

## RETHINKING MYCENAEAN SANCTUARIES\*

In the most recently published, comparative study on Mycenaean cult buildings the author argues that “it is very possible that they were considered divine *dwelling*s” (our emphasis).<sup>1</sup> An essay of 1994 in which the Mycenaean sanctuaries at palatial sites are termed “Citadel Cult Centres,” states that those comprised “the *seat* of cult at the citadel centres” (our emphasis).<sup>2</sup> In a forthcoming paper<sup>3</sup> we see strong indications for a function of what we call Mycenaean “public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts” as abode of the deity and seat of the cult: in the sense that a deity was believed to actually reside or, at least, to be accessible for ultimate contact by the human sphere in the respective location. The overall conclusion is, in our view, to be drawn first and foremost from the archaeological evidence of the so-called “Cult Centre of Mycenae” in the LH IIIB period. The Cult Centre in its entirety reflects an intricate organization of ritual space, namely a deliberate arrangement of buildings and open areas designed and furnished according to differentiated function. In particular, the four definite cult buildings by their architecture and architectural decoration, fixed installations, as well as the movable equipment that was still recovered within the buildings, are each evidenced as a ritual unit of highly individual character. As has been observed by others, the public communal cult practised in the complex during the LH IIIB period therefore cannot be conceived as having been homogeneous. Instead, it appears that cult buildings constituting the central cultic premises either of different deities or, at least, of fundamentally different connotations of a most important deity, possibly the *potnia* of the Linear B tablets, were represented in the complex;<sup>4</sup> their arrangement reflecting perhaps, as suggested by K. Kilian, specific stations in the course of the ritual acts that were performed on certain occasions.<sup>5</sup>

---

\* This is a revised and in certain parts extended version of the paper presented at Gothenburg. Due to limited time and space, only a selection of more recent scholarly views that were actually based on for the preparation of the conference paper will be referred to in the following. Other contributions in particular, but not only of older date which are also of relevance to our theme here could, however, not be quoted *in extenso*. In case that we, owing to circumstances and as we have worked rather on a synthetic basis, have omitted indispensable references the failure is all ours and we wish to express our regrets.

1 H. WHITTAKER, *Mycenaean Cult Buildings. A Study of their Architecture and Function in the Context of the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean (Monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 1, 1997)* esp. 144, and see also the comparison between Mycenaean sacred and domestic architecture, *ibid.* 120-138, as Whittaker's main argument in this respect.

2 J.C. WRIGHT, “The Spatial Configuration of Belief: The Archaeology of Mycenaean Religion,” in *Placing the Gods* 37-78, esp. 75-76, and see also *ibid.* 61-63.

3 G. ALBERS, “Re-Evaluating Mycenaean Sanctuaries,” in *Celebrations. Sanctuaries and the Vestiges of Cult Practice* (symposium held at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 12-16 May 1999) (forthcoming), with detailed refs. to what can only be summarized in this paragraph.

4 Esp. K. KILIAN, “Zeugnisse mykenischer Kultausbübung in Tiryns,” in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 56: “[...] fünf Kultbauten der Akropolis von Mykene, die nach Darstellungen und Paraphernalia fünf verschiedenen Eigenschaften und Wirkungsbereichen einer wohl immer identischen *potnia* gelten [...]” differently, C. BOULOTIS, “Nochmals zum Prozessionsfresko von Knossos: Palast und Darbringung von Prestige-Objekten,” in *Function Palaces* n. 45 on p. 153: “Beispiel *par excellence* für eine lokale Mehrgötterschaft.” In his later contribution, KILIAN (*infra* n. 5) esp. 18-20, however attempted a precise differentiation in terms of religious function.

5 K. KILIAN, “Mykenische Heiligtümer der Peloponnes,” in *Kotinos. Festschrift für Erika Simon* (1992) 10-25, esp. 19-20: “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).

The mentioned scholarly views regarding the function of Mycenaean cult buildings as abode of the deity and seat of the cult are, in our opinion, by now to be accepted as *communis opinio*. What we intend to emphasize here is that, before that background, further conclusions as to the wider context of the functioning of Mycenaean sanctuaries appear inevitable. Before going on we need, however, to point out that the following is to apply solely to Mycenaean sanctuaries in settlement contexts which constitute architecturally independent buildings and functioned most certainly on an “official,” that is a public communal level within the respective settlement.<sup>6</sup> Thus, what we at the present, comparatively meagre state of archaeological evidence have at hand are: the buildings in the Cult Centre of Mycenae, the successive cult rooms in the Lower Fortress at Tiryns as well as the sanctuary at Phylakopi on Melos dating, respectively, to the Late Helladic (LH) IIIB and IIIC periods; - the reused Temple and succeeding cult room BB at Ayia Irini on Keos dating from the LH IIIA through to the IIIC period; - finally, in our opinion also cult room XXXII with room XXXI in Building G at Asine dating only to the latest phase LH IIIC Late of the Mycenaean era.<sup>7</sup> Instead, what may be termed “private cult rooms” in houses as well as in palaces and further, “nature sanctuaries” in the open country due to the altogether different contextual setting will not be included in this argument.

