering a time-span of ± 300 years: Albers 1994:table 1; for Ayia Irini as well as Phylakopi see below. Cf. also the characterization of the general situation of Mycenaean sanctuary sites by Wright (1994:38 and map in fig. 3.1 [Tiryns missing, though]).
- 10 E.g. for Laconia, Banou 1996:106f.; however, the assemblage at Amyklai has been re-interpreted by Wright (1994:65 and refs.); cf. also Eder 1998:97f., 136f. Evidence is further lacking for the southern Argolid: Jameson *et al.* 1994:368–72.
- 11 E.g. for the Theban 'kingdom', Aravantinos 1995:618f. We do not include the small cultic room 93/'Sanctuary of the *Potnia Hippon*' in the 'Palace of Nestor' at Ano Englianos/Pylos—cf. most recently Whittaker 1997:8–31, esp. 9f., 25, 179f. and refs.—in the group of cult buildings which we term public communal sanctuaries and refer to in the following: due to its location within the palace complex room 93 must, in our opinion, be viewed within the immediate functional and ideological context of the Mycenaean ruler at Pylos' residence; cf. Albers 1994:9f. (heading nr. 4).

of excavation at the particular sites we shall, however, duly keep the point of relation of public communal sanctuaries to palatial sites in mind.

What secured evidence there is, then, comes from the Argolid on one hand, and thus from an obvious nucleus region of Mycenaean settlement and of palatial sites. On the other hand, and interestingly in the view of regional differentiation, the evidence accounts for two sites within the Cycladic islands' cultural sphere, namely Phylakopi on Melos and Ayia Irini on Keos: our argument in the following will therefore also emphasize that this circumstance ought *eo ipso* be viewed as one of several strong indicators for a dominant Mycenaean presence in the Cyclades.¹²

The Argolid

To speak about the Argolid first and in chronological order, the earliest secured evidence so far is the famous complex of the so-called 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' flourishing at least during the greater part of the LH III B period and down to its end (figs. 1–3). Thus, the 'Cult Centre' functioned together with the palace on the acropolis, as well as at the peak of the continuous enlargement that was effected on this prominent Mycenaean site in its entirety.¹³

Furthermore, cultic activities at Mycenae, however on a diminished scale in single cult rooms with associated courtyards, apparently went on in the area of the former 'Cult Centre' also in LH III C, hence after the final III B destruction of the site and the overall collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system.¹⁴ Those later activities, again, seem to have continued there for quite some time, namely down to the so-called 'Granary destruction' constituting the end of LH III C Middle.¹⁵

The only other not only palatial but, in fact, generally *settlement* site in the Argolid which has to our present knowledge produced evidence of a public com-

12 E.g. Marthari 1988:56f.: 'Der Wiederaufbau von Agia Eirene und Phylakopi trägt den Ausdruck mykenischer Gebietshoheit'; basically also Whittaker 1997:29–31, 63 (in contrast with Crete), 141 (for Keos). A different view has however been taken by Schallin (1993:188f., cf. 172–187).

13 For the various plans published so far of the LH III B 'Cult Centre' and adjacent 'Southwest Quarter' see Albers 1994:pls. 2–15; cf. also the plan in Mylonas 1981:14f. Precise location of the 'Cult Centre' within the greater settlement context: Albers 1994:14; internal chronology: *ibid.*:50f.; details of the evidence to be given below.

14 Taylour 1981:38, 42f., 53, plan 5: room with long walls hc and cb, pls. 172a, 178d, French 1981a:48, Albers 1994:51, pl. 17. Full account of the LH III C remains in the area of the former 'Cult Centre' and adjacent 'Southwest Quarter', as documented so far: *ibid.*:51f. and nn. 302–311, pls. 17–19, tables 4–10; and see now for vessel finds and their contents Tzedakis and Martlew 1999:131, 134f., 154f., 164, cat. nrs. 113, 118, 121, 139, 148.

15 As indicated by the presumed round altar in an open-air area: Taylour 1965, 1981:38, 43, pl. 4, section 1–2: 'tower' to the south of and adjacent to wall cb, pl. 172d, French 1981a:48, Albers 1994:52, pls. 9a, 18. The context and layout of the architectural remains surrounding the altar are, however, unclarified.

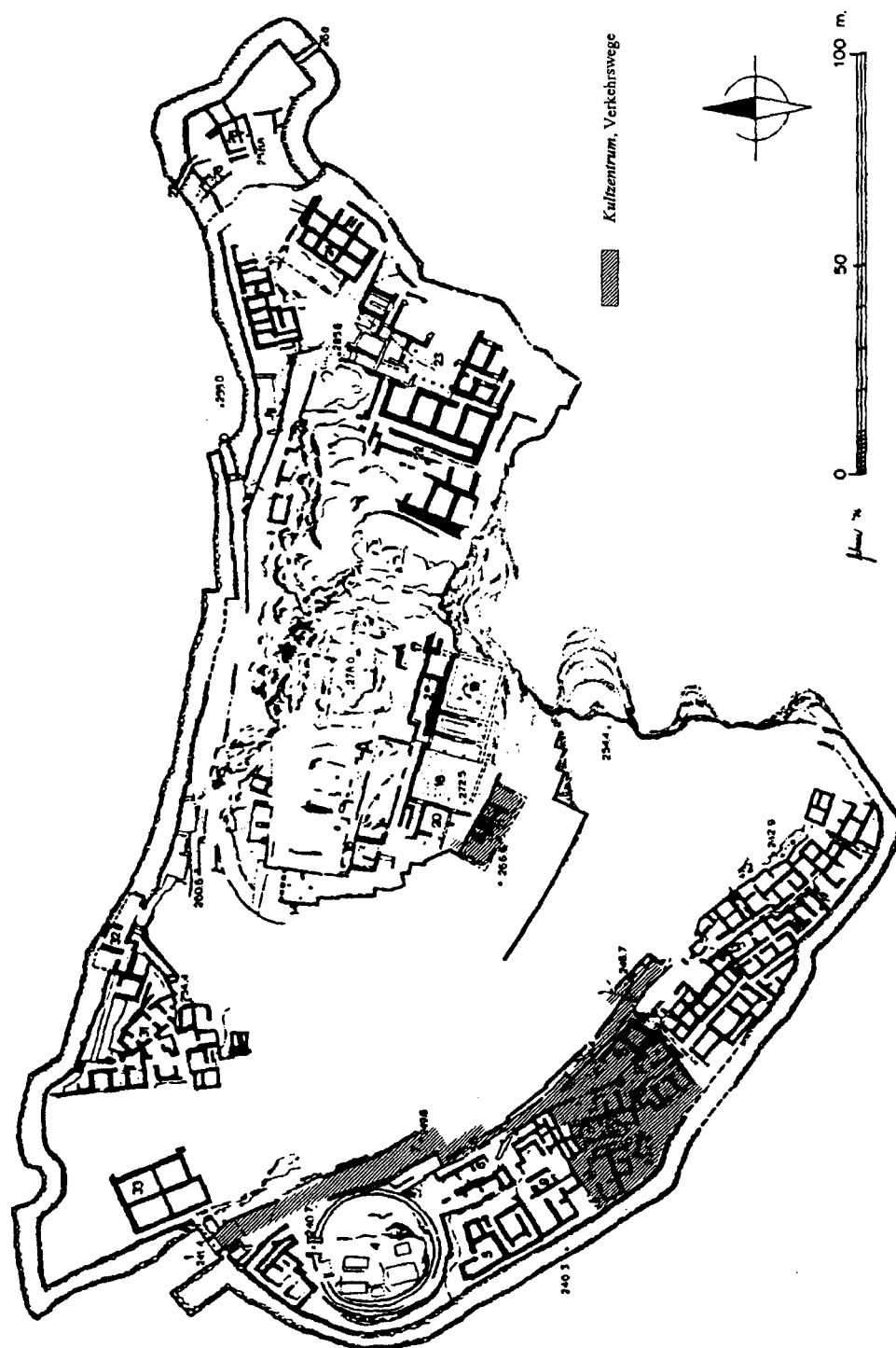


Fig. 1: Citadel of Mycenae, LH III B 2: situation of the 'Cult Centre', and road system in between the 'Cult Centre', palace, and main gate (from Albers 1994:pl. 2.)

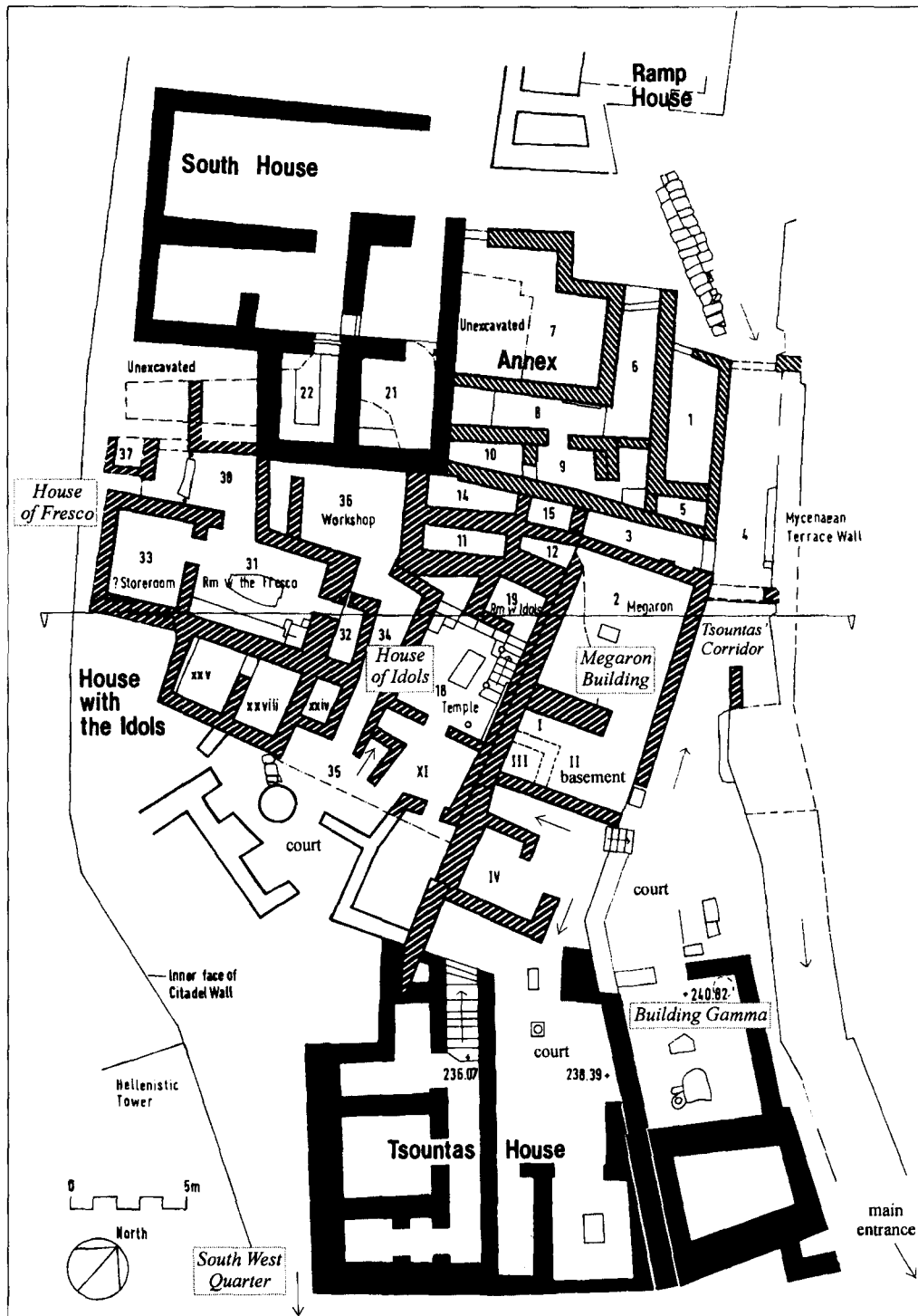


Fig. 2: The 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' (general plan from the British excavations): buildings, access, and passageways as mentioned in the text (based on French 1981a:42 fig. 1.)

munal sanctuary of the LH III B period, *i.e.* contemporaneous with the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' as well as with the local palace on the acropolis still in function, is Tiryns. At Tiryns, at least towards the end of LH III B cult activities were taking place in the *Unterbürg* (Lower Fortress) and apparently in relation to one of the casemate chambers in the western fortification wall.

