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Review

of the PhD dissertation

„Mycenaean Palatial Towns: Contextual and Comparative Study “  
submitted at the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland  
by Piotr Zeman

Already at the time when in the 1870s and 1880s the Mycenaean period was discovered through the excavations of Heinrich Schliemann and Christos Tsountas, information emerged about how palaces of that period looked like and that they were structured around a central building which was designated by Wilhelm Dörpfeld with the term Megaron. Since then, Mycenaean palaces have been the subject of numerous studies, in which various aspects related to them were discussed. While we are therefore relatively well-informed about the features characterizing such palaces and setting them apart from their Minoan counterparts, the towns surrounding Mycenaean palaces have attracted much less attention especially as regards synoptic studies analyzing such towns in a comparative perspective as entities consisting of interrelated and cohering parts. When he started to devise his dissertation project, Piotr Zeman intended to focus exclusively on the Lower Towns of Mycenaean centers. Indeed, at first, it seemed like a straightforward task to analyze “Lower Towns”, that is those parts of palatial towns situated outside of the fortifications or boundaries demarcating the built environment immediately surrounding the respective palaces. The more he delved into the matter, however, Mr. Zeman rightly realized that it would be insufficient to restrict his study to Lower Towns, since this would not have allowed him to gain conclusions about wider concepts of urbanization and town planning underlying the configuration of the built environment at the individual sites. Therefore, he is to be commended for his decision to include the entire architectural setting of Mycenaean palatial towns, from the individual palaces and their immediate architectural surroundings to the Lower Towns and funerary monuments, although this meant considerably more work for him than was initially planned. For the mentioned reasons, the present dissertation by Piotr Zeman forms, somewhat surprisingly, not only the first in-depth assessment of such towns, but also of Mycenaean processes of urbanization in general.

In the introduction (pp. 18-44) Mr. Zeman outlines the aims as well as the methodological and theoretical basis of his study. He thoughtfully explains why the above mentioned “holistic” approach is a prerequisite for reaching the main goal of the study, namely to define and understand Mycenaean patterns of urbanism. He goes on to specify what he defines as a “palatial town” and to justify which sites he found to be suited for an in-depth study of such towns. It needs to be pointed out that Mr. Zeman’s study goes far beyond the relatively limited period of ca. 1400–1200 BCE during which Mycenaean palaces have existed, since he includes the Early Mycenaean period to trace the origins of the later palatial towns as well as the post-palatial period to comprehend what happened to the former palatial towns after the final destruction of the palaces. It is also a strength of the study that the author includes in his analysis of the built environment of palatial towns all kinds of architecture including not only building in which people lived, met or worked, but also fortifications and other kinds of special-purpose structures (cf. dams) and especially funerary monuments, which, as will become evident, form such a prominent feature of Mycenaean palatial towns. The choice of sites to be included in such a long-term analysis of



Mycenaean palatial towns was difficult, as the author frankly admits. Although Mycenaean palaces are likely to have existed in a number of sites in regions of Eastern Central Greece and the Peloponnese, for most of these places there is either a lack of information about the exact nature of the respective built environment or the attribution of the main buildings to the category “palace” is questionable or uncertain. In applying a strict and lucid methodology, Mr. Zeman decided that only three sites, namely Mycenae and Tiryns in the Argolid as well as Pylos in Messenia, fulfill the necessary requirements to be included in his study. While it seems to me that this choice is well-founded and correct, one needs to bear in mind that, as a consequence of the focus on these three sites – all in the Peloponnese and two of them in the same region – only future studies will tell whether the conclusions about Mycenaean patterns of urbanism can be generalized or are only applicable to specific kinds of palatial towns. This caveat is intensified by the fact that, even among the three selected palatial sites, the general characteristics of the palatial town of Pylos and its development throughout the Mycenaean period is much less known than the ones of Mycenae and Tiryns, because the two Argive sites have been extensively investigated for a long period, while excavations at Pylos were much more limited.