### The cultic function of the Mycenaean central megaron: a reappraisal

To accept the function of Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts as abode of the deity and seat of the cult, in our view in particular requires us to reconsider the religious function of the Mycenaean palace’s central megaron. The essay of 1994 already referred to above further argues that the so-called “Citadel Cult Centres” were of an alleged lesser importance in relation to “the cults in the megaron of the palace.”<sup>8</sup> The cultic nature of the megaron has long been discussed and is not doubted by us: namely, we do regard the megaron together with the central court of the palace as a location for religious ceremonies, celebrated in the frame of official, that may here specifically be termed “state cult,” and thus

6 Public communal cult in later Mycenaean times as we perceive it is essentially what R. Hägg in 1980 termed “official cult,” however with intended modification and extension: R. HÄGG, “Official and Popular Cults in Mycenaean Greece,” in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 35-39, as well as later (cf. in ALBERS [*infra* n. 7] esp. 7, and also 8-9). Hägg’s approach has been taken up esp. by Kilian, see mainly, based on his earlier contributions, KILIAN (*supra* n. 5) *passim*; and it has more recently been modified by Hägg himself: R. HÄGG, “State and Religion in Mycenaean Greece,” in *POLITEIA* II 387-390, and discussion on p. 391. - In the present state of our knowledge from archaeological evidence a *coherent* differentiation of Mycenaean “official” versus “popular cult” is in our view not really possible, but only as to “public” versus “private cult;” cf. in this respect the statement by KILIAN (*supra* n. 5) 21 (who otherwise keeps the concept of “popular cult” up): “Es scheint derzeit wenig aussichtsreich, eine funktionale Differenzierung der gleichen Objekte (Figurinen etc.) in der offiziellen Kultpraxis bzw. in jener der Volksreligion mit Hilfe des archäologischen Bestandes anzugehen.” All cultic events, therefore, that to any extent are official in that they were organized by members of the Mycenaean administrative body and executed by priestly functionaries, according to the events being scheduled in the fixed annual cycle of religious festivities, should in our view be termed also public communal - to be specified further below in this paper -, whether they took place at locations within settlements, in the palace itself or in the open country (And we just do not know about other *organized* cultic events, namely whether the commoners had occasions of religious gatherings without any involvement of members of the central administration; however, cf. the recent detailed approach by WRIGHT [*supra* n. 2] esp. 63-76, on the question of “official or popular cults.”). Private cultic events are, consequently, cult activities executed by private persons beyond any official level, be it the commoner to care for religious measurements in his house or at his work place or to enter a sanctuary for personal worship, be it the *wanax* and his household to perform cultic rites to purely private ends.

7 For convenience here, see for extensive refs. to excavation reports: G. ALBERS, *Spätmykenische ‘Stadtheiligtümer’: Systematische Analyse und vergleichende Auswertung der archäologischen Befunde* (BAR Int. Ser. 596, 1994) *passim*; KILIAN (*supra* n. 5) esp. 16-23; WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 1) esp. 8-31, 163-183. See now also the final reports for the British excavation areas in the Cult Centre of Mycenae: W.D. TAYLOUR and A.D. MOORE, *Well Built Mycenae 10. The Temple Complex* (1999); ID., *Well Built Mycenae 11. The Room with the Fresco Complex* (forthcoming); M.A.S. CAMERON, N. MARINATOS *et al.*, *Well Built Mycenae 29. The Painting in the Room with the Fresco* (forthcoming). - For our not referring in the following to the particular case of the postpalatial, LH IIIC public communal sanctuaries, see *infra* n. 25.

8 WRIGHT (*supra* n. 2) 61.

on the highest - and probably a highly restricted - Mycenaean social level.<sup>9</sup> However, it is to our perception not the question to compare between a greater or lesser importance of the prominent cultic location in the palace, on the one hand, and the one in the public communal sanctuary set apart from the palace, on the other hand. Instead, already on methodological grounds, as the overall context is entirely different, it appears to us to form an essential precondition that the function of the two cultic locations was rather fundamentally different. Precisely, the megaron and central court first and foremost constituted the core area and most prestigious parts of the palace as residence of the ruler and seat of power of his all-authoritative administrative system. Within that area and due to a strong religious connotation of the Mycenaean rulership, besides the official state businesses also ritual affairs were taken care of under the immediate supervision and probably also active participation of the ruler: him being, as we learn from other scholars' contributions, religiously legitimized and at the head of all cultic issues within his sphere of power, in so far as those were of official character and took place according to the Mycenaean fixed annual cycle of religious events.<sup>10</sup>

If, then, the central megaron of the palace together with the forelying court served also as a location for cultic activities it, though, did *not* constitute the abode of any, one or more, Mycenaean deities: that is, it was not the seat, in the sense of the central premises, of any cult of any deity of the Mycenaean pantheon (if we keep in mind the possible but not ultimately proven divine connotation of the *wanax* himself).<sup>11</sup> The megaron may have been, and in the opinion of most scholars was, a location in which also cult activities, that is, then, adoration and sacrifices, took place. But it was not the actual sanctuary - or more pointedly, and we shall come back to this -, it was not the *temple* of any deity that was venerated through the ritual acts performed within the location (unless it was the *wanax* himself). Instead, it is the essential nature of the public communal sanctuary set apart from the palace that it was considered, and thus functioned, as abode and central cultic premises of the deity or deities. Quite evidently, the deity/deities was/were not only venerated - cultically invoked - there but also in the palace as well as at various other locations in the Mycenaean settlement.<sup>12</sup> However and in our view, the fundamentally different significance of the public communal sanctuary outside in relation to the megaron and central court inside the palace, as well as in relation to other locations of cult activities within the settlement, lies in the condition that the latter were localities of veneration but not sanctuaries in the meaning of premises of the gods, whereas the former functioned as the so-believed particular place of divine at least occasional presence