The so-called 'Cult Chamber' had been filled in during repair work done on the fortification in the early aftermath of the final LH III B destruction, and it was thus not in the realm of excavation.¹⁶ However, the finds in the narrow open space—the so-called *Zwinger*—in front of the casemate chamber and between it and the so-called 'House of the Priestess' to the east, as well as the evidence of the latter building itself, all in all strongly indicate that this area of the *Unterbürg* was reserved for public communal cult at least by a later phase of LH III B.¹⁷ Another indicator for this is the circumstance that the three successive cult rooms established in the *Unterbürg* since early III C—to be referred to immediately—were located in the same general area, thus being apparently intended to revive and continue the older tradition.

To compare with the situation at Mycenae, the area of public communal cult that is evident at Tiryns for the later LH III B period reflects, in terms of its basic purpose as well as the location in the lower citadel of the site, practically the same arrangement as that of the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae'.

Further, at Tiryns after the final LH III B destruction and collapse of the palatial system three successive small and basically free-standing cult-rooms 117, 110, and 110a (figs. 4f–h) were erected in the same area of the *Unterbürg*.¹⁸ As remarked above, this circumstance of preserved location on the one hand strongly supports the fragmentary evidence for the former palatial period. On the other hand, continuity of public communal cult in that very locality of the *Unterbürg*, if however within an altered settlement organization,¹⁹ is evidenced by the successive buildings right through to the end of the Mycenaean cultural era in LH III C Late.

16 Esp. Kilian 1980:178, 1981a:53, fig. 2, 1981b:166–171, figs. 22, 24a–b; Albers 1994:104–111, pls. 35–36a, 37–39, 44a, tables 4–10; *Mauerkammer Kw 7*; Whittaker 1997:180f.

17 For the 'House of the Priestess'/Building VI see the summary of the evidence in Albers 1994:111 and refs., pls. 36a, 37a, 44a.

18 Esp. Kilian 1980:178–81, 1981a:53–56, figs. 4–9; *cf.* Kilian 1978:460–465, figs. 14–15, 17–22, 1979:389–394, figs. 10–15; see also Kilian 1992:21–23, Albers 1994:104–111, 123 figs. 1f–h, pls. 35, 36b, 38, 40–43, 44b–45, tables 4–10, Whittaker 1997:8–31, 180f. We do not further refer here to the so-called 'provisional cult room' 119 of the immediate aftermath of the LH III B final destruction: Albers 1994:106, 108 and refs., pl. 40, tables 4–10, Whittaker 1997:181. For the new excavation results proving, however, continuity of the Tiryns central megaron into LH III C (!) see now Maran 2000, 2001.

19 Esp. Kilian 1980:173, 177–181, figs. 3–4; *cf.* Albers 1994:104f. and nn. 579, 585.

The situation at Tiryns in LH III C is again compatible with that at Mycenae, in that public communal cultic activities in the context of single cult rooms with associated courtyards were continued beyond the destruction of the former III B sanctuary and in the same general area within the lower citadel, against whose repaired fortification wall the late cultrooms were built.

For reasons published earlier, we now as then consider another discovery in the Argolid as evidence for public communal and not private house cult, as has variously been stated: namely the sanctuary formed by Rooms XXXI/XXXII which are architecturally bound into Building G in the Lower Town of Asine (fig. 4e)²⁰—Asine constituting perhaps a subordinate palatial, or at least another central, site within the settlement hierarchy of the Mycenaean Argolid.²¹ However, the cultic building belongs only to the latest LH III C Late phase of the Mycenaean era, thus relating chronologically to the latest Room 110a of the successive III C cultrooms in the *Unterburg* at Tiryns. No vestiges, on the other hand, of a LH III B public communal sanctuary as at Mycenae and Tiryns have been uncovered at Asine, and evidence is also lacking whether the late sanctuary had any predecessor of earlier III C phases. Nevertheless, we should like to maintain that the Asine sanctuary, whether there was a predecessor or not, by being located in the Lower Town as well as by certain other features, generally compares to the public communal sanctuaries at Mycenae and Tiryns.

New evidence for cult activities at least in the LH III B period, especially the finds of one complete specimen and fragments of more large female figures of the appealing painted type ('Type A' according to E. French²²), has come to light in the ongoing excavations in the citadel of Midea.²³ No related cult building could be observed so far, but the finds of religious objects stem from two greater areas within the lower citadel and close to the western, respectively the northern fortification wall: as each general locality is again compatible with the situation at Mycenae and Tiryns, and since this citadel more and more unequivocally proves to be another *major* palatial site in the Argolid, a built place designated for public communal cult

20 *Ibid.*:112–115, esp. 114f., 123 fig. 1e, pls. 46–47, tables 4–10, and refs. in n. 627 to the original (little detailed) excavation report by Frödin and Persson 1938. 'House sanctuary': esp. Hägg 1981b, cf. *idem* 1981a:39; most recently Whittaker 1997:10f., 163f. Arguments similar to ours *contra* a house sanctuary have simultaneously been put forward by Wright (1994:63f.); earlier, Kilian (1981a:56) as well as van Leuven (1981:20) had doubted the interpretation, and cf. later also Hägg (1996:609f.). Again, see however the latest evaluation of the Asine complex by Kilian (1992:23f.).

21 Cf. the map in Kilian 1988b:297 fig. 3.

22 French 1981b.

23 Demakopoulou 1999 and refs.; cf. (summarizing) G. Walberg, in Tzedakis and Martlew 1999: 124f.; see now esp. Demakopoulou and Divari-Valakou 2001.

is quite likely to have existed also in one of the particular settlement areas within the lower citadel of Midea.²⁴

In some distance from the Argolid on the Saronic gulf, finally, the newly discovered Mycenaean building complex at Ayios Konstantinos on the Methana peninsula at least in partial function undisputably housed cultic activities during the LH III B period, and apparently also already in LH III A2.²⁵ However, clarity is still lacking as to the structure's wider setting and hence functional context on the site, namely the layout and character of the settlement to which it supposedly belonged are as yet dubious: for the present, the situation of the cultic building in relation to the particular settlement area can therefore not securely be compared to that of the public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts of the Argolid. Moreover, the architectural layout of the building does not fit at all unequivocally in with the Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries' architecture as we know it so far.²⁶ Further investigation in special view also of the basic relevance of the new discovery at Ayios Konstantinos to the evidence under discussion here thus appears required.

To conclude from the structured survey for the Argolid we have at Mycenae, Tiryns, and Asine—for Midea it remains to wait and see—a pattern of sanctuaries serving purposes of Mycenaean public communal cult. In the case at least of Mycenae and Tiryns, those sanctuaries were in function during the greater, respectively the later part of LH III B as well as revived in III C, and they were thus always situated in a location within the lower citadel of the site and adjacent to the fortification wall. For Asine, the same observation is relevant so far only to the latest phase of LH III C, but with reservations as to whether the Lower Town was at all enclosed by a fortification wall.²⁷ Anyhow, to the extent the pattern described is concerned, the evidence from the named Argive sites can be viewed as being

24 Cf. now Demakopoulou 1999:204.

25 As maintained by the excavator. The following is based on earlier, preliminary information about the recent discovery and was presented in Athens with reservation as to the contribution by E. Konsolaki in the symposium: cf. for convenience Whittaker 1997:8–31, 164f. and refs., who includes Methana in her discussion of Mycenaean cult buildings in the LH III period, mentioning also a possible earlier, LH III A 1 date, *ibid.*:28 and n. 98; but see most relevantly E. Konsolaki's paper in this volume, as well as now Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001.

26 The major difference of the Methana structure in comparison with the other Mycenaean cult buildings in settlement contexts lies in the agglomerated, mansion-like layout (also N. Marinatos pers. com. in Athens) which comprises several rooms yielding evidence for cult activities; the rooms being however not arranged according to any clear-cut axial concept to form one single, freestanding or at least architecturally independent, rectangular building unit. As another indicator of a likely diverse function the lack so far of female figures as well as, with one exception, female figurines in any context of the Methana structure appears conspicuous.

27 Cf. Albers 1994:112 and refs. in n. 629.

virtually identical. When it comes to the respective layout, size, and other features of the sanctuaries, though, the picture from the outset demands substantial differentiation: and that is in our view, and as will be argued in the following, with the particular regard to the material manifestation and the socio-historical significance of the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' during the LH III B period.²⁸

28 Our reviewing the evidence of the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' as in the following is esp. based also on the contribution by Wright (1994) and precisely the account on 'Citadel Cult Centres', *ibid.*:61–63. As to that part of his highly instructive essay we, however, disagree with Wright on two major points which we should here like to clarify:

- 1) Most significantly (but not only) in the case of the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' we do not accept Wright's notion, *ibid.*:62, as to 'a secondary nature' of the location of the complex (*cf.* already Wright, in Dabney and Wright 1990:52; and in similar terms for Phylakopi, Renfrew 1985:390f.). Generally differently for Mycenae, Wright 1994:51: 'Architectural icons form a series of concentric rings of symbols that increasingly focus on the centre of Mycenaean ritual and authority, which is the megaron with its monumental hearth and royal throne.' That implies that by its very location the 'Cult Centre' ought to be part of such 'ring of symbols'. It cannot, thus, be at the same time described in a minimalizing way as Wright does, *ibid.*:62, namely that it was set '... literally at the bottom of the citadel, tucked behind the display of Grave Circle A and not obviously accessible' Rather, it would be a consequence from Wright's own line of argument that each element—'architectural icon'—within the 'series of concentric rings of symbols' around the Mycenae megaron had its proper and meaningful place, at the most so the fortification wall being the visually most obvious concentric ring and unquestionably of high symbolic value (although it is located even further away at the bottom of the citadel); and the 'Cult Centre' at least in its final concept is deliberately attached to that significant constituent of the overall layout of the site. Already Kilian (1992:17–20) has provided an account of the 'Cult Centre' which does not at all allow for a conjectured, remote setting within the Mycenae citadel.

A further point is linked to what has just been said but is not immediately relevant in the frame of this paper: namely Wright's notion as to an alleged 'lesser importance' of the 'Citadel Cult Centres' in relation to 'the cults in the megaron of the palace', *op. cit.*:61. Our different view in this respect is now explained in detail in Albers 2001; suffice it thus to comment here: Wright, *loc. cit.*, esp. argues that the lack of attention paid to the architectural adornment of the 'Citadel Cult Centres' demonstrates their being less important than 'the cults in the palace'. However, several elements of monumentality, architectural adornment and building material used in all the Mycenaean palatial architecture are evident in some of the public communal sanctuaries, too, and particularly so in the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae', as observed by Wright (*ibid.*:61f. and n. 94) and see below with fig. 3; *cf.* Kilian, *loc. cit.* This circumstance, again, ought to be taken as one among other indicators that the 'Cult Centre' was under the immediate control of and directly served the Mycenae palace, as will be argued in the following.

- 2) Our argument in the following will be as that we would not define all Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts as 'cult centres', but only the differentiated complexes at Mycenae and Phylakopi on Melos (and due to the probable regional significance *perhaps*, but not securely demonstrable, the sanctuary at Ayia Irini on Keos; see below). Thus, we fundamentally do not accept what is implied by Wright's account, namely that a cult centre as such was a generic component of every Mycenaean citadel and that the alleged 'Citadel Cult Centres' were equals in function and religious significance.

The 'Cult Centre of Mycenae'

Mycenae public communal cult in settlement contexts of the LH III B period at the only other site in the Argolid, besides Mycenae, yielding definite evidence, namely Tiryns, and further the revival and continuation of the cult in LH III C after the collapse of the palatial system, at Mycenae itself, at Tiryns, as well as at Asine in a late phase, took place in the context of single cultrooms mostly of smaller size and with a courtyard area in front of or also partially surrounding the cultic building. By contrast, the LH III B 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' stands out from the contemporary and later evidence as a unique complex of five separate buildings with associated courtyards, linked by corridors or passageways through upper stories, thus displaying a sophisticated spatial arrangement and clear-cut architectural as well as, in our perception, functional differentiation.