Concerning its theoretical background, Mr. Zeman’s study also rests on an extremely well-considered basis. Regarding the thorny issue of what should be considered as features of “urbanism” he rightfully rejects attempts of a cross-culturally valid definition of this term through the application of a checklist of criteria that need to be met in order to classify a site as “urban”. Instead, he opts for a much more adequate and refined approach that combines elements of “comparative urbanism” with such derived from entanglement theory and network-based archaeology. According to the approach chosen by him urbanization should be perceived as a process and the degree of urbanization should above all depend on whether a site was more complexly organized than other sites in the system of settlements of a particular time and region.

The discussion and analysis of the three sites starts in chapter two (pp. 45-176) with Mycenae and follows a structure that is also applied to the other two sites. The discussion begins with an overview over fortifications and their building phases, which is followed by an assessment of funerary monuments and their setting and chronological sequence. The ensuing in-depth analysis of the Mycenaean buildings takes its start with the ones on the summit of the hill and moves on counter-clockwise to cover the buildings in the other sectors of the acropolis and thereafter turns to the Lower Town, whose buildings are discussed, again in a counter-clockwise sequence, starting from the area outside of the Lions Gate. Each of the buildings is given a catalogue number consisting of a shorthand for the respective site (cf. MYC, TIR, PYL) and a number. This well-considered procedure allows the reader to quickly locate the necessary information and illustrations in the catalogue and plan section of the dissertation. In the discussion of the individual buildings inside and outside of the acropolis Mr. Zeman carefully traces what is known about changes during the discernible building phases. He first outlines the interpretations that have been proposed in the literature and then, in a summary, evaluates the validity of these interpretations and, wherever he thinks it is necessary, develops his own ideas about the structure of the respective architecture and its chronological sequence.

The breadth, precision and quality of the author’s discussion are impressive and give evidence for an outstanding level of knowledge of the architecture under discussion and a superb command of the available bibliography. This allows him to formulate observations and interpretations that go beyond and significantly enrich previous research.

To cite only a few examples:

- Regarding the Mycenae Megaron, the central building of the palace, Mr. Zeman argues in favor of the existence of two superimposed building phases, of which the earlier version of the Megaron was situated slightly more to the west in comparison



to its successor (pp. 59-60). This would be reminiscent of the two phases of the Great Megaron at Tiryns which also slightly deviate in their position.

- He considers (p. 74) whether parts of the House M complex during LH IIIB2 Late may have replaced some buildings of the Cult Centre that seem to have been abandoned after a destruction horizon at the end of LH IIIB2 Early (see below).
- He argues in favor of an interpretation that regards the famous Warrior Vase as one of the furnishings of an unusually rich post-palatial burial that was cut into the fill of the House of the Warrior Vase (p. 83).
- He reconsiders the architectural sequence of the West House Group and rightfully objects to Bryan Burns interpretation of the group of buildings in the Lower Town as evidence for the antagonism between different political factions in Mycenae. Instead, he emphasizes that the whole building complex was very much under the palace's control (p. 136).
- The most radical challenge to previous scholarship concerns the subdivision of the "Panayia Houses" into three separate units proposed by Ione Mylonas-Shear. According to Mr. Zeman's bold, but persuasive reconsideration we are instead dealing with different parts of one and the same architectural complex. While I find this view compelling, I would advise him to introduce a different designation than "House I", as this would undoubtedly lead to a confusion with Mylonas-Shear's Houses I, II and III (pp. 145-147).

