

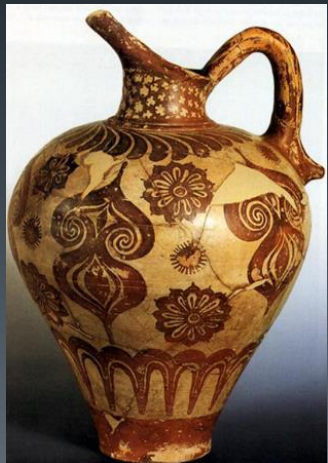
Creating Sacred Spaces: Urban Cult in the Bronze Age Aegean



HPAH7014

Mycenaean Greece

- Late Helladic
 - LH I: c.1550-1500 BC
 - LH IIA: c.1500-1460 BC
 - LH IIB: c.1460-1400 BC
 - LH IIIA1-2: c.1400-1300 BC
 - LH IIIB: c.1300-1190 BC
 - LH IIIC: c.1190-1050 BC
- Political geography



LH II “Palace style” jug



Creating Religious Spaces

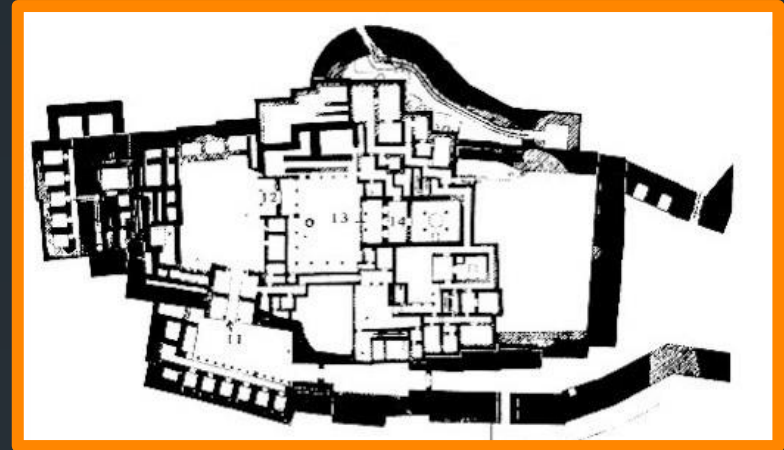
- Institutionalisation of cult & integration within built environment
 - Increasing (elite/palatial) control of cult?
- Religious spaces become embedded in popular consciousness
 - Many survive as sacred spaces into Iron Age & beyond



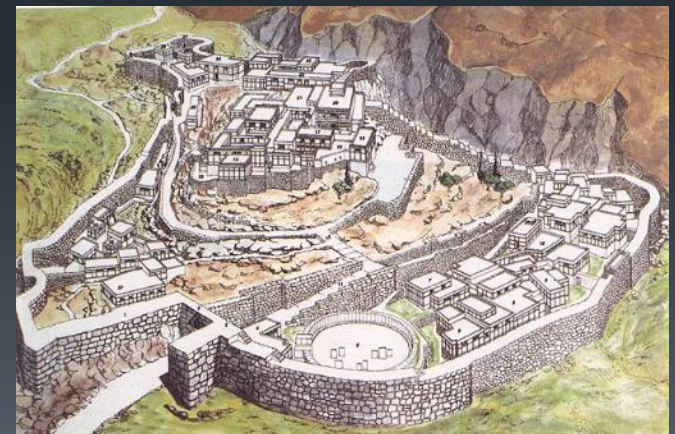
Athens, Αρχαίος νέος

Palaces: Focus of Established Cult

- “designed down to the smallest detail for the staging of centripetal processions” (Maran 2016: 587)
 - Architectural layout imposed movement in a particular direction
- Sensory manipulation: movement deeper into palace & sensory experiences:
 - Reinforced through light, dark, colour
 - Moving between restricted & open spaces