The entire complex is built in a quite complicated manner over three carefully prepared rock-cut terraces descending towards the citadel wall and covering at least 8 metres difference in height (figs. 2–3).²⁹ Access to the complex was provided through a main entrance which was apparently integrated into a major road system—we shall refer to it in more detail below. The entrance itself had been closed by a monumental two-winged wooden door constructed over a monolithic conglomerate threshold, thus indicating controlled access to the 'Cult Centre'; and it was approached via a staircase of representative character, fashioned of broad low steps and thereby designed for slow solemn, that is ceremonial, descent.³⁰ Wall frescoes in the immediate area of the entrance, though poorly preserved, further enhance its representative character.³¹

Descent from the main entrance down towards the courtyard on the first, upper terrace of the 'Cult Centre' which provided access to two of the cult buildings was effected over a long and at one point sharply turning ramp or corridor with a white stucco floor, the ramp/corridor being commonly understood as a representative passageway for ceremonial processions.³² From the courtyard on the first terrace, other corridors or passageways through upper-stories that were probably or at least possibly, as well as at least in part also decorated with wall frescoes, led further down to the two cult buildings and the courtyard on the lower terrace of the complex, and also to the so-called *Tsountas' House* with the associated

29 Cf. *supra* n. 13. In general and for convenience, since the published information on the excavation results in the 'Cult Centre' is so scattered, see in detail for the following Albers 1994:13–21 and refs., pls. 2–14; cf. the summarizing description by Kilian 1992:17–19.

30 Esp. Mylonas 1972:19, pl. 1; Albers 1994:15 and nn. 99–100, pls. 5, 7; see esp. fig. 3 here.

31 *Ibid.*:15 and n. 101; Kritseli-Providi 1982:19, 90f., fig. 1, pls. 27–28: Δ-1–3.

32 Albers 1994:16f., 122 and refs., pls. 4, 6–7: *Tsountaskorridor*. For the designations of the various buildings as used in the following, see *ibid.*:13f., pl. 5, table 2; cf. fig. 2 here.

courtyard.³³ The *Tsountas' House*, being of the Mycenaean 'Corridor House' type and constructed over the adjacent middle and lower terraces of the 'Cult Centre', was perhaps in partial function as well dedicated to cultic purposes.³⁴

With regard to the four definite cult buildings of the complex (figs. 4a–d, and see also figs. 2–3), although they do adhere to a certain basic concept as has been maintained in our earlier analysis, it is obvious that in detail they are all different.³⁵ Moreover, while H. Whittaker is generally right, in our opinion, to view Mycenaean sacred architecture in connection with domestic structures,³⁶ the design of each LH III B cult building at Mycenae is nevertheless apparently either more sophisticated than, or it significantly differs from, that of common houses: on the whole, each of the buildings is so far without a close parallel among either the other Mycenaean sacred or the profane architecture, and thus stands out as unique. To illustrate this we should only like to mention the representative long open façade of *Building Gamma* with its two low, i.e. again ceremonial, steps leading down into the main hall;³⁷ the wide main room of the *Megaron Building* with the low rectangular dais at its centre, the bent-axis entrance of the building and the basement section underneath the entrance room;³⁸ the staircase at one side in the main room of the *House of the Idols* leading to a religious store-room or possibly 'holy-of-holies' (?) at an upper level within the building, and the three pillars aligned off the long axis of the main room;³⁹ finally the peculiar arrangement of rooms in the *House of the Fresco*, the bent-axis entrance of the building, as well as

33 According to French (1981a:45), fragments of a procession fresco found in the fill of the *House of the Idols* (or 'Temple', as the entire building or its main room — 'Room with the Platforms/Room 18' — have varyingly been designated by the British excavators; cf. Albers 1994:table 2) may come from the *Megaron Building* or from a room above the *House of Idols*; cf. Albers 1994:18 and n. 129, Kilian 1992:17 n. 90, Whittaker 1997:20 and n. 68. The procession theme is *perhaps* a valid indicator that the fresco rather not ornated a proper room in one of the two cult buildings, but the corridor/passageway leading alongside the *Megaron Building* into an upper storey above the *House of Idols* (and further, via the supposed staircase 'K', down to the lower terrace of the 'Cult Centre': fig. 2 here).

34 To be concluded from the evidence collected in Albers 1994:17, 28–30 and refs., pls. 4, 6–7, 13; see accordingly Kilian 1992:18.

35 Architectural features of all Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts summarized in Albers 1994:10, 121–127 and fig. 1, table 4, Whittaker 1997:17–26. Again, in this and the next paragraph we for convenience do not repeat refs. to the scattered published information on the excavation results in the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' up to 1988, but refer to our analysis as well as to Whittaker 1997.

36 Whittaker 1997:120–38, 144, also 159, 162.

37 Albers 1994:17, 22–25 and n. 122, pls. 10–11, Whittaker 1997:8–31, 166–68.

38 Albers 1994:26f., pl. 12, Whittaker 1997:8–31, 168.

39 Albers 1994:31–36, pl. 14, Whittaker 1997:8–31, 168–70; see now Moore and Taylour 1999.

the unique fresco covering the wall above and to one side of the platform in the main room.⁴⁰

The point we mean to make regarding the differences in architecture and architectural decoration equally applies to the fixed installations, and—as we cannot elaborate on the installations here⁴¹—to the movable equipment that was recovered within the cult buildings.⁴² Thus, first the painted stucco *pinax* from *Building Gamma* depicting a so-called Shield Goddess with two venerating priestesses or adorants and a portable altar in front of the goddess, is a unique find likely somehow relating to the cult practised in that building.⁴³

In the further case of the *Megaron Building*, whereas the main room by the time of the building's final destruction appears to have been empty of movable equipment, the two basement rooms were filled with a conspicuous assemblage of objects linked to ivory-working, and also with a few objects of religious character.⁴⁴ As, however, O. Krzyszkowska has recently confirmed there is altogether no reliable evidence that ivory was actually worked, or that materials of a near-by ivory-workshop were stored, in the *Megaron Building* or at any other locality within the 'Cult Centre',⁴⁵ in consequence, the assemblage in the basement rooms of the *Megaron Building* is bound to reflect a ritual motivation of depositing precious, or at least undiscardable, materials of a prestigious craft in a religious context.⁴⁶

The *House of the Idols* is evidenced as a ritual complex of highly individual character by the well-known assemblage of large terracotta figures perhaps serving an apotropaic purpose (French's 'Type B'; *supra* n. 22), and further the terracotta

40 Albers 1994:37–47, pls. 7–8, 14a, Whittaker 1997:8–31, 170–172, Marinatos 1988, Rehak 1992, Tzedakis and Martlew 1999:191–193; see now Moore and Taylour forthcoming, with new account of the stratigraphy (according to Krzyszkowska 1997:147 n. 15), and Cameron *et al.* forthcoming.

41 Internal and external installations of all Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts summarized in Albers 1994:127–34, table 5; cf. Whittaker 1997:17–26.

42 Movable equipment of all Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts summarized according to functional groups in Albers 1994:135–149, tables 6–10.

43 *Ibid.*:23 and n. 153; e.g., Rehak 1984; good photograph in Demakopoulou 1988:189 (cat. nr. 163). A limestone plaque with a thick stucco coating from the newly discovered building complex at Ayios Konstantinos on Methana is said by the excavator to show traces of a painted figure-of-eight shield on one side, and thus to form a parallel to the so far unique find from Mycenae: see the paper by E. Konsolaki in this volume.

44 Albers 1994:26f. and n. 176, Krzyszkowska 1997:146f. and refs. For an apparent cultic nature of the pottery: Whittaker 1997:9 and n. 6; cf. Kilian 1992:17 and n. 90.

45 Krzyszkowska 1997:148f. and nn. 26, 28, Albers 1994:19f. ('Werkstattbereich 36'), 26f. (*Megaron Building*, basement rooms), 43–45 (*House of the Fresco*, back room 32/T5), and summary, *ibid.*:147f. and table 9—*contra* esp. French 1981a:45, 48 (as well as *ibid.*:125 [discussion of Hiller's paper]), who has been much quoted thereafter; e.g. Hägg 1992:30, 32, Whittaker 1997:23f.

figures of coiled snakes featuring the same general design as the human figures:⁴⁷ both kinds of figurative equipment are, again, confined to this particular cult building in which they were found not as isolated, single specimens but in considerable numbers, thus indicating that the cult practised in the building must have been specifically determined by the presence of those figures.

Finally, the adjacent *House of the Fresco* has yielded, apart from the unique fresco already mentioned, a human head as well as a lion figure of ivory which are each without a close parallel in the Mycenaean cultural sphere.⁴⁸ Also, the movable finds include a conspicuous number of large and smaller clay stirrup jars: stirrup jars and the handling of oil, in the main likely perfumed oil (?), must thus have fulfilled a significant requirement of the cult related to this particular building.⁴⁹ The further circumstance that in the small back religious store-room or possibly 'holy-of-holies' (?) of the building were, again, kept 'half-worked' items of ivory somehow matches this room of the *House of the Fresco* to the basement rooms of

46 Krzyszkowska 1997:148 n. 29. At least as regards the archaeological evidence that has come up so far on the mainland as well as the Cyclades, we more and more have the impression that it was *not* the case that Mycenaean workshop industry was to any extent (as in the Near Eastern model of temple economy) organized by and subject to the immediate control of religious functionaries—for Linear B see recently Antonelli 1995; but that business apparently constituted a supreme privilege of the palace (who by actual archaeological evidence also housed premises of prestigious workshop activities; Kilian 1984:41–43, fig. 4, 1987:24, 28, 32, figs. 2b, 3a–b, 5; also *e.g.*, Carlier 1996.) Instead, industrial production and workshop areas, among other activities and localities in Mycenaean settlements, were likely believed to depend to a high degree on divine protection, as can be deduced from the placing of religious items, esp. 'idols', at work places *etc.*: K. Kilian, quoted in Albers 1994:9 and n. 61. Thus, it can be hypothesized that workshop items—utensils, *e.g.* moulds, as well as raw or 'partly-worked' materials or finished products, or even irrecyclable things as evidenced at Mycenae (Krzyszkowska 1997:148)—were out of a *ritual* motivation also taken/sent into the sanctuaries, namely to further, and perhaps most efficiently, warrant divine protection of the craft (regularly or perhaps on certain occasions, *e.g.*, the need for a craftsman to accomplish an exceptionally ambitious task of manufacturing, or to make a thankful offering after having succeeded). To account, again, for the presence of workshop items in the assemblages only of some cult buildings and not in others, it could be surmised that the respective cult buildings served as abode or otherwise major cult place of a deity or aspect of a deity believed to be specifically in charge of the protection of a certain or several crafts. Further, to account for the ivory things of little practical use—left-overs and spoilt pieces—occurring in the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' together with products of practical, artistic or ideological value, such items could have gained their own religious meaning by being cultically offered with the specific aim to seek protection from failure in the manufacture, or something like that (all suggested explanations are, of course, purely hypothetical).

47 Albers 1994:32–36 and refs., Moore 1988; good photograph of one snake figure in Demakopoulou 1988:192f. cat. nr. 166; see now Moore and Tylour 1999.