There are relatively few aspects in this first part of the Mycenae chapter that in my opinion should be reconsidered by the author, when he publishes his study:

- It is a common habit in the literature to extend the designation "Grave Circle A" to the time of the shaft graves of Late Helladic I. Yet, this is deceptive, since the term "Grave Circle" refers to the circle of slabs built on the platform high above the shaft graves in LH IIIB1. It is, in my opinion, rather unlikely that already the shaft graves were encircled by a wall, as was proposed by Charles Gates, whose interpretation Mr. Zeman follows (p. 52). Since the original inclination of the slope in this area of the hill was steep, any encircling wall would have had to be supported towards the slope by a strong retaining wall in order not to be washed away. The segment of a curved wall interpreted by Gates as part of an early grave circle, does not show such a support and would not have withstood the earth pressure.
- As Mr. Zeman rightly observes (p. 90), the area of Grave Circle A and the Granary must have been important for communal ritual during LH IIIC. Yet, if Lisa French's attribution of the "Geometric Building" in the court of the destroyed Megaron to LH IIIC is correct, as Mr. Zeman and also I believe, then Grave Circle A and the Granary were probably not the 'only areas of clearly public character' (p. 90) in LH IIIC-Mycenae.
- It seems to me, that there is a slight inconsistency as regards the question to which part of the palatial town the early phase of the Cult Centre should be assigned. As we now know, this early Cult Centre was still situated "extra muros", but higher-up on the slope than, for instance, the buildings of the West House Group. Mr. Zeman seems to assume a strong connection of the Cult Centre to the interior of the Citadel, although during this phase the buildings of the Cult Centre were still rather open towards the outside and therefore should probably more adequately be regarded as parts of the "Lower Town".
- After the construction of the new western wall in LH IIIB2 the Cult Centre was integrated into the citadel. Thereafter, certain buildings of the Cult Centre were much more difficult to reach and some of them seem to have not been used for ritual purposes any more. Mr. Zeman regards this as evidence of a loss of importance of certain parts of the Cult Centre (p. 102). This may indeed be the case, but we need to bear in mind that the abandonment of cult buildings does not necessarily signify a loss of their importance. It could also be that they were still respected and venerated, but had become "ἄβυστος", that is too holy to be entered.
- Concerning the LH IIIC-reoccupation of the area of the former Cult Centre Mr. Zeman refers to indications that some rooms may have been used for ritual (p. 105), but he does not cite in this context Gabriele Albers' monograph and her observation of a possible ritual continuity in this area of Mycenae from LH IIIB to IIIC (cf. G. Albers, *Mykenische Stadtheiligtümer: Systematische Analyse und vergleichende Auswertung der archäologischen Befunde* [1994] 51)

Based on the conclusions reached in the first part of the chapter on Mycenae Mr. Zeman goes on to provide a masterly overview over the rise and decline of that site's palatial town.



He convincingly subdivides the entire span between the Shaft Grave period (MH III/LH I) and the end of the post-palatial period (LH IIIC) into six general phases. He demonstrates that the origins of the palatial town of Mycenae are unfortunately still very much shrouded in mystery, since the first two phases are mainly represented through monumental and sometimes richly furnished tombs, while, basically until LH IIIA1, we know very little about how settlement architecture at Mycenae looked like, since such architecture was overbuilt or destroyed through later construction activities. It is the fully developed palatial period between LH IIIA2 and the end of LH IIIB2 that has radically transformed the appearance of the site, as he is able to show. In this context, he makes the crucial distinction of three main phases, the first dating to LH IIIA2, the second between LH IIIB1 and IIIB2 Early and the third to LH IIIB2 Late. In building on insights gained at Mycenae during the last decades, Mr. Zeman rightly identifies the transformation between LH IIIB2 Early and IIIB2 Late as the probably most crucial one in the history of palatial period Mycenae. The significance of this turning point during the last five decades of the palatial period has long been overlooked in the literature, since the rebuilding of the western wall was traditionally dated by most excavators well LH IIIB2. After a destruction horizon at the end of LH IIIB2 Early, possibly caused by an earthquake, profound changes in the organization of the palatial town were introduced, which is why Mr. Zeman rightly opts for subdividing Phase 8 of the local Mycenae sequence into the two sub-phases 8A and 8B that were separated by the destruction horizon. As the author demonstrates, the Lower Town seems to have lost most of its economic importance after the destruction horizon, while many of the functions of storage and craft-production that buildings such as those of "West House Group" had previously fulfilled, seem to have been transferred into the acropolis in Phase 8B. In addition, he rightly stresses that the construction of the new western wall enabled the inclusion of the Cult Centre and Grave Circle A as stations within newly configured processional ways that allowed the elite to visualize their legitimacy and to regulate who had access to such monuments. Mr. Zeman ascribes the fundamental changes from Phase 8A to 8B to a dynastic change, which is indeed a distinct possibility. Concerning the destruction at the end of LH IIIB2, I totally agree with the author that this major conflagration most probably was the result of an armed conflict (p. 172) that put an end to palatial rule. The last part in the history of the Mycenaean period at its eponymous site, the post-palatial period, Mr. Zeman correctly characterizes as "the decomposition of the Palatial Town" (p. 173). Especially when compared with what was happening after 1200 BCE in nearby Tiryns (see below), it is striking how much more Mycenae seems to have suffered from the repercussions of the palatial conflagration. One likely similarity between the two major Argive Mycenaean centers may consist, as Mr. Zeman notes, in possible building activities in the Court of the Megaron (Christos Tsountas' "Geometric Building") that were probably linked to attempts to memorialize palatial period ruins.