Tiryns



Mycenae

Palaces: Focus of Established Cult

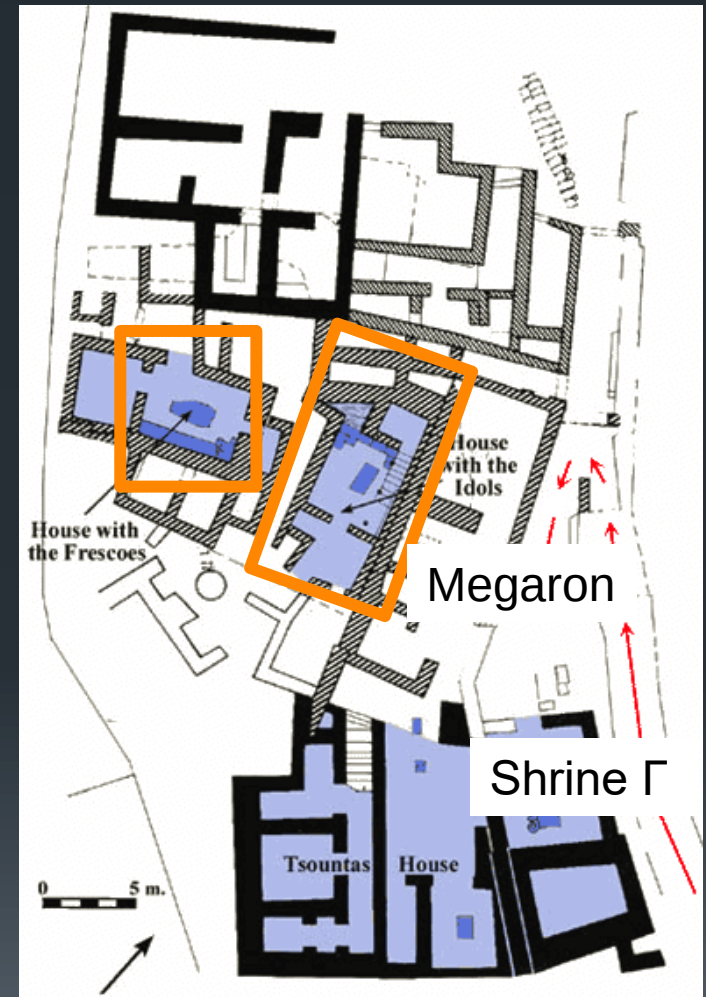
- Focal point: megaron
 - Ritual performance around ceremonial hearth:
 - Importance of fire in Mycenaean cult
- Cult experiences reinforced through embodied practices:
 - Heat & light of fire
 - Consumption of alcoholic beverages & animal feasts (Pylos)
 - Colour experiences: wall paintings
 - Music, bardic recitation....



Central hearth, Mycenae

Cult Centre, Mycenae

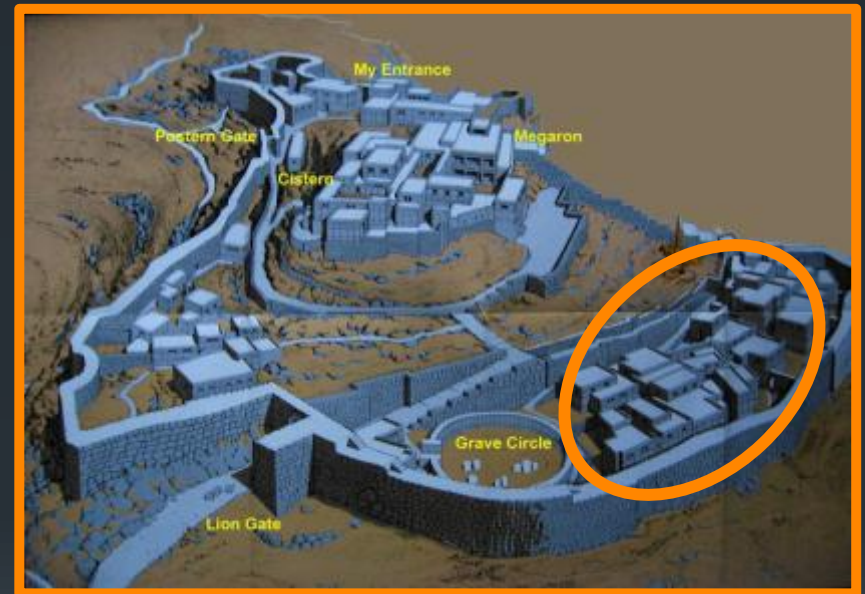
- Group of 5 buildings on the west slope of the citadel:
 - Megaron
 - The Temple
 - The Room with the Fresco Complex
 - Tsountas House Shrine (Shrine Γ)
 - Tsountas House
- Built around a small open area (the Courtyard)
- Each shrine had a central hearth or altar & an open air court for outdoor rituals & gatherings