- 9 See the recent detailed analysis by WRIGHT (*supra* n. 2) esp. 54-60: "hearth-*wanax* ideology" and "centralized hearth-*wanax* cult" (*ibid.* 59-60), on the basis of the pioneering coinage of *wanax ideology* by K. KILIAN, "The Emergence of *Wanax* Ideology in the Mycenaean Palaces," *OJA* 7 (1988) 291-302; cf. e.g., HÄGG (*supra* n. 6) II 389. Further, see now the most significant cultural-historical insights regarding the religious aspects of the megaron complex at Tiryns and its survival into the early LH IIIC period, as are deduced from new excavation evidence by J. MARAN in his paper presented at Gothenburg and published in this volume. - We wish to indicate that here and/or in the following rfs. would probably be required also to the recent publication *Mycenaean Palaces*; however, we have as yet not had the opportunity to look at that volume.
- 10 E.g. more recently, T.G. PALAIMA, "The Nature of the Mycenaean *Wanax*: Non-Indo-European Origins and Priestly Functions," in *Ruler* 119-139, esp. 131-134, with rfs.; E. STAVRIANOPOULOU, "Zur Verflechtung des Politischen mit dem Religiösen im mykenischen Pylos," in *POLITEIA* II 423-433, with rfs. "Dirigisme" of the (mainland) palatial administration on the cult: e.g. S. HILLER, "Mykenische Heiligtümer: Das Zeugnis der Linear B-Texte," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 95-125, esp. 95-96, 116-117, 122, with rfs.
- 11 KILIAN (*supra* n. 5) 15: "Ein Teil der Kultvorgänge scheint auf den *Wanax* ausgerichtet [...];" STAVRIANOPOULOU (*supra* n. 10) esp. 430, 432-433.
- 12 That is, also in houses and at work places of commoners: KILIAN, quoted in ALBERS (*supra* n. 7) 9 and n. 61; cf. also the statement by WRIGHT quoted *infra* n. 23. Moreover, it needs to be emphasized here that Kilian has convincingly argued for the existence, within the Mycenaean palace and in addition to the central megaron, of several further rooms that specifically served cultic purposes; these other cult rooms within the palace being interconnected to the cultic function of the megaron in a "dreidimensionales Bezugssystem:" KILIAN, quoted in ALBERS, *op. cit.*, 9 and n. 59. On the basis of the overall conclusions by Kilian, and including the evidence as known up to 1994, we had then come to differentiate between five types of Mycenaean cultic settings within settlements: in addition to the settings just mentioned, also 'gate sanctuaries,' 'house sanctuaries' serving a partial cultic function within an otherwise "profane" building context; as well as, evidently, the separated public communal sanctuaries under consideration in this present paper (originally termed 'Stadttheiligtümer'): ALBERS, *op. cit.*, esp. 9-10, with rfs.

on earth. This view does not preclude the possibility which is known of from Egyptian and Near Eastern instances, but for the Mycenaean sphere is so far not evidenced by archaeological observation, namely that there may have been more than one sanctuary of more than one deity of an equal central function in different locations within the settlement.

To conclude this first line of argument: the main reason for the other view outlined above has been the notion of a “lack of attention” paid to the architectural adornment of the so-called “Citadel Cult Centres” which allegedly demonstrates their being less important than “the cults in the palace.”<sup>13</sup> However, as one point several elements of monumentality, architectural adornment and building material used in all the Mycenaean palatial architecture are evidenced in some of the public communal sanctuaries, too, and especially so in the case of the Cult Centre of Mycenae.<sup>14</sup> This circumstance, again, ought to be taken as one among other indicators for the Cult Centre to have functioned under the immediate control of the Mycenae palace, as we argue in our earlier paper.<sup>15</sup> A second point is that the comparison does not appear to hold altogether: the architectural adornment of the central megaron and the palace on the whole cannot have been directed towards the sanctuary of any genuine Mycenaean deity for the palace, as we have stressed, did not function as such. Rather, the adornment was directed towards the residence of the *wanax* constituting the central seat of power and nucleus of the state, the *wanax* being *eo ipso* also a religious personality. The entire line of argument proves, instead, to work out to the contrary: namely, the Mycenaeans at the specific socio-historical stage which we are able to view apparently did not aim at any - *by comparison* - substantial monumental and adorned architectural design for the sanctuaries of their deities; this observation making for a major difference of palatial and later Mycenaean especially from certain Near Eastern and Egyptian practices.

### The question of Mycenaean *temples* in relation to the Egyptian case

In the foregoing, we have at one point in connection with the Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts used the word “temple.” The problem of terminology shall be focussed on in the following as it is, in our perception, mainly a twofold one and definitely requires reconsideration. Especially scholars, including ourselves at initial thought, have been reluctant to accept a status of Mycenaean cult buildings as temples because they, despite of their being mostly architecturally independent buildings, do not display the mere largeness, symmetry and complexity, as well as the dominating freestanding situation within a system of wide forelying and/or surrounding courtyards - in short, they do not come up to the monumental architectural appearance -, which we commonly connect with Egyptian and Near Eastern representatives of temple architecture.<sup>16</sup> Several aspects, however, taken together and in a *basically* equal way to Egyptian and Near Eastern counterparts, in our view require us to acknowledge also the nature of the Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries as temples.

13 WRIGHT (*supra* n. 2) 61.

14 As goes in the following, *ibid.* 61-62 and n. 94, Wright’s own argument; cf. the overall account by KILIAN (*supra* n. 5) esp. 17-20.

15 ALBERS (*supra* n. 3). - Moreover, we wish to briefly comment here that we in consequence from our main argument in that paper - namely esp., the proposal of the existence of Mycenaean *regional cult centres* during at least the later palatial period (LH IIIB); see also our abstract in *JPR* 14 (2000) 9 -, would *not* determine 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 mutual regional significance *perhaps*, but not securely demonstrably, also the sanctuary at Ayia Irini on Keos (see in detail our line of argument, *ibid.*). 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.

16 That the Mycenaean sanctuaries under consideration ought rather not be termed temples has been argued most recently by WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 1) esp. 6, cf. *ibid.* 25-26, 159. - We here wish to acknowledge Whittaker’s merit, in that she has been explicit about and thus drawn attention back to the decidedly problematic issue.