48 Albers 1994:41 and nn. 257–258; Krzyszkowska 1997:147 and n. 16; good photographs in Demakopoulou 1988:70f. cat. nr. 2, and Tzedakis and Martlew 1999:191, 195, 203f. cat. nrs. 204–5. In general, see for the movable equipment in the *House of the Fresco* Albers 1994:41–47; see now Moore and Tylour forthcoming.

the *Megaron Building*—so this would be a similar aspect of the find assemblages in two buildings of the ‘Cult Centre’ which otherwise appear profoundly different.⁵⁰

We cannot deal here any further with the special features displayed by the ‘Cult Centre of Mycenae’,⁵¹ but should like to state in summary that the complex in its entirety apparently reflects an intricate organization of ritual space: namely, a deliberate arrangement of buildings and open areas designed and furnished according to differentiated cult function, and thus religious meaning. In the light of its material remains, the public communal cult practised in that special precinct at Mycenae during the LH III B period can therefore not be conceived as having been homogenous. Instead, as has been observed by others, it needs to be concluded from the evidence available that the cults either of different deities or perhaps rather of fundamentally different aspects of a most important deity, then possibly the *potnia* of the Linear B tablets, were represented in the complex, each with its own cult building and arranged side by side or perhaps even in a hierarchical order.⁵² In the latter case of a (at least not from the outset entirely unlikely) hierarchical order it could, again, be surmised that the higher ranking cults were located on the upper terrace which was reached first from the main entrance of the complex via the processional ramp, and the lower ranking cults could have been located on the lower terrace—but this would evidently be mere speculation.⁵³

All in all, we should thus like to maintain, first, that the LH III B cultic precinct at Mycenae was rightly given its designation by one of its excavators, G. E. Mylonas, in 1972:⁵⁴ as to the religious and social significance of the complex we apparently have before us on the western slope of the citadel, deliberately *separated from* but in function intimately *linked to* the palace on the acropolis—we shall

49 Albers 1994:41–47, with detailed comment *contra* the proposal that perfumed oil was actually produced in the *House of the Fresco*, and summary *ibid.*:147f. However, the common scholarly attribution of stirrup jars to the storage and handling of oil appears now quite questionable, as three stirrup jars together with various other vessels from the *House of the Fresco* had evidently contained *wine* (we thank E.B. French for pers. comm.): Tzedakis and Martlew 1999:152f., 189, 196, cat. nrs. 134–135, 180; and *ibid.*:128–135, 154f., 157, 187–205, cat. nrs. 112–118, 120, 133, 136–38, 140, 178, 181–208, for further vessels and their contents as well as other finds mainly from the same building, but also from the *House of the Idols* and other areas of the ‘Cult Centre’. Future analyses in the course of the project presented by Tzedakis and Martlew, *cf. op. cit.*:23, esp. also of stirrup jars ought therefore prove instructive.

50 Krzyszkowska 1997:147f. and refs., and *cf. supra* nn. 45–46.

51 Besides many more aspects adherent to the individual buildings and adjacent courtyards, the complex of the so-called ‘South West Quarter’ needs to be considered as having been linked in space and function to the ‘Cult Centre’: Albers 1994:48f. and refs., pl. 15; *cf.* Kilian 1992:18 (Kilian’s summarizing statement, *ibid.*:17, as to the ‘Vielfalt in den einzelnen Kultarealen’ of the ‘Cult Centre’ is quoted in full *infra* n. 59).

52 Boulotis 1987:153 n. 45; earlier and more cautiously, Kilian 1981a:56 (*cf.* Albers 1994:141). Kilian later however attempted a precise differentiation in terms of religious function (1992:18–20).

come back to this immediately—the *official cult centre* of the LH III B settlement of Mycenae in its entirety. Furthermore, we here see the need to expand the conception of the ‘Cult Centre of Mycenae’ and put it within the Argive regional frame: no other settlement in the Argolid has yielded evidence even approximately of the kind, namely of a built area for public communal cult that is to a high degree spatially and functionally differentiated, neither in the contemporary LH III B nor in the subsequent III C period after the destruction of the palaces. Thus, while there is always the uneasiness for the archaeologist that a future discovery might contradict his respectively her reasoning we, as the ultimate conclusion from the statements above, propose that the LH III B cultic complex at Mycenae constituted not only the central area of public communal cult in the context of that settlement itself, *but the cultic centre of the entire region of the Argolid*.⁵⁵

A major socio-political inference follows in our view inevitably from what we have argued so far: namely to identify Mycenae as a *regional* cult centre, *i.e.* as the centre of religion and cult in the LH III B Argolid, most plausibly requires us to perceive the citadel also as *the socio-political centre* of the region at the latest by that time.

The ‘Cult Centre’ is situated among other building complexes in the western part of the citadel which in function were probably all closely linked to the palace administration. The same general area further houses Shaft Grave Circle A which is commonly viewed as a locality designed in LH III B for ancestor cult.⁵⁶ The

53 (As to a potential hierarchical order, we have here been unable to trace the relevant ref. which we are sure exists.) A related approach is the proposed identification of genuine ‘double sanctuaries’ within the ‘Cult Centre of Mycenae’ (as well as at Phylakopi); however, we do not see supporting evidence for that: Albers 1994:7, 121f. and refs. in nn. 48–49. The most plausible, hence, appears to us the approach by Kilian (1992:19f.): ‘Eine Wertigkeit in Bauform, fester Ausstattung ist ablesbar, zu der die Anordnung an möglichen Prozessionswegen hinzukommt. Die Wahl von Freskenthemen wie die Altarformen scheinen spezifisch für *bestimmte Stationen des Kultes* bzw. für ihre jeweilige Funktion zu sein ... zusammen mit dem architektonischen Rahmen erlaubt das Spektrum der Paraphernalia eine weitere *Differenzierung der Kultbauten*’ (our emphases).

54 Mylonas 1972:27f. (cf. 38).

55 From what we argue in this present paper, together with our perception of Mycenaean public communal cult now explained in detail in Albers 2001b, we by using the term ‘cult centre’ do not, however, mean to imply that the particular location served to any substantial extent for large communal *gatherings* during religious ceremonies. Instead, a ‘cult centre’ in our perception and for later Mycenaean times is a built sanctuary serving public communal cult where the cult/cults of one or more deities had their *central premises*, in the sense that the somehow architecturally elaborated abode of a deity or abodes of various deities venerated ‘officially’ was/were located in the particular setting. Thus, the cult centre formed the holiest place connected with the cult of the respective deity or deities, in that the deity/deities was/were believed to actually reside—Whittaker 1997:144—or, at least, to be accessible for ultimate contact by the human sphere in the particular location. In short, the cult centre comprised the seat of one or more cults of one or more deities; cf. the statement by Wright 1994:75f. (quoted also *infra* n. 93).

access to the 'Cult Centre' by its main entrance reflects, as mentioned, a representative ceremonial approach via a major road system, this road system (fig. 1) ensuring most probably direct traffic in between the 'Grand Staircase' of the palace, on one hand, and the 'Cult Centre' as well as the main gate of the fortified citadel, namely the 'Lion Gate', with the adjacent area for ancestor cult, on the other hand.⁵⁷

That the palace, hence, was in direct control of the main citadel gate as well as of the area reserved for ancestor cult has been argued by others and is easily conceivable, in the light of what is known about the overall dominating role of the Mycenaean ruler's authority and organization of his palatial system.⁵⁸ With the 'Cult Centre' being located in the same general area of the citadel, and being integrated into the same major communication system, we see no reason whatsoever why this should not lead to a similar conclusion: namely that the palace/*wanax* was also in immediate control of the central cult area of the citadel.⁵⁹ His thereby being, again, in ultimate charge of the *regional* cult centre as argued above, strongly implies that the ruler of Mycenae with his palace administration was at the very top of the socio-political hierarchy, and that his citadel consequently was at the top of the settlement hierarchy within the LH III B Argolid.

Only a selection of other material aspects shall be mentioned that are each well-known and in our view together point to the same conclusion as regards a leading socio-political role of Mycenae: the in all respects extremely well-chosen, dominant but equally protected location of the site at the northern entrance to the Argolid;⁶⁰ the concentration (seen diachronically) in a unique number at Mycenae of the largest and most elaborate tholos tombs of the region;⁶¹ (*ditto*) the as well unique clustering of chamber tomb necropoleis around Mycenae, pointing to 'suburbs' sprung up in the immediate vicinity of the regional centre or, at least, to numerous villages directly related to Mycenae and ensuring the centre's agricultur-

56 More recently *e.g.*, Kilian 1988a:148, 1992:15, Wright 1994:59; *cf.* also Wright 1987:180–182, Stavrianopoulou 1995:432: 'Die religiöse Ideologie des Königtums manifestiert sich in der Verknüpfung von Ahnenkult mit dem Palast. Bei der Verehrung der Ahnen, d.h. der verstorbenen Mitglieder und Gründer der Dynastie, handelte es sich nämlich auch um eine Art von Vergöttlichung, die darüber hinaus dem Regierenden indirekt eine zusätzliche Legitimation verleiht und zu der Erhaltung des politischen Systems beiträgt.'

57 Albers 1994:14f., pl. 2; *cf.* the plan in Mylonas 1981:14f. For the close connection of the 'Cult Centre' to the palace, *e.g.* Kilian 1992:15: '... ist nicht zu verkennen, wie die architektonischen Organisationsprinzipien auf den Kern der Palastanlage gerichtet sind'; and see below.

58 *E.g.* (summarizing) Kilian 1987:32f., 1988b:291–302 and refs. ('*wanax* ideology'); for the 'Lion Gate', road-system, masonry, as well as 'hearth-*wanax* ideology', see esp. Wright 1994:51–54, 59f., ill. 3.6–3.7., and 1987:177–183. For the picture of a next-to-totalitarian societal system as evidenced by the Linear B texts, see conveniently Stavrianopoulou 1995:423–25 and refs.; see also Deger-Jalkotzy 1996, as to the character and failure of the system.

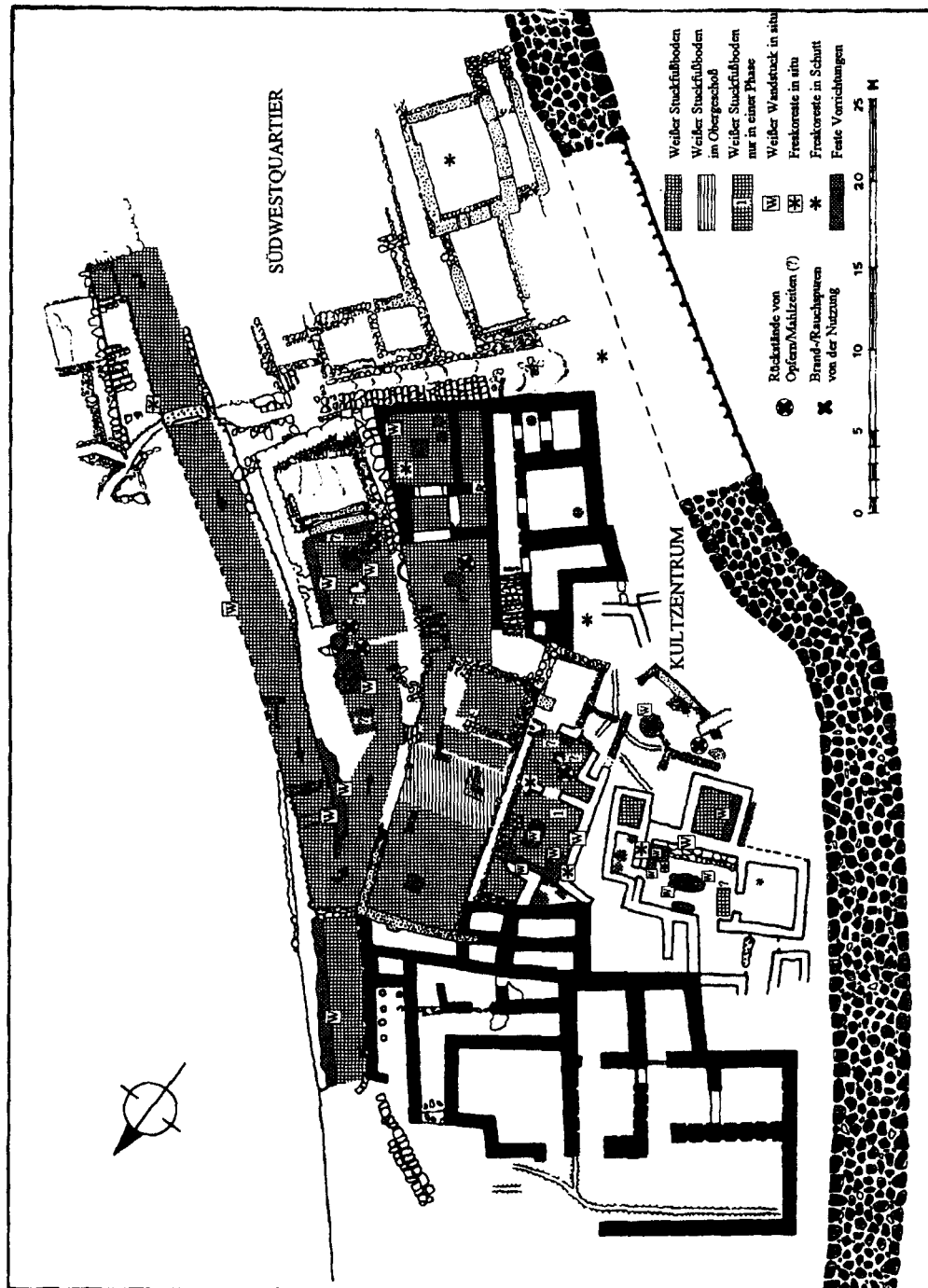


Fig. 3: The 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' (general plan from the Greek excavations): details of architectural design and adornment; fixed installations; organic remains from the cult (from Albers 1994:pl. 7.)