Cult Centre

Cult Centre, Mycenae

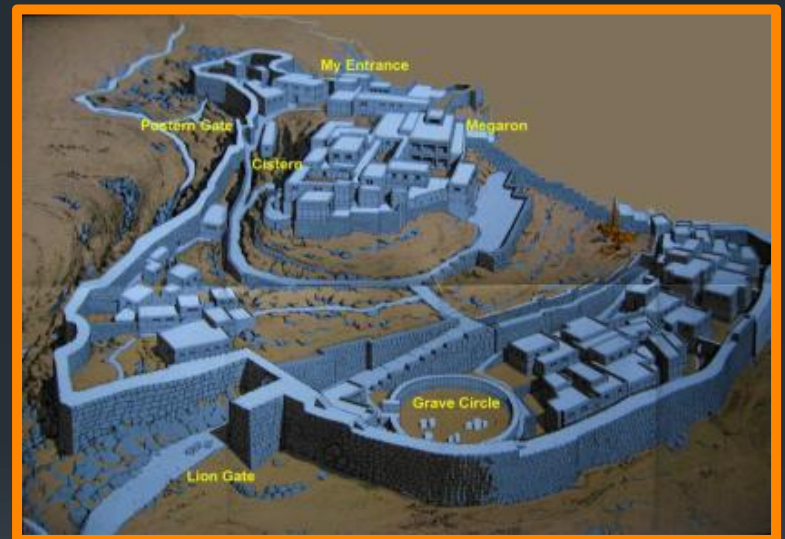
- LH IIIB: reorganisation of political & religious space of citadel
- Cult Centre brought inside citadel fortifications
 - Linked to the palace via a Processional Way
 - Partly roofed
 - Decorated with a chariot procession



Citadel of Mycenae

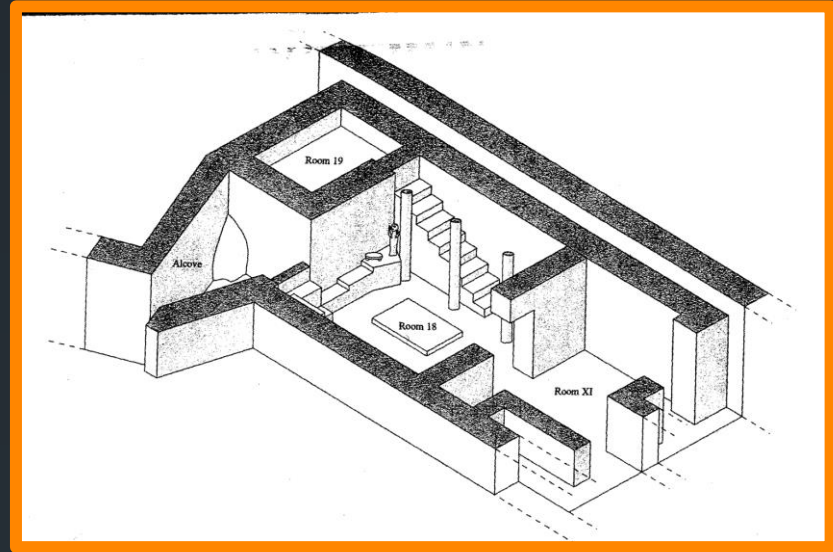
Palatial Control of Religious Space

- Incorporation of religious spaces within citadel walls
 - Integrated into patterns of circulation inside the citadel
 - Processions creating links between *wanax*, the gods in the Cult Centre & the “ideologically elevated ancestors in Grave Circle A” (Maran 2016: 588)
- Access to religious monuments appropriated by palatial elite



Temple Complex

- North-south axis
- Courtyard with circular altar
 - Ash debris & burnt offerings
 - Significance of fire & animal offerings
- Megaron unit:
 - Restricted liminal space
 - Rich in repeated symbolic objects:
 - Plastered platforms with large numbers of figures
 - A female terracotta statuette was plastered into the top of the northeast platform, facing west
 - Facing a small mud-plaster offering table



Clay idol *in situ*

Room with the Idols

- Small chamber: c.2 x 2m
- Contained large number of cult items
- Doorway walled up & whitewashed: closure ceremony?
- Nature of ritual activity performed in room?
 - Cella / holy of holies



Fig. 2. The Temple Complex in Phase VIII. For clarity, the black lines on the plan are not to scale.