The starting-point is, if accepted, again the notion that Mycenaean separate cult buildings functioned as abode of the deity and seat of the cult. It is precisely their being the “house for the God” (our emphasis) that ultimately makes for the identity of the Egyptian *Göttertempel* as temples, whereas the monumental design, complex layout as well as spacial and functional association with wide courtyards each do not *a priori* constitute a characteristic *sine qua non* of the phenomenon.<sup>17</sup> Instead, the origin of the Egyptian temple (like, in fact, of monumental temples in most cultures, at least as far as we are aware) lies in simple *Götterhütten* (“divine hut-shrines”) which, through certain development and only after a long period of time, namely at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, finally emerge into what we consider true Egyptian temple building. The factors, however, which initially led to the specific monumentalization of the Egyptian *Göttertempel* and determined their further longlasting tradition - resulting from the rebuilding again and again, often over hundreds of years, of older temples as well as from the foundation of new ones - lie in that, at one point, an until then unknown stately controlled building activity set in at all major Egyptian cult places; at the same time, that the creation and sustenance of large temples was pursued under the one and only responsibility, and thus personal ambition, of the king. Even then it may have been, as has been pointed out by D. Arnold with special reference to the case of the Amon temple at Karnak, that only with the beginning of the New Kingdom the stately *Götterkult* experienced a particular increase in value when the gods were ultimately shifted into the focus of interest by the Egyptian kings.<sup>18</sup> Regardless, the Egyptian temple *par excellence* as we conceive it cannot possibly be viewed as precondition to meet essential requirements of the nature of the “house for the god” and/or of the cult practised in it, but it results rather from a gradual development proceeding on one hand in accordance with the highly peculiar Egyptian body of religious beliefs and symbolic systems. On the other hand, it was apparently realized solely due to the specific self-concept of the Egyptian king. The latter factor evidently brought about that large building projects, sacred and profane, were executed predominantly at the times of great ruling personalities;<sup>19</sup> and this again means, plainly put and specifically for the Egyptian context, the greater the king intended to be the larger he made the temple.

- 17 Cf. from an early date H.H. NELSON, in G.E. WRIGHT, “The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East,” *BiblArch* 7: 3 (1944) 41-53, esp. 44. In the main, see here and for the following esp. D. ARNOLD, *Die Tempel Ägyptens. Götterwohnungen, Kultstätten, Baudenkmäler* (1992) 9-60; cf. D. VAN DER PLAS, “Tempel in Ägypten,” in *Ägyptische Tempel. Struktur, Funktion und Programm. Akten der Ägyptologischen Tempeltagungen in Gosen 1990 und in Mainz 1992* (Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge 37, 1994) 239-254, esp. 249-254. Further, see also the first part of the contribution by J. BAINES, “Temples as Symbols, Guarantors, and Participants in Egyptian Civilization,” in S. QUIRKE (ed.), *The Temple in Ancient Egypt. New Discoveries and Recent Research* (1997) 216-241, esp. 216-227. - A useful formulation is also provided regarding the nature of the temple in ancient Mesopotamia (and India) by K.-H. GOLZIO, *Der Tempel im alten Mesopotamien und seine Parallelen in Indien. Eine religionshistorische Studie* (ZRGG Beiheft 25, 1983) 1: “[In einem modernen Kontext, und als ein allgemeines Wort, das eine Reihe von verschiedenen Begriffen enthält, die für verschiedene Religionen kennzeichnend sind, ist der Tempel grundsätzlich ein sakrales Bauwerk, das für die Ausübung eines religiösen Kultes einer bestimmten Gemeinde errichtet wurde. Der Hinweis auf eine Kirche z.B. als “Haus Gottes” bedeutet nicht oder nicht mehr die physische Gegenwart der Gottheit im Bauwerk, geschweige denn irgendein göttliches Besitzrecht.] Die Stellung des Tempels im alten Zweistromland wie in Indien ist davon gänzlich verschieden. In beiden Kulturen ist der Tempel primär das Besitztum des Gottes. Das Heiligtum ist sein Haus, seine Wohnung, er ist physisch in ihm zugegen, er lebt in ihm und besitzt das Eigentumsrecht. Zum zweiten ist der Tempel ein dem Kult geweihtes Bauwerk, was im wesentlichen den Dienst im physischen Sinne des Wortes beim hausbesitzenden Gott bedeutet. Somit liegt der bedeutendste Unterschied zwischen einem Tempel und einem gewöhnlichen Haus in der Stellung seines Besitzers - Gott oder Sterblicher.”
- 18 ARNOLD (*supra* n. 17) 21. For significant other types, besides the *Göttertempel*, of Egyptian temples and cult places which cannot be considered here as there are no evident parallels in the Mycenaean sphere, see *ibid.* 29-39.
- 19 ARNOLD (*supra* n. 17) 14, and referring to the temple building program of Ramses II, *ibid.* 25.

**Special issue: the questionable role of the great court in front of the central megaron as location for Mycenaean communal cultic gatherings**

With regard to the Egyptian case, we for our theme here, consider one further aspect significant. It is especially also the circumstance that wide courtyards form a distinct element in many Egyptian as well as Near Eastern temples but are lacking in the Mycenaean sanctuaries, that has led scholars to deny the nature of the latter as temples: in the sense that the Mycenaean sanctuaries, as opposed to Egyptian and Near Eastern temples, could not possibly have functioned as localities for substantial public gatherings on the occasion of cultic celebrations. Consequently, due to the lack also of other open areas of presumed sufficient extension within the settlements, for the Mycenaean context the attempt has been made to locate the one and only suitable place for communal cultic gatherings in the great courtyard of the palace, that is the forecourt of the central megaron.<sup>20</sup> However, the basic underlying assumption, namely that a wide court or other open space within an ancient settlement precisely was as wide because it had been planned to provide for gatherings, in our case especially cultic gatherings, of more or less the entire community is definitely misleading in the Egyptian case; and analogously, we think that it also does not suit the Mycenaean case.