In this second part of the Mycenae-chapter I would take a slightly different position than the author regarding the following points:

- It seems to me that a gradual rise of Mycenae from a previous Middle Helladic settlement is extremely unlikely, although this is the traditional view of most authors including Mr. Zeman (p. 153). Undoubtedly, Mycenae was settled during the entire Middle Helladic period, but it has not yielded any residential or funerary structures dating to Middle Helladic I and II that even distantly resemble what we encounter in nearby Argos. The latter was the natural candidate for becoming the Mycenaean capital of the Argolid. That this did not happen and instead Mycenae quickly rose to this position probably must have been, in my opinion, the result of a political upheaval (see Maran 2015).
- It is correct, when Mr. Zeman writes (p. 154) that we have no evidence 'that these first leaders of Mycenae made any attempt to form a distinct habitation zone for themselves'. Yet, the example Pylos that he later discusses, should have cautioned him not to equate too quickly the absence of evidence with an evidence of absence. At Pylos we find a significant Early Mycenaean "ritual topography" very much resembling, as he rightly notes, the situation in Mycenae. The difference is that at Pylos also remnants of Early Mycenaean buildings of imposing character have been uncovered, which, in my opinion, provide an idea of what is to be expected to have existed also at Mycenae.



- It is laudable that Mr. Zeman tries to estimate the size of the palatial town of Mycenae during its different stages (cf. p. 163), but the reliability of such estimates seems questionable in light of the fact that the quite dense organization of buildings inside the citadel is contrasted with a rather dispersed patterning of groups of buildings in the Lower Town which are separated by considerable distances without any architecture in-between them. Exactly because he is so much interested in processes of urbanization, Mr. Zeman should have discussed whether he sees any signs of an urban planning of this Lower Town, and, if not, what this may signify.

In the third chapter (pp. 177-287) Mr. Zeman turns to Tiryns, the second palatial center of the Argolid. The discussion follows the same basic outline as the one of the chapter on Mycenae in that the author first provides an overview over the uncovered architecture starting with the Upper Citadel, and then moving on to the parts of the site, which is followed by a chronologically structured assessment of the development of the palatial town of that site from the beginning of the Mycenaean period until its end. The author again is able to show how versed he is concerning the site under discussion and how much literature he has digested to assess Tiryns' palatial town. Therefore, his observations always rest on a solid basis, which allows him to analyze the architecture and independently reach conclusions that support or in some cases challenge previous interpretations:

- On the basis of his careful architectural analysis Mr. Zeman reaches the well-founded conclusion that the Lower Citadel of Tiryns was an 'impressive palatial investment' and served as a 'multifunctional zone' used for storage, skilled crafting and other purposes that were closely administered by the palace (pp. 211-212).
- He also makes the valid point that during the late palatial period Lower Citadel Building A and Building V must have been closely connected, since, from a certain point in time onwards, the access to the former building seems to have run through the latter one (p. 204).
- In respect to late palatial ritual activities in the Lower Citadel he puts forward the interesting hypothesis that the abandonment of a cult room in Building VI may form a parallel to the one of cult buildings at the contemporary Cult Centre of Mycenae (p. 214).
- Concerning the extent of destruction at the end of palatial period Tiryns he disagrees with Reinhard Jung, who has claimed that traces of fire were restricted to the palace on the Upper Citadel. Instead, Mr. Zeman correctly argues that also the Lower Citadel has provided evidence for such a destruction horizon (p. 215).
- Regarding Mr. Zeman's stimulating discussion of the architecture of the Tirynthian Lower Town, I completely agree with him that the LH IIIC northern part of this Lower Town constitutes an extraordinary example for post-palatial urban planning (p. 253).
- For the imposing Megaron W in the LH IIIC he assumes a public function (p. 270), and he makes the interesting suggestion that the start of the LH IIIC-inhabitation of the Southeastern Lower Town may have been linked to the gradual abandonment of the Northern Lower Town, with people moving from one area to the other (p. 285).
- Carefully considered and important is also his suggestion that the heterogeneity of the inhabitants of the Northern Lower Town may have prevented a better urban integration of the different neighborhoods constituting this part of the Lower Town (p. 283).
- The overview over the historical development of the palatial town of Tiryns (pp. 272-287) leads to interesting similarities and differences to Mycenae. Major differences concern on the one hand the fact that Tiryns until Late Helladic IIIA was still rather small (p. 273) and seemingly not very important, and on the other hand that after the palace's destruction Tiryns was the only site in Greece that underwent a major phase of urban development during LH IIIC (p. 281). By contrast, the two sites are linked, as Mr. Zeman demonstrates, through striking similarities in the kind



of building measures carried out in the last decades of the palatial period (his “Palatial Town – Phase 3 [LH IIIB2]; pp. 277-280).

Among the aspects in which I would caution the author to reconsider some parts of his argumentation are the following:

- In the discussion of the architecture of Tiryns Mr. Zeman deviates from the approach of the chapters dealing with Mycenae (and Pylos). Thus, as mentioned, when discussing building complexes of Mycenae he first described the interpretation of the excavators and only at the end gave his own. In the case of Tiryns, however, he proceeds differently inasmuch as he does not differentiate between these two levels of discussion and immediately presents his own conclusions. To give some examples: In the LH IIIC northwestern Lower Citadel he does not use the designations presented in Maran 2008 and Mühlenbruch 2013, but speaks of “Building XIa” and “Building XVa”, although the architectural units succeeding the final palatial Buildings XI and XV are now called “Raum 78c, Hof 78b, Raumkomplex 78a.2/02” (instead of “Building XIa”) and “Raumkomplex 1/01. 5/01” (“Building XVa”) respectively. Of course, Mr. Zeman is entitled to disagree with the nomenclature of the scholars working at the site, but he should have mentioned their interpretation and terminology. This also applies to the subdivision of the different areas of the Unterburg, in which he seems to follow Rahmstorf 2008, although the subdivision presented by Tobias Mühlenbruch and Ursula Damm-Meinhardt in the Tiryns XVII-volume is now the authoritative one. Yet, the described problem in how to integrate the existing terminology of architectural units becomes particularly apparent in the case of LH IIIC residential architecture. When he deals with the organization of LH IIIC-architecture in the Lower Citadel, he accepts Klaus Kilian’s proposal that discrete rooms and room complexes were organized around courtyards. Yet, when he turns to the LH IIIC-architecture uncovered in the Northeastern and Northwestern Lower Town he argues that rooms and room complexes together with a courtyard may have formed parts of one and the same “building”, although they exhibit a similar organization around courtyards than in the Lower Citadel (pp. 240-258). Again, it is his scholarly right to take such a position, but I would have expected a reference to the fact that all publications dealing with these areas of the Lower Town (cf. Kilian 1978; Maran – Papadimitriou 2006, 2016, 2021; Mühlenbruch 2013; Vetters 2019), have opted for a different interpretation, namely that these rooms and room complexes should be perceived as separate architectural units bordering on one (or even two) courtyards. The reason for such an interpretation is that especially in the case of the architecture of the Northeastern Lower Town the courtyards separating architectural units are of considerable size, which for me makes it difficult to believe that they formed parts of one and the same building than the rooms surrounding them. Indeed, this aspect is acknowledged by Mr. Zeman, who, in the end, leaves it open, whether in this case his interpretation is valid. Arguably, the situation in the Northwestern Lower Town is different, inasmuch as the courtyards separating roofed spaces are smaller than in the NE Lower Town and in the Lower Citadel, but this does not necessarily mean that they were used differently than the contemporary architecture of other parts of Tiryns.
- In the case of the fireplace in Room 8/00 Mr. Zeman doubts whether it was used as a hearth for cooking and rather assumes a cultic significance, due to the appearance of a Cypriote-type wall bracket that was probably attached to a wooden roof support close to this fireplace (p. 242). He also notes that it is unlikely that a hearth would be situated next to a wooden roof support. Yet, this is exactly how the large hearth in Megaron W was situated – namely between two wooden columns – and Vetters 2019 has referred to a close comparison to the situation of Room 8/00 in Kilian’s excavation in the Northwestern Lower Town, where a hearth is combined with a column base and a wall bracket. It also needs to be mentioned that surrounding the hearth in Room 8/00 a concentration of cooking vessels was found, which points to a function of the fireplace in the context of food preparation, perhaps of a ceremonial kind.
- Concerning ritual practices carried out in the LH IIIC Northern Lower Town he refers to the deposition of a Near Eastern bronze armor scale beneath a hearth and uses this, together with the appearance of wall brackets, as an indication for a possible Cypriote or Near Eastern origin of some of the inhabitants, which is indeed a distinct possibility. In this context, references to the following contributions should be added: J. Maran, “The Spreading of Objects and Ideas in the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean: Two Case Examples from the Argolid of the 13th and 12th Centuries B.C.” *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 336, 2004, 11-30; Vetters 2019, 222. 247.
- As regards the Mycenaean occupation of the Western Lower Town (p. 259-261) excavations between 2006 and 2010 were carried out in order to understand better the building history of the neighboring Building (“House 49 Complex”) that unfortunately was badly documented (and excavated) in the early 1970s. The renewed excavation uncovered architectural remains dating to LH IIIA2 and LH IIIB1, but thereafter the area seems to have been abandoned, since there were no traces of a LH



IIIB2- or IIIC-occupation (see Jahresbericht DAI 2009, pp. 214-216). Accordingly, the late palatial and post-palatial Lower Town do not seem to have extended to this area to the west of the citadel.

- In general, the author's command of the relevant literature is also excellent in the case of Tiryns. The following publications seem to have escaped his attention: the article by Joseph Shaw on the "bathroom" of the Tirynthian palace ("Bathing at the Mycenaean Palace of Tiryns", *AJA* 116/4, 2012, 555-571); the article by Maria Kostoula and Joseph Maran on the head-shaped faience vessels that were embellished by gilding in Building XI ("A Group of Animal-headed Faience Vessels from Tiryns", in: G. Lehmann, Z. Talshir, M. Gruber and S. Ahituv [eds.], *All the Wisdom of the East. Studies in Near Eastern Archaeology and History in Honor of Eliezer D. Oren* [2012] 193-234); the monograph by Ulrich Thaler on the palace of Tiryns (me-ka-ro-de: Mykenische Paläste als Dokument und Gestaltungsrahmen frühgeschichtlicher Sozialordnung [2018]).