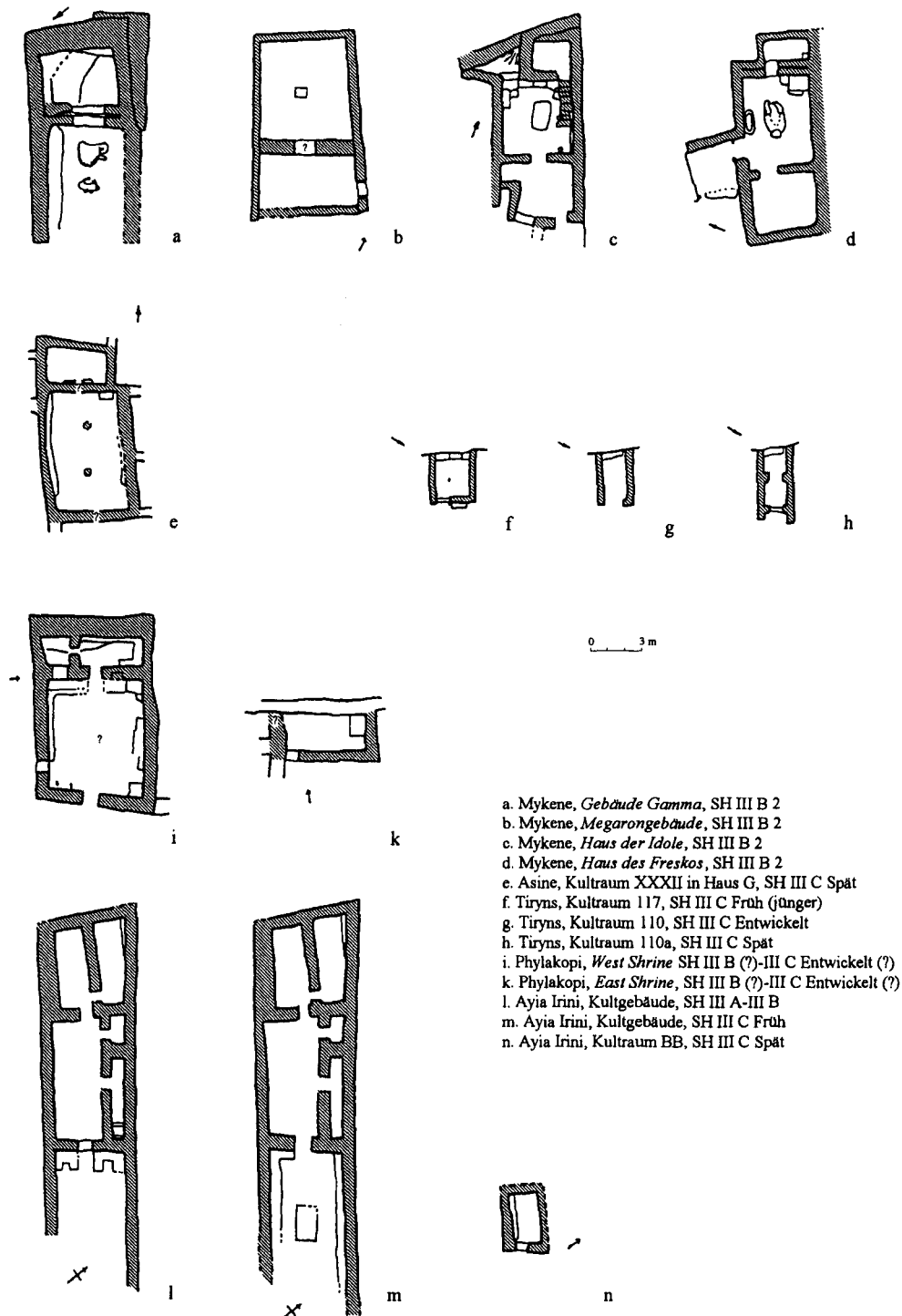


Fig. 4: Cult buildings in Late Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries, main building phases only; a–d illustrate the different buildings in the ‘Cult Centre of Mycenae’ (from Albers 1994:123 fig. 1.)

al wealth;⁶² the circumstance that the design and dimensions as well as the building material of the 'Lion Gate' were copied in one of the gates at Tiryns, indicating a leading role of Mycenae also in architectural fashion;⁶³ and other aspects (*cf. infra* n. 65).

Thus—if we are not mistaken—the often adduced perception of Mycenae as a *primus inter pares* in relation to the other Argive palatial sites⁶⁴ factually appears not quite to fit the picture. Rather, on the basis of the re-evaluation of the 'Cult Centre' as opposed to the other, contemporary or later Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts of the Argolid, Mycenae in our view needs to be re-evaluated as playing the part of a true *primus* (*viz. a prima*) on the regional level, thereby standing out *from*, and at the same time constituting the model site

59 Kilian 1992:17: 'Die Verflechtung mit dem Palastsystem einerseits wie auch eine Vielfalt in den einzelnen Kultarealen wird am Südhang des Burgberges von Mykene, im sog. Kultzentrum deutlich: hier seien besonders ausgeführt die Unterschiede in Ausstattung und architektonischem Rahmen, wie feste Einrichtungen, Bänke, Herde, Altäre, dann Freskendarstellungen, deren Themen in Räumen des Palastes wiederkehren, ferner Bewegliches wie Paraphernalia, Anteile von Tieropfern, bestimmte Geschirrsätze, die bei Kultaktivitäten zum Einsatz kommen. Nach dem derzeitigen Publikationsstand setzt sich das Kultzentrum von Mykene zusammen aus: Gräberrund, sowie Rampenhaus, das in den Prozessionsweg hinauf zur Großen Südtreppe am Palast überleitet. Dieser Weg erschließt die stucküberzogene Platzanlage vor dem sog. Tsountas-Heiligtum, Halle mit Raum Γ ...'; and *ibid.*:20, *contra* the vision of a cult centre largely independent from the *wanax*, arguing esp. from the 'statusbezogenen Bildthemen' in the *House of the Fresco* and the route for processions within the citadel; more recently Hägg 1995:387–390; Whitaker 1997:155f. For the nature of the *wanax* primarily as a religious figure, e.g. Palaima 1995:131–134 and refs.; Stavrianopoulou 1995:423–433 and refs. 'Dirigisme' of the (mainland) palatial administration on the cult: Hiller 1981:95f., 116f., 122. We also wish to draw attention here to the most important observation by T. G. Palaima, in the general discussion on 'rulership and polity', in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995:382, as to 'a huge amount of stuff that goes on even at the palace proper that never gets recorded': this should, then, certainly account also for the natural supremacy of the Mycenaean palace in the running of the public communal sanctuary.

60 *Cf.* the description of the setting by Wace 1964:3–6. On entering the Argolid from the north, the citadel remains invisible even until one reaches the last of the range of foothills (controlled without doubt by posts); and then makes her sudden appearance rising from the plain in full glory.

61 Distribution map in Mee and Cavanagh 1990:239 fig. 9; also e.g., Mee and Cavanagh 1984:50–53, Wright 1987, Pelon 1990.

62 Distribution map in Mee and Cavanagh 1990:232 fig. 3.

63 Müller 1930:70–73, Küpper 1996:41–46, Wright 1987:183, adducing further in this context the possible ornamental gate on the Larissa at Argos (however, see for the questionable evidence of the gate Eder 1998:46 and n. 102): '... Perhaps the public symbolism employed at Mycenae was part of a program of pronouncing the consolidation of power of her rulers over the general region of the Argolid. In such an instance, admittedly very hypothetical, the distribution of this form of power symbolism could be compared in general way to the use of monumental sculpture adorning the gates of Hittite centers such as Bogazköy and Alaja Hüyük.' Our present argument regarding the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' is definitely meant to make this statement by Wright less hypothetical.

for, the other Argive citadels at least by the time of LH III B.⁶⁵ The factors again, which at some stage in the history of development of the Mycenaean palatial society led to the dominant role of the rulership at Mycenae and then kept it up until the end of the palatial period, cannot be traced.⁶⁶ Not at least by *virtue* of her being in command of the regional cult centre, however, Mycenae as we see her was rather at the very socio-political and hence cultural-historical top in the Argolid. Or perhaps more likely, the two phenomena of Mycenae's ascent to the top and the consolidation of the regional cult centre at the site, then conceivably most immanently to the process, went together.⁶⁷

64 E.g. more recently, Kilian 1987:33: '... kleinere Herrschaftsbereiche während der späten Palastzeit ..., unter denen Mykene ... wohl die Rolle eines *primus inter pares* zukam'; Kilian 1988a:136; Kilian 1988b:296: '... a plurality of kingdoms rather than a single one', and map in fig. 3: Argos, Mycenae, Tiryns, and Midea (and further also Nauplia) equally signatred as 'centre', in accordance with the common view of four (or five) major Mycenaean palatial residences co-existing within extremely short distance from each other in the Argolid, guarding their territories by 'border fortresses' (Kilian 1987:33), and being of a certain independence from each other as well as in relation to Mycenae; and *cf.* the overview of scholarly hypotheses as to site hierarchy in Darcque 1998:110f. For the actual archaeological evidence at Argos which is without doubt obstructed or wrecked to the utmost by the ancient and modern re-occupation, see Eder 1998:45–49 and refs.

65 A status of Mycenae as model citadel could esp. account also for the very existence and the by Mycenaean standards and now as then visible (except at Argos, *supra* n. 64)—hardly surpassable strength of the fortifications of all the Argive major citadels: in our view, these served not in the first place as defensive measures of acute necessity due to severe threats from outside, but constituted a means of self-symbolism towards the commoners as well as of ostentatious competition between the respective *wanakes*—in military fashion, strategic *raffinesse*, and command of (most probably non-voluntary) work forces to execute ambitious palatial building programs; *cf.* accordingly Wright 1994:51. The actual requirements of defense were, instead, probably only intended to be met with effectively in the case of true danger, *in so far as the entire region was concerned*: that is, as emphasized most recently by Darcque (1998:111), the topographical arrangement of major and minor citadels in the Argolid reflects a sophisticated, well-planned system of strongholds set up in all the relevant strategic locations which controlled access to the region, thus warranting (presumably) utmost protection. Even the installation of a technologically ambitious device to secure water supply in the case of siege should reflect a regional rather than local measure to meet an actual increased need for defense: namely the mere circumstance that the well-known subterranean cisterns at Mycenae and Tiryns (*cf.* Küpper 1996:46f. and refs.) were built simultaneously in LH III B2 at two Argive citadels and according to a similar scheme (covered passages from inside the citadel through the fortification wall and down to a source of underground water outside the wall), should be taken as indicating that the measures ultimately derived from a one and only seat of central planning, that is Mycenae. In the Argolid the same could then account also for the construction of the fortification walls, in terms of development of engineering abilities, mechanical equipment, and knowledge of principles of statics: it is, in our estimation, highly likely that such work of specialists—see Küpper 1996—was organized, constantly refined, and kept available for demand on the regional, not local level, and that it thus operated under the ultimate supervision of the regional centre.