Most egyptologists agree in the view that the Egyptian commoner did not have access to the “house of the god” but performed his prayers, made his petitions and offered his votive gifts at the outer temple wall where statues eventually flanking the entrance were believed to warrant contact with the superior powers. Or he pursued his religious request at a cultic installation at the back wall of the temple, or he, if he could afford it, dedicated a personal statue which was the only way for him to gain access to the interior of the god’s residence (and even dwell there himself), namely in the shape of his statue.<sup>21</sup> Definitely the commoner did not get even into an outer temple court in the frame of large gatherings of the cultic community on the occasion of religious ceremonies. Instead, the nature of the Egyptian *Götterkult* as far as it relates to the common people lies in that, when the *Götterfeste* were celebrated and the religious processions of the divine images adherent to the festivities were due, the images were transferred out of the temple; and on such events the commoner could *not quite* *impossibly* get in closer touch with the gods, in that he might even catch a glimpse of their statues.

The providing for wide courts in the spacial and functional context of Egyptian temples therefore does not to any extent reflect an intention on the side of the king and/or the priesthood to have a substantial proportion of the population participate in the religious ceremonies. Instead, the courts constitute an ultimate consequence from the royal ambition to build the god’s house, apart from its essential protective character, as representative and impressive - *i.e.* monumental - as possible. Decidedly in the context of non-democratic social organization there are, in our awareness, hardly any instances of monumental architecture or the like which were effectuated with a single building, sacred or profane, and at the same time do not somehow instrumentalize a wide but also clearly bordered open space especially in front of the building’s entrance, thus making for its dominating architectural appearance and enhancing its overall prestigious character. In the same light we must, in our opinion, view also the comparatively wide court in front of the central megaron of the Mycenaean palace: namely, the mere largeness of the court is not to be taken as physical indicator of any intended function for large cultic or other gatherings of the common people, but makes for an essential architectural and ideological constituent of the overall majestic layout and adornment of the

20 The argument has most recently been raised again during the subsequent and final discussions of our symposium paper quoted *supra* n. 3; cf. WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 1) 143-145; WRIGHT (*supra* n. 2) 60: “Places for communal worship are rare. Those that are available, such as the great court at Tiryns, are in special, presumably restricted, locations.”

21 This paragraph is, for convenience, entirely based on the account by ARNOLD (*supra* n. 17) 13, 29; cf. BAINES (*supra* n. 17) 218: “The most characteristic aspects the Egyptian temple presents to the world are exclusion and protection.”

palace.<sup>22</sup> The court in our specific case is thus especially also intended to enhance the facade of the central megaron as official seat of the Mycenaean charismatic ruler; and otherwise is it an immanent feature of the phenomenon that a monarch's palace includes a central, inner ceremonial courtyard which, as the entire palace, was in the first place *not* meant to be accessible for the common people.

On one hand, consequently, as regards the great court of the palace and in more general words, we in view of what is known about the next to totalitarian organization of Mycenaean palatial society, as well as about the function of the palace as residence of the religiously legitimized (and perhaps even worshipped) ruler and centre of his all-dominating earthly authority, simply consider it highly unlikely that any member of the common people should have been admitted access to the palace at all (if not for ordinary purposes of delivery or maintenance which would, however, have led the common person mostly only into the palatial service compounds). Precisely, what could the motivation on the side of the *wanax* have been to allow for regular large gatherings of the common people on the occasion of religious ceremonies right in the core area of his absolutistic and highly secretive seat of rulership, when the system of rulership did not comprise an interest in, and thus a necessity of, any such gatherings? Much more likely, a ruler of the format of the Mycenaean *wanax* - analogously, e.g., to his Egyptian counterpart - would have aimed at keeping the public out of his residence, and especially out of its most prestigious parts; and he would consequently have provided for an area for cultic gatherings of the people in another place, to think here of the public communal sanctuary<sup>23</sup> - if that would have been necessary at all.<sup>24</sup> Suffice it, thus, to say that the Mycenaean palace by all aspects adherent to it appears as a place of highest restrictiveness and that, therefore, access to the official premises of the palace without doubt constituted *eo ipso* a privilege of the highest sort - most probably, we think, as a means to signal esteem to equals or, at least, to high-ranking cooperators within his rulership by the Mycenaean lord of the palace.

On the other hand, in the same general line of argument a further, vital question is intimately linked to what has just been said but remains as yet entirely open: namely, *who* in

22 In addition to the highly instructive contributions of KILIAN referred to *supra* n. 9 and n. 12, see more recently the account by M. KÜPPER, *Mykenische Architektur: Material, Bearbeitungstechnik, Konstruktion und Erscheinungsbild (Internationale Archäologie 25, 1996)* esp. 111-122.

23 Cf. WRIGHT (*supra* n. 2) 75: "[...] the hearth-*wanax* cult [...] represents the traditional value structure of Helladic society. [...] the maintenance of this cult by the ruler in the palace removed the commoners from direct participation" (our emphasis); and *ibid.*: "As the Helladic institution *par excellence*, however, the cult was celebrated at every household hearth by every head of household, and it is this redundancy that makes the cult so powerful when officially celebrated in the palace. On the other hand is the establishment of the Citadel Cult Centres, which, if they have a direct relation to cult locales outside the palaces, were probably much more open [to public participation] - a point underlined [not only by their informal architecture but also] by their removal from the palace." Regarding specifically Wright's notions put here in square brackets we however object, as is evident from our above line of argument and will also be emphasized in the following paragraph.