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the palatial center of Pylos (pp. 288-336). Regarding this site Mr. Zeman was faced with a much more limited basis for his investigation than in the other two sites, since after the exemplary excavations of the 1950s under the direction of Carl W. Blegen that led to the uncovering of the palace, only in recent years renewed excavations have been carried out at Pylos, but these have uncovered almost exclusively elite funerary contexts. Accordingly, the author was confronted with a situation in which besides a beautifully preserved and published palace dating to LH IIIB and funerary monuments, only fragmentary information on predecessors of the final palace and on other parts of the palatial town were available. Nevertheless, Mr. Zeman was able to expertly handle these problems, to extract the necessary information and to form a synthesis that gives an up-to-date overview over the long-term architectural changes at Pylos in their respective historical context. In particular, his analysis demonstrates why Pylos, in spite of the fragmentary state of research on its palatial town, constitutes an important case example for his study:

- What makes Pylos so instructive are, as the author explains, the extremely early signs of a kind of monumental architecture that is unknown not only at Mycenae, where it was probably overbuilt or destroyed by later activities, but also at Tiryns, where it probably never existed, since the site only rather late was transformed into a palatial one. Thus, at Pylos already as early as LH I there is evidence for imposing architecture probably of some sort of "proto-palace" (pp. 298, 305) that was partially built in pseudo-ashlar technique. This goes along with the creation of a funerary topography mostly consisting of tholos tombs (pp. 323-324) and an expansion of the Lower Town (p. 326).
- The links to Crete that are already manifested in the pseudo-ashlar architectural style of the Early Mycenaean "proto-palace" seem to have continued at Pylos and find their clearest expression in the First Palace that was built in LH IIIA and seems to have had a large Central Court and buildings with a relatively high number of well-made ashlar blocks (p. 298, 305).
- Mr. Zeman is absolutely right in emphasizing the severity of the break that is reflected in the change between the First Palace and the Megaron Palace, probably built in LH IIIB1, which seems to also have been accompanied by a transformation of the ritual topography and a peak in the size of the palatial town (pp. 300-301, 332-334).
- As in the case of the Argive palaces he attributes the final destruction of the palace at Pylos to human agency (p. 335), an assessment which I find just as plausible as the observation that the site astonishingly did not recover from the blow of the destruction, which represents a major difference to the situation in the two Argive centers.

The chapter would profit from the integration of the following aspects:

- The idea of an Early Palace with a "Minoan-style" Central Court at Pylos was first introduced by Klaus Kilian, whose article should be cited: K. Kilian, "L'architecture des résidences Mycéniennes: Origine et extension d'une structure du pouvoir politique pendant l'âge du Bronze Récent", in: E. I. évv (ed). *Le système palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome: Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 1985*



(1987) 213–217. It needs to be remembered, though, that the current excavator of Pylos, Jack L. Davis, rejects this interpretation.

- Concerning the patterns of circulation and decoration of the Megaron palace of Pylos the mentioned monograph by Thaler (2018) should be included and also the recent proposal to reconstruct the palatial Megaron of Pylos (and also at Tiryns and Mycenae) as a “lofty hall” by S. LaFayette Hogue, “The Palatial Megaron and Upper Story in the Palace of Nestor: Evidence for a New Reconstruction”, *Hesperia* 92/1, 2023, 43–110.