Room with the Idols

- Rich in repeated symbols
- Fragments of 8 large, grotesque terracotta figures (0.50 - 0.60 m high):
 - 3 most complete had their faces turned toward a wall
- 6 coiled terracotta snakes
- Quantity of undecorated pottery
- 3 tripod offering tables made from unbaked clay covered with stucco



Room with the Idols

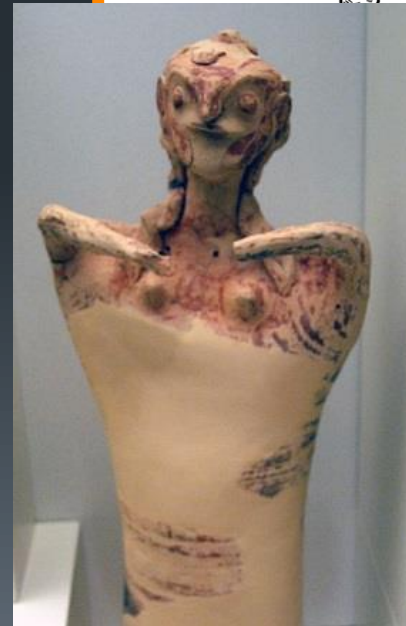
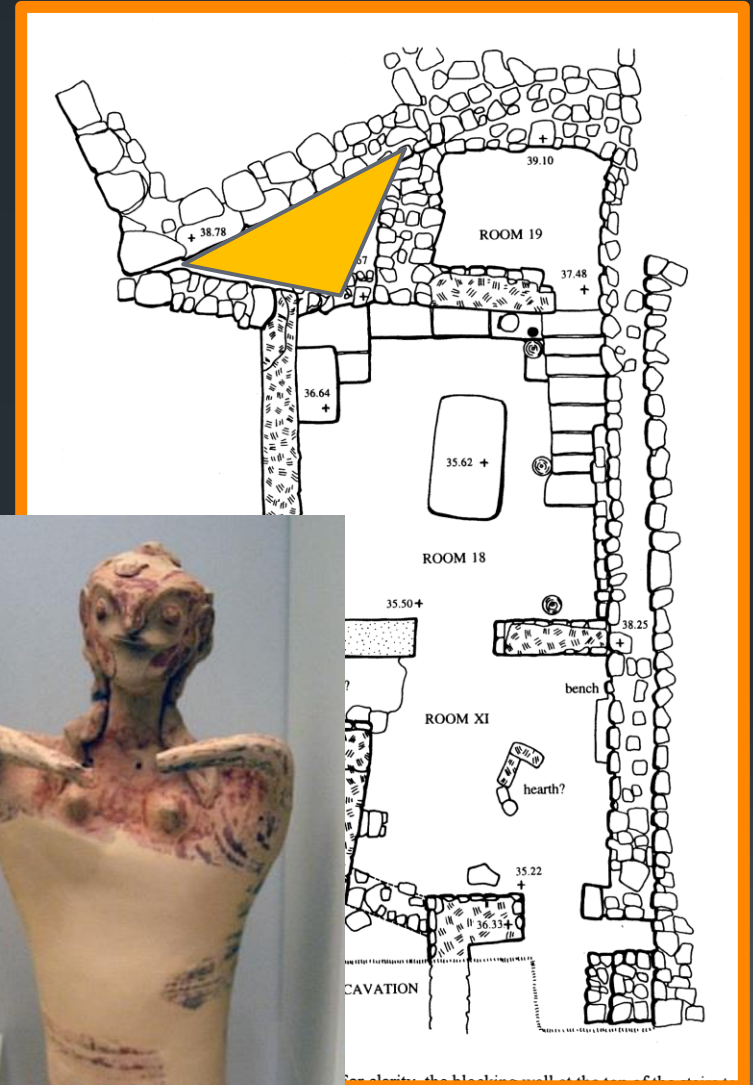
- Luxury items
 - Ivory objects
 - Scarab inscribed with the name of Queen Tiye
 - Cowrie shell, amber, rock crystal, lapis lazuli
 - Carnelian beads from a necklace
 - Numerous glass-paste ornaments
- Wealth of cult, ceremonial use, offerings?



Ivory lion

Temple Complex: “Alcove”

- Triangular shape cut into the bedrock
 - Space for cult storage?
 - Numerous fragments of incomplete large terracotta figures (or idols)
 - Joins between fragments found in the Alcove & in the Room with the Idols
- Structured deposition:
 - Deliberately broken & placed in two separate places
 - Intentional aspect of ritual use & object biography?
 - Ritually killed in some form of closure ceremony?