24 But it was *not* necessary, in our view - to be further specified below and in analogy to the Egyptian case -, in the realm of Mycenaean palatial society; as there was no place for "politically" organized secular communal gatherings in the sense of an *agora* - namely because the societal system did not provide/allow for any such events of public life which form a feature only of later Greek periods. Also, we in this respect wish to add in all brevity that the particular question of large cultic gatherings may prove to make for an essential difference of, respectively, a Mycenaean and a Minoan cultural-specific concept: that is - at least in seeming contrast to the Mycenaean case -, for the Minoan sphere esp. the frescoes indeed depict genuine *crowds* of people actually gathered in the sanctuary location on the occasion of a religious festivity; the gatherings thus securedly comprising a much expanded group of participants/attendants than only the (presumed) lord of the palace and his family, the nobility as well as the priesthood and other cult functionaries (Grandstand fresco and Sacred Grove and Dance fresco from Knossos: *PM III* pls. 16, 18 after p. 46, cf. for convenience *Aegean Painting* esp. 63-67, pls. 22-23; further evidence would also be the well-known *Schautreppen* in the 'Theatral Area' at Knossos and in the other Minoan palaces, in addition to the general, altogether much more open architectural layout of the Minoan in comparison with the Mycenaean palace). Thus, as there is as yet no certain evidence for a single Minoan monarch, as well the Minoan special emphasis on cultic gatherings of the common people *perhaps* indicates an ultimately different character of Minoan in relation to Mycenaean societal structures and practices.

the Mycenaean context formed the cultic community that was actually *present* during religious ceremonies held on the occasion of official festivities in the public communal sanctuaries, or also at other cultic locations; and where eventually - if at all - a *large* community actively involved in cultic ceremonies would have gathered. We here wish to be somewhat more explicit about our view regarding that question but name our respective premise right away: that is, by speaking of Mycenaean “public communal cult” we do not mean to imply to any extent that a wider proportion of the community, *i.e.* that the commoners were actual participants of the cultic events, in so far as access to the respective locations during the ceremonies is concerned.<sup>25</sup> In other words, we - in analogy to the case of the Egyptian *Göttertempel* - do not presume that the Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts served to any substantial extent for communal gatherings on the occasion of religious ceremonies. Such would, instead, be the model of the later Greek sanctuaries, which indeed by their mere availability of space, however ultimately proven only due to the existence of written evidence, provided for their functioning as places for gatherings of the cultic community. *Nevertheless*, the events of Mycenaean public cult are, in our perception, to be termed also communal, namely in that they would have served the cultic expectations of all subjects of the palace or other body of central administration: that is, the commoners due to the religious nature or, at least, the formal religious legitimation of their ruler were (kept) aware of what was on the schedule of cultic festivities; and the ceremonies were, if only to satisfy the expectations for propaganda reasons, cared for and executed *on behalf of also* the commoners.

As has been brought up elsewhere,<sup>26</sup> it appears thus to be quite a suitable model for the Mycenaean case that the commoners were actually not admitted access to the public communal sanctuary during religious festivities; but that the ceremonies were carried out on their as well as on the *wanax*’s and the nobility’s behalf by priests and associated cult functionaries, with the cultic community gathering only outside but knowing essentially what was going on inside, and being also spectators from a distance as the ceremonies most probably involved processions through the settlement.<sup>27</sup> This view, again, would not preclude that single members of the

25 Cf. the view of KILIAN (*supra* n. 5) 20: “Keine der bislang bekannten offiziellen Kultstätten mykenischer Siedlungen ist für eine Teilnahme der Bevölkerung ausgelegt; immer dürfte nur eine im Kultablauf sich abstufende *Auswahl* der elitären Schichten beteiligt gewesen sein” (our emphasis, in view of what follows *infra* n. 27). KILIAN, *ibid.* esp. 18-20, however does differentiate between areas accessible to or overlooked by a certain “größerer Personenkreis,” and areas (termed “sanctissimum”) reserved for a much limited number of participants involved in the actual cultic proceedings (And cf. *ibid.* 21-22 for LH IIC; and arguing from a larger extension of open areas in front of the cult buildings for a different composition of the cultic community by LH IIC, as consequence of “gesellschaftliche Gleichschaltung” after the collapse of the palatial system. The particular case of the postpalatial, LH IIC public communal sanctuaries cannot to any extent be dealt with here, but see the discussion in our earlier paper quoted *supra* n. 3).

26 That is, during the discussion of the named paper quoted *supra* n. 3.

27 At the same time, the ceremonies quite conceivably may have been attended and/or supervised by some sort of, say we, “delegates” as has been proposed in his conference contribution at Gothenburg by J.T. KILLEN; see his paper in this volume, and we wish to thank Professor Killen for pers. comm. at the conference and permission that we relate our own argument to his results. - Killen from the evidence of Linear B texts from Pylos concludes that food rations were allocated to “participants in and functionaries at [religious] festivals” (abstract in *JPR* 14 [2000] 32). That implies, on one hand, that the latter group of “functionaries” conceivably received the allocations for their being in charge of certain specific duties in the course of the cultic proceedings. On the other hand and most significantly for our theme here, at least some of the first adduced “participants” appear to have been allocated fixed food rations *just for attending the ceremonies*. The conclusion does, consequently, not appear far-fetched that “delegates” to the religious festivities who were to carry out a mere *order to attend* were appointed - and either compensated or even regularly paid for their services - by the palace. On the whole, Killen’s highly interesting observation may prove to shed an entirely new light on the vital question put by us, here, namely who were the participants present during religious ceremonies in the Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries: that is, there would now be textual evidence that the cultic proceedings were precisely *not* attended by the entire or even a substantial proportion of the cultic community gathering at the respective sanctuary location; but that it was, instead, the nature of Mycenaean public communal cult that only an appointed group of cultic functionaries and otherwise of mere “delegates,” in addition to the priest/-s or priestess/-es executing the rites, actually participated *in person* in the ceremonies (cf. for this also KILIAN’s statement quoted *supra* n. 25). Before this background, again, it appears to us even questionable whether the *wanax* himself attended at all the ceremonies *within*, or whether he not rather, together with the other cultic community, as a spectator from the distance remained *outside* the sanctuary.