In the fifth and final chapter (pp. 337–356) Mr. Zeman provides a synthesis of the main conclusions of his study, among which I would particularly mention:

- The definition of the crucial formative stage of Mycenaean palatial towns in which, during LH I-II ideas and practices emanating from Neopalatial Crete were translated into unmistakably Mainland Greek architectural forms that combined monumental residential and funerary structures and employed them to create “performative spaces” for movement in processions and other forms of ritual practices (p. 339).
- The linkage between monopalatial Knossos and the emergence of the first definable Mycenaean palaces that seem to have appropriated the Cretan model of the focus on a Central Court (p. 342).
- The insight that Mycenaean palaces were always spatially separated from the rest of the palatial town (p. 344).
- The reference to the transformation represented by the introduction of the “Megaron-palaces” in the beginning of LH IIIB (pp. 346–347) and the emphasis on the gigantic building measures carried out in LH IIIB2 that again significantly changed the appearance of the palatial towns and led to the abandonment of old ritual axes of movement and worship and the creation of new ones (pp. 349–350).
- The hypothesis that in the Argolid a dynastic change may have provoked the drastic building measures in the last decades before the final destructions and that during this time Tiryns may have already risen to the position of the most important palace of this kingdom (p. 351–352).
- The recognition that at Tiryns the urban tradition outlasted the destruction of the palace and that the site’s growth may have been linked with its character as the most important regional harbor town (pp. 354–355).

To these important conclusions should be added:

- There are likely to be more examples of Linear B-tablets preceding LH IIIB than the one from Iklaia (p. 342), see V. Petrakis, “The Beginnings of Linear B and Literate Administration on the Greek Mainland”, in A. L. D’Agata et al. (eds.), *One State, Many Worlds – Crete in the Late Minoan II-III A2 Early Period Proceedings of the International Conference held at Khania, Μεγάλο Αρσενάλι, 21st-23rd November 2019* (2022) 405–424.
- Concerning the idea of a connection between the major destruction of the palace at Knossos in LM IIIA2 and the introduction of the “Megaron palaces” on the Greek Mainland (p. 346) that were much more Minoan than was hitherto thought, see J. Maran and E. Stavrianopoulou, “Potnios Aner. Reflections on the Ideology of Mycenaean Kingship”, in: E. Alram-Stern and G. Nightingale (eds.), *KEIMELION – The Formation of Elites and Elitist Lifestyles from Mycenaean Palatial Times to the Homeric Period* (2007) 285–298; V. Petrakis, “The Adventures of the Mycenaean Palatial Megaron”, in: B. Davis and R. Laffineur (eds.), *ΝΕΩΤΕΡΟΣ – Studies in Bronze Age Aegean Art and Archaeology in Honor of Professor John G. Younger* (2020) 283–308.
- While Mr. Zeman correctly underlines the significance of the evidence for urban planning at Tiryns in the early 12<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE, he does not comment on the fact that the degree of systematic and extensive urbanization visible in the Northern Lower Town of that site does not seem to find any comparisons in earlier forms of Mycenaean urbanism. This, in my opinion, raises the question whether Kilian may have been right to postulate that the idea of creating a new Lower Town from scratch may have derived from Cyprus.

The main text of the study is followed by the rich bibliography, very helpful tables, in which the main data for each studied building are summarized, and the figures that encompass reproductions of the plans of the sites and buildings discussed in the study. All this provides the reader with the necessary information to follow the author’s presentation and analysis.



Mr. Zeman has accomplished to write a study that is well-written, clearly structured and unusually mature and inspiring for a PhD dissertation, which motivated this reader to write such a comprehensive and detailed review. Clearly, this dissertation deserves a swift publication, since it fills a void in the literature, inasmuch as it is the first synoptic study dedicated to the particularities of Mycenaean forms of urbanism. The dissertation is methodologically sound, based on a thorough and diligent work and full of new ideas and explanations that will undoubtedly be acclaimed by the research community once they will be published.

In closing, I wish to emphasize that I recommend the admission of Piotr Zeman to the further stages of the doctoral process. I also take the liberty of recommending that the doctoral degree be awarded to him.

Drepanon (Greece), 4 September 2023

05.09.2023.  
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