Cult centres of the Cycladic region

It is time to leave the Argolid and turn to the one other region which has so far produced substantial evidence of Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts, namely the Cycladic islands. Of the two relevant Cycladic sites, the settlement at Ayia Irini on Keos has, in our view, produced the earliest architecturally independent cult building of the entire Aegean region: the so-called Temple⁶⁸ was established already in MH times, and subsequently saw a definite floruit in LH II/LM I B when the unique nearly life-size terracotta statues were in use in the building; the iconography of the statues reflecting a strong—if, perhaps, not dominating—Minoan influence as is overall evident for Ayia Irini by that period.⁶⁹ With regard, however, to the MH origins of the Temple⁷⁰ little can be said

66 For the process, but not unquestionably the resulting pattern of Mycenaean political forces, see e.g. Wright 1995a:71–75. Cf. Kopcke 1995, Voutsaki 1995, Wright 1995b, Thomas 1995. Recent statements as to a socio-political leadership of Mycenae in the Argolid have also been made by Eder (1998:25f., cf. 32) and—after critical assessment in terms of methodology—Darcque (1998:111f.). A major problem adherent to our line of argument constituting the main argument of this paper is, as implied by Eder and Darcque, evidently the question what the relationship could have been between the at least four major palatial sites in the Argolid, respectively their rulers, in the case that they, at least in the later palatial period, were not the seats of rulership of independent Mycenaean *wanakes* over independent territories and of an equal status. And linked to that problem: the question why more than one palatial site existed at all in the Argolid, when there was at Mycenae an unequivocal central seat of rulership controlling the entire Argive region (equivalent to the single ruler's residence at Pylos). In order to refer to that important issue in a more prominent place of the text here, we include below an addendum by which we wish to explain more specifically our alternative hypotheses in regard of the named problem.

67 We are not quite sure whether we in this respect correctly adduce the statement by Wright (in Dabney and Wright 1990:52): 'Perhaps these developments at Mycenae during the LH III B period signal the convergence of ideology and political centralization such that the establishment of the cult center there was part of the final process of consolidating power in the hands of a single ruler.' What does Wright mean: a single *local* ruler (i.e. over Mycenae), or a single *regional* ruler (i.e. over the Argolid), or even a single *Mycenaean* ruler? (for our opposition, otherwise, to Wright's account regarding the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae', *loc. cit.* and esp. in his later contribution, cf. *supra* n. 28). Further, see in the above respect Wright 1994:58: 'Such an argument ... describes a cult institution of power and authority that reinforces the stability of the state, but it also demonstrates the priority of religion in the organization of the seat of power. Again this distinction needs emphasis since it is common in anthropology to view religion and ideology only as tools of state power'; also *ibid.*:59: '... the supernatural force that *supports* human authority' (our emphasis); Stavrianopoulou 1995:433: religion as 'Macht der Vermittlung zwischen den höchsten und den niedrigsten Schichten einer Gesellschaft'.

68 Esp. Caskey 1981, 1984, 1998, Albers 1994:116–119 and refs. in n. 655, 123 figs. 11–n, pls. 48–53, tables 4–10, Whittaker 1997:139–142. For the final excavation report in preparation cf. recently Caskey 1998:123 n. 1.

69 E.g. Caskey 1986:37f. and refs.; cf. Caskey 1998:128. In general for the 'town' at Ayia Irini and its significance, see recently Schofield 1998.

70 See now the preliminary synthesis by Caskey 1998:124–126.

on the basis of the evidence that is preserved, respectively has been published so far: namely, the design of the building and the remains of the presumed earliest cultic activities related to it are not known through unambiguous contextual observation. Thus, while the early founding of the building is undisputable the structure can, at present, not serve in any extent to trace aspects of the Middle Bronze Age cult in the Cycladic region and consider such as roots of the later, Mycenaean cult on the islands and the mainland.⁷¹

For the 'Minoan' phase of the *Temple*, the at least 32 or even up to 50 or more female terracotta statues that were then in use in the building ought to clearly indicate its cultic function by that time.⁷² However, with reservation as to the final excavation report in progress, it is far from clear what the specific character of the cult activities related to the building during the period was. In particular—apart from that they were perhaps even, in one way or the other, grouped in a second storey of the building—the iconography of the statues as well as the extraordinary large number in which they were found do not make an interpretation as figures of one or several goddesses very likely. Instead, most scholars are inclined to see in the statues priestesses or adorants depicted in veneration of an unknown kind;⁷³ and again there is at present no contextual observation, respectively documentation, of the overall material manifestation of the building and the cult practised in it during the LH II/LM I B period.

With regard to the evidence under discussion here, the Ayia Irini structure proves of particular significance in that it was revived as a cultic building, now of Mycenaean design, in the LH III A period (figs. 4l–m):⁷⁴ it thus constitutes the only Mycenaean public communal sanctuary in settlement contexts known so far which has yielded unambiguous evidence of a LH III A, precisely III A1, occupation phase, namely an actual floor level clearly dating from the period has been

71 Due to the circumstances of preservation/excavation—though observations as to platforms, benches and a hearth *are* conspicuous; *ibid.*:124f.—there is even as yet no absolute certainty that the *Temple* was dedicated to cult purposes during MH times; it *could* originally have been erected as a profane structure, to be reconstructed and modified into a cult building only by the later, 'Minoan' period of Ayia Irini.

72 Caskey 1986, 1998:126 (briefly).

73 Detailed discussion, *e.g.*, in Caskey 1986:35–43 and refs.; see also the interpretation by Dürk 1996. Whittaker (1997:140f., 150–152) assumes that the Kean statues functioned in a way—in her view as votaries—similar to the later Mycenaean large female figures (*i.e.* of French's 'Type A', *supra* n. 22), as occur in the public communal sanctuaries at Mycenae, Phylakopi, Tiryns, and Asine. Since we, however, see in the Mycenaean 'Type A' female figures depictions of one or several goddesses we would not agree with the equation proposed by Whittaker: Albers 1994:136–138; *cf. e.g.* Kilian 1992:21.

74 Detailed compilation from the various preliminary reports of the evidence of the Mycenaean periods of use: Albers 1994 (*supra* n. 67); see now the preliminary synthesis by Caskey (1998:126f.).

observed. The cultic use of the building continues, with several reconstructions and modifications, in LH III B as well as III C and through to the latest phase III C Late of the Mycenaean era. By that time, though (at least as to our understanding so far), the original building was given up and a small single cult room BB was erected on top of the remains of its predecessor (fig. 4n), room BB relating chronologically to the latest of the successive III C cult rooms at Tiryns as well as to the late sanctuary at Asine.⁷⁵

The layout of the Ayia Irini settlement, and thus the situation of the *Temple* in relation to the built-up area, during the time-span from LH III A to III C are not well known.⁷⁶ Also, the front part of the building had eroded away so that neither the specific access to the building nor the extent of the settlement towards the sea could be established. However, the cult building was probably always located relatively close to the sea which, then in place of an enclosing wall, likely constituted the boundary of the settlement at that side. All in all, the situation of the LH III A to III C public communal sanctuary at Ayia Irini thus appears compatible with what has been observed for the Argolid; Ayia Irini being, if not a palatial, at least *the* central site on the island as well during the Mycenaean period, and being probably also of regional significance beyond the restricted Kean hinterland.

Phylakopi on Melos by Mycenaean times saw the establishment of a palace with a megaron of mainland design in the centre of the settlement, as well as of a public communal sanctuary adjacent to, and partially built in, the line of the renewed fortification which surrounds the entire south side of the settlement towards the Melian hinterland.⁷⁷ A major road system runs in between the megaron, on one hand, and the sanctuary as well as the main gate of the fortified settlement, on the other hand,⁷⁸ and the situation of the sanctuary within the settlement compares altogether well with the Argive pattern.

75 A special point of interest would also be that the later of the two successive phases in which room BB at Ayia Irini was in use already dates to the Protogeometric period (refs. in Albers 1994:215 n. 657): in that case, namely, this particular small cult room would have seen continuity in the use of one and the same building between the latest phase of the Bronze and the earliest phase of the Iron Age. *However*, the so far commonly accepted, early chronological assignment of room BB to the LH III C Late pottery phase has now been refuted by Caskey (1998:127 and n. 16)!!

76 Cf. Albers 1994:216 n. 659.

77 For refs. regarding the palace and megaron as uncovered during the first period of British excavations in 1896–99, see *ibid.*:179 n. 326. For the sanctuary see esp. Renfrew 1985; also Renfrew 1981, Albers 1994:53–103, 123 figs. 1i–k, pls. 20–34, tables 3–10, Whittaker 1997:8–31, 173–179, Kilian 1992:22, and esp. 1990. Having made the attempt to analyse—with extensive refs. to Renfrew 1985—the complicated stratigraphical situation within the sanctuary as documented in the final excavation report, we shall for convenience refer in the following mostly to our study.

78 Albers 1994:53f. and refs., pl. 20b.

As argued in our detailed analysis of the complex, we do not see the early date of foundation of the sanctuary in LH III A2, as maintained by the excavator, proven since no actual floor level clearly dating from a III A2 or even a III B period of use has been observed:⁷⁹ thus being perhaps established only in a later part of LH III B the sanctuary, with several severe modifications in relation to its original layout, continued in use through III C Early and probably into III C Middle. Unfortunately again, the exact date of the destruction of the local central megaron is unknown so that no correlation can be drawn between, precisely, the palace's latest period of use and the major destruction and subsequent revival of the sanctuary.⁸⁰ However, the sanctuary's major 'collapse', as it was labelled by the excavator and apparently occurring at some stage during the LH III C Early pottery phase, clearly resulted in the giving up of one part of the so-called *West Shrine* which constitutes the main cult building (fig. 4i); the subsequent revival of the cult took place within a much altered, somehow reduced as well as irregular layout of the *West Shrine* and the entire precinct.⁸¹

At least at some stage during its altogether complicated architectural development,⁸² the sanctuary of Phylakopi clearly forms a more complex structural ensemble within the immediate settlement area reserved for public communal cult. As a secondary building measure, to the original *West Shrine* was then added another structure, the so-called *East Shrine*,⁸³ which is erected against part of the entrance façade of the *West Shrine* as well as on a higher level. The *East Shrine* (fig. 4k) being a small single room with a bent-axis entrance and lacking a clear-cut fixed installation in its later periods of use, as well as any movable equipment that points to an individual cultic character of the room, may thus not to be perceived as a cult building by its own right, but rather an annex to the main building serving requirements of one and the same cult. Also, in view of the ambiguous stratigraphical conditions within the entire complex, the possibility cannot even *quite* be ruled out that the construction of the *East Shrine* was, in fact, to make up for the loss of the southern part of the *West Shrine*'s main room in consequence of the severe destruction of that building (?).

79 *Ibid.*:90 and refs.

80 Renfrew 1985:401, *cf.* also 438.

81 In detail Albers 1994:69, with preceding stratigraphical analysis *ibid.*:63–68, 74–78 for the main room, 79–85 for the small back rooms A and B of the *West Shrine*, whose stratigraphical sequence cannot at all unequivocally be correlated with that of the main room, and pls. 21, 23, 33–34.

82 Which we can not conceivably deal with in any detail here; see esp. the summary *ibid.*:90–103, including an evaluation of the excavator's main hypotheses in relation to the actual evidence, and see also *ibid.*:55–62 for the street and courtyard.

83 *Ibid.*:86–93, 98–102, pls. 23, 33a, table 4.

Anyhow, all in all the complex does hence not appear, on one hand, to a degree internally divided that two separate cult buildings actually co-existed side by side or in a hierarchical order. On the other hand it is clear from the layout, including a passageway likely serving for ceremonial, *i.e.* processional approach towards the *West Shrine*, as well as several subsidiary rooms probably related in function to the cult buildings,⁸⁴ that the public communal sanctuary at Phylakopi formed a spatially and functionally differentiated precinct. Phylakopi again being a palatial site and therefore of major importance most probably not only in the restricted Melian island context, but in relation to a wider geographical area within the Cycladic region, to us thus makes the conclusion very likely that also the sanctuary constituted not only the main area of public communal cult of that settlement itself, but the cult centre of a greater region:⁸⁵ viewing the evidence from the site in its entirety, we therefore duly propose to identify Phylakopi as another regional cult centre within at least the more southern sphere of the Cycladic islands; and hence as an equal of, or at least a sound comparison to, the regional cult centre of the Argolid constituted by Mycenae as we have argued.⁸⁶

Conclusions

The re-evaluation of the presently known Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts, and the resulting proposed recognition of regional cult centres located at socio-politically leading sites in the various Mycenaean regions may, to some extent and in our view, supply us with means of explanation. *In the case*, namely, that Mycenaean public communal cult in settlements took place on the regional level and was determined by individual cult centres located

84 *Ibid.*:54–62, 102f., pls. 21, 23. The limited area covered by the recent excavations makes it, however, difficult to determine precisely: the borders of the cultic complex; how the passageway providing access to the complex was connected to the main road system of the settlement; the layout of the subsidiary rooms and their linkage by passageways to the cult buildings.