cultic community *possibly* had access to the public communal sanctuary for the purpose of, say we, private worship at times other than during religious ceremonies.<sup>28</sup>

### The question of Mycenaean temples in relation to the Palestinian case

The Egyptian case that has been adduced, so far, nevertheless leaves us the option to determine as temples only archaeologically recorded cult buildings which served as “house for the god” and at the same time display a substantial, monumental architectural appearance. The latter criterion would then have to be considered ultimately decisive, and it would require that cult buildings not conforming to a monumental concept, then also the Mycenaean ones, were to be conceived sanctuaries of the gods but not true temples. Our argument, however, for an overall conclusive perception also of the Mycenaean sanctuaries as temples, despite of their lacking the alleged characteristics of “genuine” monumental temple architecture, is further supported by the case of more or less contemporary Near Eastern, precisely Palestinian parallels.

In the Palestinian context we have, on one hand, the phenomenon of the so-called “monumental symmetrical temples” especially at Hazor, Megiddo and Shechem which originate from the late Syro-Palestinian Middle Bronze Age and *basically* display a concept comparable to the Egyptian *Göttertempel*.<sup>29</sup> As a prominent case of relatively recent evidence, we are now actually for the first time in the history of archaeological discoveries in Palestine in the position to trace the local development, through several stages, from an original cult building of decidedly non-monumental architectural design to a true, if still comparatively small, representative of the monumental symmetrical temples. This is with the stratigraphically and chronologically uninterrupted sequence of altogether four temples in the same central setting within the small settlement on the Tell el-Hayyat in the East Jordan river valley, which starts in the early and ends in the late Middle Bronze Age.<sup>30</sup> It illustrates that also in the Palestinian context a specific concept of monumental temple architecture - probably ultimately derived from Syria - did not suddenly appear but went through a certain, gradual development; the unbroken development in the case of Tell el-Hayyat taking something like four to five hundred years.

28 Cf. KILIAN (*supra* n. 5) 20, who emphasizes a probable seasonal character of Mycenaean public communal cultic ceremonies; further, HILLER (*supra* n. 10) esp. 119: “Hinsichtlich des Anteils, den weitere Bevölkerungsteile an diesen Heiligtümern und den in ihnen ausgeübten Kulturen hatten, läßt sich immerhin bemerken, daß auch nichtpalatiale Bevölkerungskreise zumindest gelegentlich Zugang hatten [...]”

29 The detailed differentiation for Syria-Palestine of a coherent group of monumental symmetrical temples on one hand, and ‘irregular temples’ (see below) on the other hand, has first been undertaken by A. MAZAR, *Excavations at Tell Qasile Part I. The Philistine Sanctuary: Architecture and Cult Objects* (Qedem 12, 1980) esp. 61-68. References to the archaeological evidence of and vast bibliography on the Palestinian temples cannot to any extent be given in the frame of our account here; however, for the ‘irregular temples’ in relation to the Mycenaean cult buildings see, e.g., G. ALBERS, “Comparative Aspects of Regional Cult Structures of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages in the East Mediterranean (Aegean, Cyprus, Levant-Palestine),” in *Atti e memorie del Secondo Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia, Roma-Napoli, 14-20 ottobre 1991* (Incunabula Graeca 98, 1996) II, 647-662, as well as most recently WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 1) esp. 66-93, 197-209. - The Palestinian temples constitute the theme of our doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Heidelberg in 1997 and forthcoming as G. ALBERS, *Studien zu Siedlungsheiligtümern des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr. in Palästina. ‘Unregelmäßige’ und symmetrische Tempel im typologischen und funktionalen Vergleich* (Würzburger Arbeiten zur Prähistorischen Archäologie 1; due 2001), with extensive refs.

30 More detailed preliminary reports and plans as well as isometric drawings are so far published in B. MAGNESS-GARDINER and S.E. FALCONER, “Community, Polity, and Temple in a Middle Bronze Age Levantine Village,” *JMA* 7: 2 (1994) 127-164, esp. 135-140, fig. 5; ID., “Bronze Age Village Life in the Jordan Valley: Archaeological Investigations at Tell el-Hayyat and Tell Abu en-Ni’aj,” *National Geographic Research* 5: 3 (1989) 335-347, figs. 5-14; ID., “Hayyat (Tell el),” in D. HOMÈS-FREDERICQ and J.B. HENNESSY (eds), *Archaeology of Jordan 2, I. Field Reports (Akkadica Suppl. 7, 1989)* 254-261, figs. 2-3; S.E. FALCONER, “Rural Responses to Early Urbanism: Bronze Age Household and Village Economy at Tell el-Hayyat, Jordan,” *JFA* 22 (1995) 399-419, esp. 402-404, figs. 3-6. See now also our analysis of the temple sequence of Tell el-Hayyat: G. ALBERS, “Die Tempelabfolge von Tell el-Hayyat und ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der Sakralarchitektur in Palästina,” in the forthcoming *Festschrift* on the occasion of the 65<sup>th</sup> birthday of Harald Hauptmann (R.M. BOEHMER and J. MARAN [eds]; due 2001), with further refs.