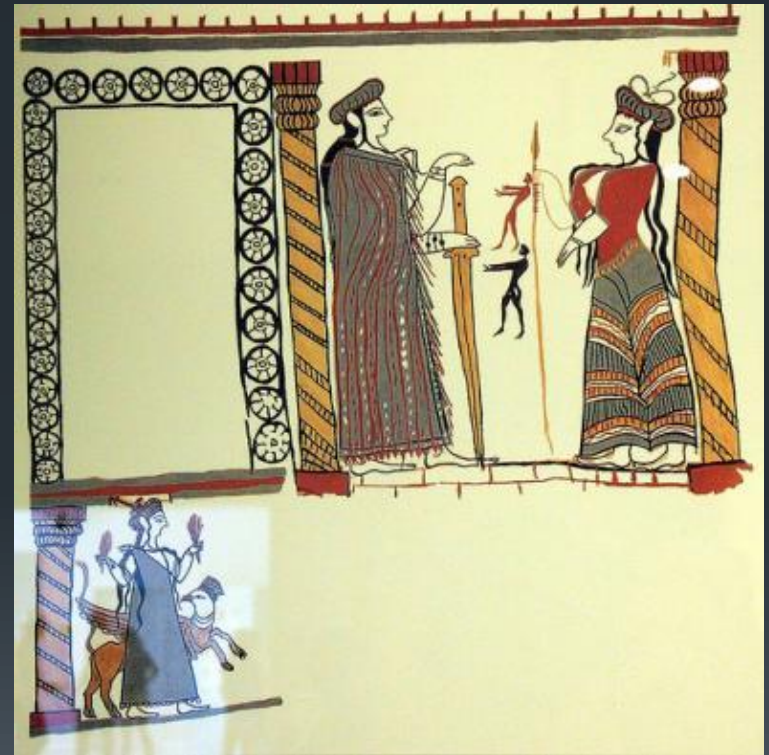
Fresco Room Complex

- Reasonably substantial room (5.3 x 3.5m)
- Oval hearth at centre & 4 wooden columns
 - Large quantities of burnt pottery around hearth
- South wall: “bench” covered by large stone slabs:
 - Several rich objects (including stone & lead vases, ivory sword pommel, & two ivory figures) were placed inside this



Fresco Room Complex

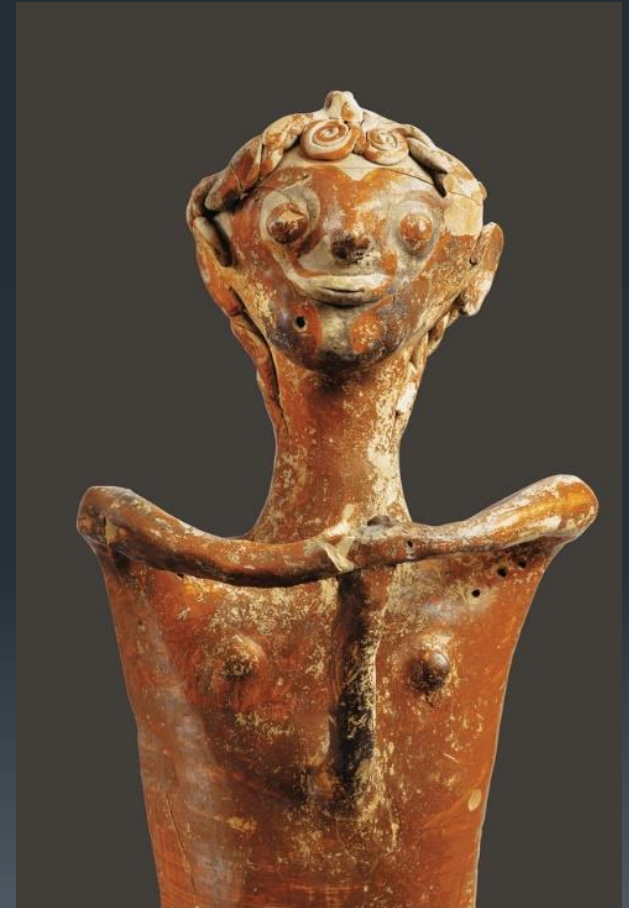
- Low platform or altar in SE corner of room
- Wall & altar covered with painted plaster:
- Religious content of imagery
- Room filled in purposefully at the end of the 13th century & wall paintings whitewashed:
 - Power of imagery – closure ceremony?