85 Another indicator for this ought to be seen in the two metal statuettes of the Levantine ‘Smiting-god’ or ‘Reshef’ type, as well as the face of gold sheet perhaps originally adorning a similar figure, which were actually found *in the sanctuary*: Renfrew 1985:302–310, 381, figs. 8.2–8.4, pls. 59a, 67–70; cf. Albers 1994:89, 99–103, 142–145, tables 3, 6. The minimum explanation for the occurrence of those objects in the particular find contexts should be, that one or several persons took them into the sanctuary who had direct or indirect access to a cultural sphere far distant from Phylakopi, or had relations to people with such access to foreign lands; or who was/were at least in the position to acquire from some source foreign items of material and/or ideological value. All in all, it needs to be pointed out here that the archaeological evidence of the Phylakopi sanctuary is strikingly rich in objects ultimately derived from foreign lands: (summarizing) *ibid.*:145–147 and table 8.

86 Cf. (in our sense here) Wright 1994:61: ‘... the Cult Centres vary among themselves in degrees of complexity; some, such as those at Mycenae and Phylakopi, show evidence of a constellation of different cults probably located in different shrines.’

at the leading palatial site or other leading site of the respective region this could explain, first and foremost, the altogether meagre evidence.⁸⁷

We *do* believe that the initially mentioned dearth of evidence in other nucleus regions of the Mycenaean sphere is, above all, due to find circumstances and extent of archaeological investigation. That means on one hand, that future discoveries should generally be possible and likely.⁸⁸ On the other hand it should be surmised that at known important Mycenaean sites which have been built over in the course of ancient and/or modern re-occupation, like *e.g.* Athens and Thebes, such sanctuaries existed but were destroyed by, or are hidden underneath, the later, ancient or modern constructions.

However, if we should be correct the possible future discoveries in other regions, in case they came up to the scale of the LH III B 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' or the sanctuary of Phylakopi at its peak, ought on principle be settled in the context of socio-politically leading sites of those regions, the sanctuaries themselves constituting regional cult centres. As well, sanctuaries to be discovered of that category ought conceivably belong to the final palatial period at the latest or, more generally (esp. in view of Phylakopi), to an era before the destruction of the local Mycenaean palace (or other premises of central control) and hence break-down of its all-authoritative administrative system. The number, however, not only of palatial or generally central sites but of *regionally leading* sites is to have been conceivably small, that is there ought have been one leading site per region. We by no means intend to get into the question where to draw the boundaries between socio-politically genuine Mycenaean regions—but it is to us somehow no surprise that only a few Mycenaean sanctuaries of the category of cult centres, namely the ones at Mycenae and Phylakopi (and perhaps Ayia Irini), have been discovered so far. And against this background, future observations of the kind may perhaps only come true by the mere coincidence of excavation in the right settlement areas, as has been the case so far, or otherwise through purposeful and well-planned investigation.

For another case, future discoveries of Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts may happen at minor sites, respectively at subordinate palatial sites as well as in postpalatial, LH III C chronological contexts. The archaeological evidence of such sanctuaries should then, theoretically, amount only to the simpler scale that is evident in the respective LH III C revival phase of the former regional cult centre at Mycenae, Phylakopi and perhaps Ayia Irini, as

87 As another explanation, the assumption has often been put forward that the settings of Bronze Age Aegean, and hence also Mycenaean, cultic observances were rather determined by open cult places/nature sanctuaries leaving few, if any, archaeological traces: *e.g.*, Hägg 1993:188; however, cf. the view of Kilian (*supra* n. 6).

88 Cf. the corresponding statement by Whittaker 1997:13f.

well as in III B and/or III C at the subordinate sites of Tiryns and Asine.⁸⁹ The limited spatial extent and 'insignificant' design of sanctuaries of that category—which is probably responsible that not more of them have been discovered so far, but future findings are in this case very likely—we would in view of what has been argued above then explain as follows: in the LH III B period those minor sanctuaries likely adhered to the model of the sanctuaries at the regionally leading sites, namely of the regional cult centres, only up to a pattern which can be perceived as being basic to Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts. Otherwise, their function was confined to the limited scale of public communal cult executed on a purely local level at the respective sites. Cultic events *beyond* the local scale, namely celebrations and festivities for the worship of major deities, as well as, possibly, of the regional ruler,⁹⁰ which must have been of importance also to the subordinate sites were, instead, cared for and controlled supremely and exclusively by the regional cult centre. In LH III C again, when (at *some* stage during the period) the palatial system had disintegrated, regional cult centres due to the changed social organization survived or came into being no more, and the continuation of Mycenaean public communal cult from then on took place only in sanctuaries designed for the basic issues of the cult.⁹¹

Those basic cult issues are maintained, in one way or the other and as far as can be inferred, by every Mycenaean public communal sanctuary in settlement contexts, be it the regional cult centre or a locally confined sanctuary at a subordinate site, respectively a cult place of the postpalatial era; and they are in our view constituted by the following, common and combined elements in the archaeological record:⁹²

-the location in the lower citadel, respectively the lower town, that is the spatial separation of the sanctuary from and at the same time its linkage in traffic and function to an eventual palace or other premises of central administration; or, in the postpalatial era, its linkage to the town centre;

89 We do not refer here any further to the problematic case of the structure at Ayios Konstantinos at Methana.

90 Kilian 1992:15: '... ein Teil der Kultvorgänge scheint auf den Wanax ausgerichtet'; Stavrianopoulou 1995: *passim* and esp. 430, 432f.

91 Kilian 1992:21: '... traditionsverharrende Aspekte ... besonders in religiösen Verhaltensweisen der "Überlebenden"', as against drastic changes in nearly all other aspects of Mycenaean conditions by LH III C; and Kilian in the following traces developments, in the sense of decline, of the postpalatial public communal cult. For the Mycenaean society in LH III C see esp. the various contributions by S. Deger-Jalkotzy, e.g. for convenience Deger-Jalkotzy 1995:375–377 and refs. For the archaeological evidence in the Argolid as well as in Laconia and Messenia see most recently Eder 1998:29–55, 86f., 92–99, 136f., 144–162, 195f., 199–201 and refs.

92 Cf. the list of 'salient features' of the so-called 'Citadel Cult Centres' in Wright 1994:61, and cf. Whittaker 1997:26.

-the situation close to the fortification wall or other boundary of the nucleus settlement area making, in our view, for an essential ideological component, namely the search to draw divine protection on the sensitive border of the earthly sphere of power; the border being even more exposed to divine interference, in the case that the earthly power symbolizes itself by an ostentatious stronghold (*cf. supra* n. 65);

-the basic association of a cult room and a courtyard area eventually containing a sacrificial hearth or altar, to provide for a clear-cut spatial and functional frame for the public communal cultic activities;

-finally the furnishing with large female terracotta figures, other figures and figurines, as well as with items of ceremonial and practical purpose that fulfilled basic requirements of Mycenaean public communal cult.⁹³

In the respect of the named components the Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts known so far are all essentially alike. What goes beyond the basic pattern and amounts to a spatially and functionally differentiated religious complex, that is to a genuine cult centre, appears to have developed in the realm of Mycenaean palatial society only at the very centres of rulership and administration. Regionally leading sites at the peak of the development of the palatial social organization should thus, *a priori* and among other features, be expected to house, or at least to be in supreme command of, also the central area of religion and cult of their region. *Vice versa*, the identification of a Mycenaean cult centre, by the archaeological remains and according to the criteria set out here, should unequivocally reflect the position of the particular settlement's local rulership at the very top of the socio-political hierarchy within the respective region.

Addendum

with special reference to the major problem mentioned *supra* n. 66 that is evidently relevant to our main line of argument in this paper, namely:

93 Kilian 1992:14 ('Dieser Anteil von Figurinen ...'), and 21, 24 for the 'idols'. *Cf. also ibid.*:19f. for special paraphernalia, as well as for only secondarily identifiable installations and equipment of actual cult rooms. With regard to the occurrence of most of the spectrum, including large female and animal figures, also in nature sanctuaries (if, however, in fewer numbers), Wright (1994:75f.) gives a modified view: 'Among other things the figurines may have symbolized the figures at Cult Centres and thereby provided a symbolic link to the seat of cult at the citadel centres' For distribution patterns of figures and figurines in public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts, see Albers 1994:135–42 and chart, table 6; of large female figures in other contexts: Whittaker 1997:12f., 149–52 (large bovine or other animal figures should be included in the analysis; *e.g.* the figure in the proposed 'house sanctuary' at Dimini, *supra* n. 8).

-the question what the relationship could have been between the at least four major palatial sites in the Argolid, respectively their rulers, in the case that they, at least in the later palatial period, were *not* the seats of rulership of independent Mycenaean *wanakes* over independent territories and of an equal status; and linked to that problem:

-the question why more than one palatial site existed at all in the Argolid, when there was at Mycenae an unequivocal central seat of rulership controlling the entire Argive region (equivalent to the single ruler's residence at Pylos).

The following alternative *hypotheses* may each provide a possible, if however not presently provable solution to the issue:⁹⁴

1. The at least four major palatial sites in the Argolid, namely Argos, Mycenae, Tiryns, and Midea, co-existed in the later Mycenaean palatial period, with Mycenae constituting the central seat of rulership and controlling the entire Argive region, and the at least three other citadels were the seats of high-ranking members of a one and only royal family based at Mycenae (e.g., of uncles, second *etc.* brothers, second *etc.* sons, or else of the Mycenae *wanax*; an original root of the royals at Argos, in view of the mythical tradition and the archaeologically manifest, prominent role of Argos during MH and early Mycenaean times,⁹⁵ would be included in the hypothesis). In that case, those high-ranking other royals could have been provided each with his own palatial residence established from old, because they were by tradition integral parts of the administrative body of the central rulership and in charge of high offices next to the office of the *wanax*-in-chief.⁹⁶

In short, there could have been a system of some sort of 'governors' seats' taking care of the central palace's affairs in its different Argive regional domains (including, possibly, also domains in the possession of Mycenae outside the Argolid); the tradition that the posts of such 'governors' were filled by second-ranking royals

94 Cf. here esp. Darcque's own preference—in view of the various scholarly hypotheses (*supra* n. 64)—of the “modèle” ougaritique, où plusieurs palais coexistent dans *un même territoire* et jouent *un rôle qui ne peut être que complémentaire ...* (1998:111f.; our emphases); and see his subsequently offered ‘solutions’ (*ibid.*:112). A major difficulty for any seeking to clarify the relationship between the Mycenaean palaces in the Argolid is certainly the (in comparison with Pylos, Knossos, and Thebes) extremely meagre amount of evidence from Linear B sources, as recovered so far from any of the Argive sites.

95 Cf. the statement by Darcque 1998:112.

96 To those subordinate royal offices the *wanax* title would then have been equally adherent, and they could have embraced esp. the warrant of requirements of defense (military organization/sub-commandership operating under the command of the region's *lawagetas* at Mycenae who perhaps, but not cogently, was also a royal) at the relevant strategic locations of the region (*cf. supra* n. 65); and/or of non-military administrative requirements like, e.g., the supervision of the redistributive economic system in the region's various agricultural ‘provinces’, the organization of man-power for central palatial building projects, *etc.*

could account for them maintaining their own palatial residences (in whose refinement by standards set at the central residence at Mycenae they competed among each other).