On the other hand and as a, at the present state of evidence, later but then conspicuous phenomenon the Palestinian sphere is in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages characterized by so-called “irregular temples” (cf. *supra* n. 29) existing besides the older symmetrical temples; the latter being still in function as they were rebuilt one or several times according to the traditional monumental scheme. The Palestinian ‘irregular temples’ by their ground plans are not in all cases truly irregular, and the distinction between the two groups altogether requires certain significant modification. Nevertheless, the ‘irregular temples’ are also in our opinion in a way correctly viewed as a distinct group, precisely in that they do not conform to the monumental building concept displayed by the named other group of Palestinian as well as Syrian temples. Their lacking the characteristics of monumental temple architecture, however, in the case of the Palestinian ‘irregular temples’ evidently cannot serve as criterion to deny their nature as temples: the structures in most cases clearly constituted the central sanctuary of the god within the settlement; and at least from the archaeological evidence which is all we have for them, they do not appear to have differed essentially in function but to have fulfilled much the same purpose as the earlier and contemporary, monumental symmetrical temples. Rather, the ‘irregular temples’ probably only follow different building concepts, then apparently of various roots, and at the same time they to our present knowledge make for, as said before, a later development of Palestinian sacred architecture.

In analogy to the Palestinian case, we see no reason to view the Mycenaean cult buildings in any different light: although decidedly not by origin linked to them, the Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries in settlement contexts in comparison with the Palestinian non-monumental ‘irregular temples’ unambiguously, and as a most significant point with regard to our argument here, display *a similar quality of the archaeological record*. Further, they conceivably served the same essential purpose as their Palestinian counterparts, in that they constituted the central cultic premises of the gods within the settlements.

## Conclusion

From our above line of argument we should like to conclude that - all in all and decidedly from the archaeological point of view - the discussion about *temples* as opposed to sanctuaries or other cultic structures, but *non-temples*, does not seem to take us anywhere unless it can unambiguously be demonstrated that a built locality served as location for cultic veneration but did not constitute the abode of the deity and seat of the cult. This we have attempted to clarify in the case of the central megaron of the Mycenaean palace in relation to the public communal sanctuary set apart from the palace. In other instances when we, as textual evidence is lacking, think to have good reason to presume that a cultic building constituted the so-believed and at least contemporary dwelling of the deity or deities we ought, in our estimation, acknowledge its nature to be a temple. The individual monumental or non-monumental or other special architectural design we should, instead, consider rather a secondary criterion: as it would be ultimately rooted in the specific religious concepts, and at the same time depend on the individual socio-historical situation, that is the overall stage of civilizatory achievements, of the cultural entity we are dealing with. Precisely, what we need to be aware of in the Mycenaean case is that the secured evidence for separated, architecturally independent cult buildings to our present knowledge begins only in the LH IIIA period at the earliest. As well, that we do not know what the development would have been if the palatial organization had not dissolved around 1200 B.C. but had, as e.g. in the Egyptian case, gone on more or less uninterruptedly for a much longer period of time. In particular, therefore, the question from old in our view needs to be put again, if however in a somewhat different sense, namely whether the separate Mycenaean cult buildings did not, for the Aegean sphere, constitute the decisive beginning of an ultimately coherent, only already at a relatively early stage severely interrupted, general development: that is, in analogy to the Egyptian and Near Eastern cases, with the evident long duration of such process, and from a socio-historical point of view we do not consider the hypothesis entirely unlikely that the rise of the Greek temples, if embedded in much different cultural conditions, may have had its ultimate roots in a development which had taken an early

shape already in the Mycenaean palatial period.<sup>31</sup> With the fall of the palaces that development would have come to a standstill for a considerable period of time, but it could then eventually be tied on and further proceed in a direction that might *in essence* have been possible already earlier on - if the Mycenaean palatial society and self-concept of its ruler had become more firmly established, instead of breaking down.<sup>32</sup>

Last and not least, on this occasion: we think that we ought to consider what our approach would be if we actually knew from secure evidence that a certain Mycenaean cult building served as abode of a certain, namable deity. Quite positively, we in such case would not be reluctant to also for the Mycenaean context refer to the *temple* of the individual god or goddess in its respective settlement location or other setting.

Gabriele ALBERS

- 
- 31 Highly illuminating in this respect, and as regards the *general* socio-historical processes, appears to us the view taken on the formation of the Greek temples by C. SOURVINOU-INWOOD, "Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space. Fragments of a Discourse," in N. MARINATOS and R. HÄGG (eds), *Greek Sanctuaries. New Approaches* (1993) 1-17. (SOURVINOU-INWOOD, *ibid.* n. 4 on p. 13, has also stated her intention, then, to discuss the theory of Mazarakis Ainiian in the meantime published as: A.J. MAZARAKIS AINIIAN, *From Rulers' Dwellings to Temples: Architecture, Religion and Society in Early Iron Age Greece (1100-700 B.C.)* (1997). We are not aware whether she has done that yet but, anyway, thus do not comment on that theory ourselves.) - The "missing link" between the Mycenaean public communal sanctuaries, on one hand, and the much later rise of the Greek monumental temples, on the other hand, would in case have to be seen in the mere circumstance that - if the localities did not at all remain the same - the basic Mycenaean palatial achievement of independent cult buildings was, nevertheless, kept up during the subsequent LH IIIC period and beyond the "Dark Age" down to the eighth century: SOURVINOU-INWOOD, *op. cit.*, esp. 6-8, with refs; see also the account by C. MORGAN, "From Palace to Polis? Religious Developments on the Greek Mainland During the Bronze Age/Iron Age Transition," in *Religion and Power in the Ancient Greek World. Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1993* (*Boreas* 24, 1996) 41-57 and esp. 55-57, with refs.
- 32 Or rather, if the palatial society and concept of the ruler had not *disintegrated* - as we may say now in special view of what apparently went on at Tiryns: cf. *supra* n. 9. Another indicator for the comparatively early, formative stage of the development of the mycenaean ruler concept ought probably be seen in the lack also of self-depiction of the ruler by means of large-scale statuary - in contrast to, e.g., the Egyptian case. In the later Greek context, again, that significant aspect of cultural expression appears to have emerged parallel to the beginnings of monumental temple building.