2. The at least four major palatial sites in the Argolid co-existed in the later Mycenaean palatial period, with Mycenae constituting the central seat of rulership and controlling the entire Argive region, and the other citadels were the seats of rulers of territories outside the Argolid but in Argive, *i.e.* Mycenae's possession. In that case it would have to be surmised that the larger part of the Peloponnese other than the territories of the Pylian rulership actually formed domains of Mycenae; hence, that there existed only two centres of territorial power in the Peloponnese, namely Mycenae and Pylos, of which Mycenae would then have been by far the greater. In consequence of the then exceptionally large territory under its control, the rulership at Mycenae, as opposed to Pylos, would have been organized in a differentiated scheme: that is, several sub-rulers bearing the title of *wanax* but obligated to the *wanax*-in-chief at Mycenae would have been in charge of the administration of the vast territories commanded by Mycenae outside the Argolid; and in that function they could have maintained their own palatial residences in near distance to the seat of their chief.⁹⁷

In short, there could have been a system of some sort of 'vassals' seats' in charge of the central palace's affairs in its non-Argolid domains, with the 'vassals' being subjects to the immediate command of Mycenae and therefore regularly taking residence at the various citadels in the immediate neighbourhood of the central citadel (in the refinement of those other citadels by standards set at Mycenae they competed among each other).⁹⁸

3. The at least four major palatial sites in the Argolid co-existed in the later palatial period, with Mycenae constituting the central seat of rulership and controlling the entire Argive region, and the other citadels were the seats of rulers of independent territories of their own possession outside the Argolid.⁹⁹ While

97 In those residences, again, they could temporarily but regularly have lived during periods when their presence in the non-Argolid domains under their command was not compulsory and which they made use of to report to and correlate proceedings with the central administration.

98 A further—significant—reason for the regular gathering of such 'vassals' at their own temporary residences in the Argolid could have been that the centre of rulership at Mycenae provided for the courtly events (then presumably during the winter), as taken part in by all high-ranking subjects to the royal court in order to warrant their courtly life-style (which was probably not to any extent cared for in the non-Argolid domains the 'vassals' were in charge of).

99 In that case our line of argument would only hold in so far as the independent rulers of territories outside the Argolid would have chosen to gather (presumably in winter times) in the Argolid because the rulership at Mycenae provided for courtly events, according to the fashion dictated by Mycenae and not executable to any extent in the 'provincial' territories governed by those other Mycenaean rulers within the Peloponnese.

Mycenae could in that case equally have functioned as a religious centre, further elaboration as to this point would, however, have to be left to future discoveries: namely whether there existed in the Peloponnese other public communal sanctuaries up to the scale of cult centres which were under the domination of neither Mycenae nor Pylos.

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DISCUSSION

R. Palmer: I have not seen all the material brought together in such a way and it's extremely illuminating. My question has to do with Pylos: would we then expect a major common ceremonial cult centre in the lower town? We have references to *Pakijana*, which should be in the region of the town.

G. Albers: I didn't mention *Pakijana* because I wanted to base my argument exclusively on the archaeological evidence. I wanted to present a consistent picture on a certain basis. I should think that *Pakijana* would have been the common centre. It is possible that it was not necessarily located in the lower town. It could also have been somewhere outside. But it should have formed the one cult centre that was directly controlled by the Pylos palace. The ceremonies going on there would have represented the public communal cult under the leading action of the palace. I would not accept a function of the small Room 93, the so-called *Sanctuary of the Potnia Hippon*, in the palace area as one of the Mycenaean cult centres because it really is located in the immediate area of the palace. Of course there are plausible arguments for cult rooms of various sorts within the Mycenaean palaces, and especially for a state cult going on in the central megaron. But on the public communal level I think that also at Pylos there should have existed a cult centre somewhere in an area separated from the palace.

R. Palmer: I would agree with you on the shrine area 93, but it is so attractive because it is right next to a large open paved space.

G. Albers: Yes, but that is also the case, e.g., with the altar in the courtyard of the palace at Tiryns where we, otherwise, do have a cult area separated from the palace, i.e. in terms of location comparable to the 'Cult Centre' at Mycenae: so Room 93 within the palace area at Pylos does not really appear as an equivalent to those cult areas at Mycenae and Tiryns. At Asine we don't have the palace but I think there is, again, a certain pattern, namely in that the (late) cult room is located in the lower town. Phylakopi adds to this pattern of the public communal cult area being separated from the palace—but linked to it, of course.

H. Whittaker: All the Mycenaean cult buildings are relatively small, yet you refer to them as public communal sanctuaries. Don't you think that participation must have been restricted in some way?

G. Albers: Yes, that is a significant question. I would agree for what we know from Tiryns. Asine is a bit larger. But I think that especially the buildings in the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' are not that small in comparison to other Mycenaean buildings. I take the complex as a whole, so if the participants in the cultic proceedings were gathered all over the place it was not so small—compared, *e.g.*, to the space within Grave Circle A which is, of course, one coherent cultic space, but it should be comparable. On the whole, I find it very difficult to estimate from the square meters of an open area how many people took part in events going on in that area. Analogously, here in Greece I have the impression that many more people than may appear likely are involved in rituals taking place in very small chapels. So I don't think that the physical space is really a major point. It is certainly not valid in the case of, *e.g.*, the Near Eastern monumental temples: that is, when looking at those complexes more closely, actually not all of them have a large courtyard area in front of the temple, but there are obvious differences in terms of space. Taking the complex of the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' as a whole—not knowing, possibly, where the focus of the cult was or if there was a focus at all, or whether the activities rather took place all over the place in different parts of the complex—I don't think that the question of space is a big problem. Instead, the question to me is: where else should public communal cult at Mycenae be located? I don't think that it should be located in the main room of the megaron of the *wanax*, so if it existed at all there must have been an area of public communal cult somewhere else.

H. Whittaker: I agree with you that it is difficult to estimate how many people there would have been room for. Taking the 'Cult Centre' at Mycenae, it's my impression that the entrance through which the procession entered could be shut off. There seems to me to be very clear evidence that not everybody was allowed in.

G. Albers: Yes, I have mentioned that myself, and it is for me the reason to think that the 'Cult Centre' was in function when the palace actually made it function. It is not my conception that people went in there whenever they wanted to perform religious acts but that festivities, and whatever other communal cultic events there were, took place in the area. That people go to the temple whenever they feel a need to do so is our concept of going to church, but this may not have been the case with other religious concepts. We know of the other level of cultic activities which has been pointed out especially by Klaus Kilian, namely ritual acts performed in the realm of daily life: perhaps we should view only the evidence of such practices as factually reflecting the cultic acts of individual persons, or at least of single households.

H. Whittaker: I think that's true. There must have been quite a lot of cult activity connected to the household, for which we just don't have enough evidence. I rather suspect, actually, that these cult buildings are not all that important, or at least not of major importance in the entire picture of Mycenaean religion. I think that ceremonies that took place in the open air were perhaps the most important public rituals, whether they were sacrificial ceremonies or perhaps other types for which we have no evidence at all.

G. Albers: That view is a very common one and it is, in fact, the reason why I wrote this paper: *i.e.* reading especially the essay by James Wright in the volume *Placing the gods* (Wright 1994) I thought about that view, and I don't believe it. Wright traces a certain consistent system of spatial organization of the Helladic cult; and in the context of his entire argument from Middle Helladic times onwards he comes to describe the (late phenomenon of the) 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' as being tucked away and insignificant. But for this particular view I can't see the point when looking at the material evidence of the 'Cult Centre' itself. The complex is not very well preserved, and it also has had an altogether rather sad story of excavation. Further, the final publication of

most parts of the complex is still very much awaited. However, several elements preserved and especially the frescoes—if we may take frescoes as an indication of official design—also in my view (cf. Kilian 1992) definitely point to an official design of the ‘Cult Centre’.

H. Whittaker: I agree with you on that account. I think that the ‘Cult Centre’ and the other cult buildings were an important part of official cult, but I think that major public rituals possibly took place in the open air.

G. Albers: I know what you mean, but here we have the same basic problem: namely that so few cult places are presently known. I myself have not really analysed the evidence which we have so far of the other categories of Mycenaean sanctuaries; but for something like 30 years scholars have been stating that there is altogether so little evidence. Thus, at least for the sanctuaries I have been talking about I ask myself why that is so; and for now I believe that the scarcity of the evidence is to be explained by acknowledging the existence of Mycenaean cult centres. In case that, in the future, more Mycenaean sanctuaries of the kind should be discovered in new excavations, what I have said here may possibly not prove to be true. But for the moment we are facing the particular problem, and I wanted to suggest a solution.

H. Whittaker: There are different ways of looking at it.

M. Jameson: I wonder if I could make two points. One is that I think it is useful to make a distinction between public cults that are participated in by a large number of people and which involve a great deal of public show, such as the Panathenaic procession, for instances, and the sacrifices, and, on the other hand, the type of ritual that is extremely important publicly and communally, but is in fact restricted and perhaps even hidden, such as the ceremonies of cleaning and redressing the statue of Athena Polias on the Acropolis. I have short article forthcoming on this in a book called *Performance culture*, edited by R. Osborne and S. Goldhill. I think this issue can be applied equally to the prehistoric period. It does not have to involve many people in order to be important. Sometimes it is important to know that something has been done rather than actually to see it done.

G. Albers: Yes, you put it very nicely. I wanted to be critical as to estimating the number of participants in cultic or any kind of Mycenaean communal events. In fact, I consider the possibility quite likely that a large community gathered somewhere in another place to celebrate a certain festivity, possibly even outside the citadel walls, and that only priests and other officials in charge of the cult actually executed the particular rites inside the sanctuary precinct. The community outside would have known that they were doing it, and that would have been fine enough—as it has, e.g., been confirmed to me by a colleague for Egypt: there, it is also not the case that every member of the cultic community simply went into the temple, not to say close to or even into the adyton, but the commoners waited somewhere outside while the officials in charge of the cult did the necessary things. I think, that would be quite a model also for the Mycenaean case.

M. Jameson: Might I add a second point, rather a naive question, I fear. I am somewhat puzzled why prehistoric specialists are so cautious about seeing anything going on in the megaron. It seems to me as, in a sense, an outsider looking at the complex at Mycenaean palaces that this is the largest room, it has a large hearth, in some places at least it has a fixed throne or seat, and it is hard for me to see how a person coming upon this would not say that this is a place for important public goings-on.

G. Albers: You mean that it is evident that cult was going on in the megaron?

M. Jameson: Yes.

G. Albers: I really think so, too. The article by Wright puts this very strongly. But I think that there is a difference between the cults. In the megaron, I would locate the cult that kept the state going, and perhaps also the house cult of the *wanax*. But I don't think that festivities which brought the people of the entire region together are likely to have taken place in the megaron—or not all of those festivities, at least. Why would the 'Cult Centre of Mycenae' have existed at all? We should not paint the picture in black and white but should, instead, attempt to trace the different levels of cultic action, not necessarily social levels but levels of religious activities: *i.e.*, certain festivities would have been celebrated in one place, and other festivities in another place. I am not a specialist at all, but I think what is known from later Greek times would analogously imply that there were many different contexts of religious activity also in the Mycenaean age.

M. Jameson: I would suggest that perhaps the *xenia* must have been extraordinarily important in the Mycenaean world. The ruler entertains others, the people he favors, people who are subordinate or equal to him from other places. Where does this happen? Surely it happens in the megaron and it surely involves much ritual and celebration.

M. Wedde: Another surprising point: when we speak about the megaron at Mycenae we refer to the megaron that has actually been excavated, when on the top of the hill all that existed is so badly destroyed that we do not know and cannot exclude that there were important buildings on that part of the site. This is of interest given the hypothesis of Klaus Kilian that the megaron of the Mycenaeans was a double complex. The main megaron at Mycenae may well have been on the top of the hill. This is of course part of the Aegean archaeologist's reluctance to proceed beyond the scraps and rubbish that he/she excavates—very little of the complete picture.

G. Albers: It cannot be excluded that at Mycenae we have only the little megaron preserved. At Tiryns and Pylos we have both the large and the little megaron. At Mycenae there is, however, the evidence of the grand staircase leading to the one megaron we have, and this perhaps indicates that we rather have the large megaron here. On the whole, I believe that we cannot overestimate the significance of Mycenae. Of course, the significance of the other Mycenaean palaces in the Argolid is definitely to be considered but Mycenae, at least in the LH III B period, in my view must have been something more. The problem is also that the site due to the steep ravine is much eroded on the side of the megaron. But imagining what it must have been like in its original layout, and considering the appearance of the citadel together with the evidence of the tholos tombs and other outstanding features, the site in my opinion represents the highest level of the design of a central settlement that was possibly reached in Mycenaean times.