Reconstruction of wall paintings

Thinking About the Cult Centre

- Who was involved in ritual activity at the Cult Centre?
 - Location & approach: ceremonial processions involving the king?
 - Open court spaces the main venue of ritual performance?
- Where were the religious objects found in the Temple Complex used?
 - Were these brought out as part of the religious performances in the courtyard area ?
 - Or were they kept hidden (increasing their mystery & thus their power)?

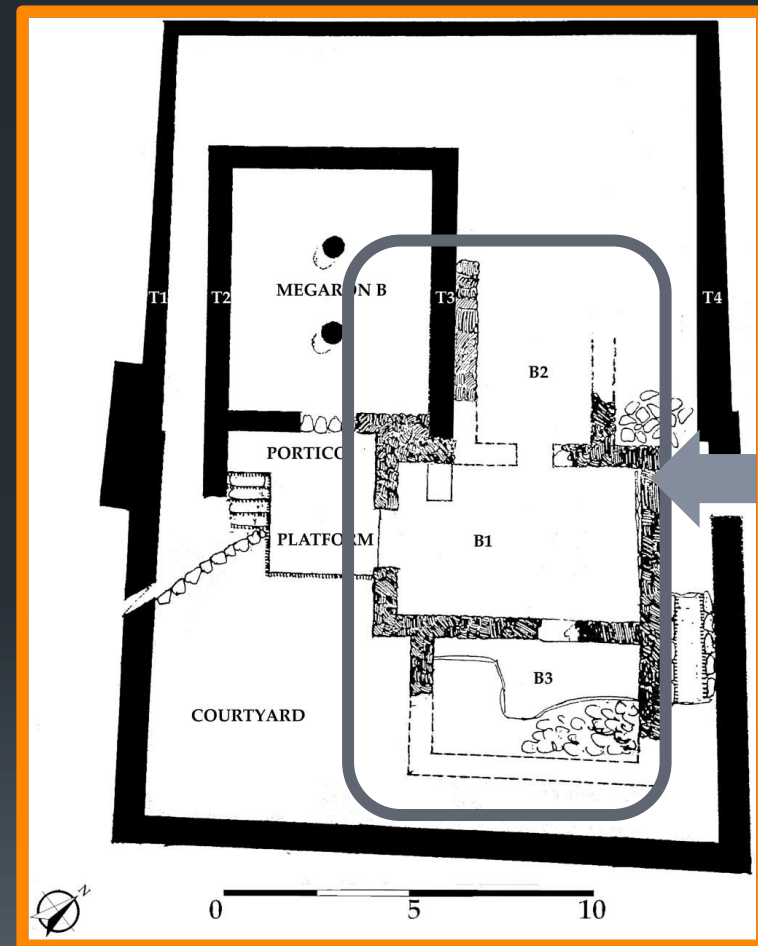


Closure Ceremonies

- Why were certain objects removed from use & buried/concealed/embedded within the Cult Centre?:
 - Closure ceremony of special rooms
 - Concealment of objects
 - Deliberate fragmentation & separation of cult objects
 - Concealment of the wall paintings: white washed but not destroyed
- Note that this is shortly before the destruction of citadel

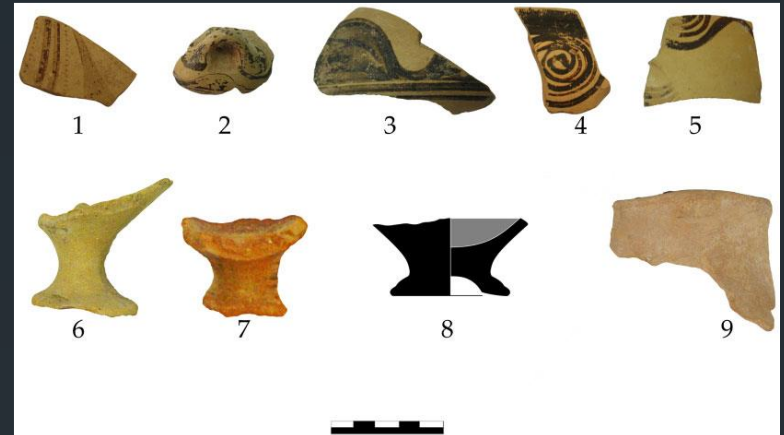
Eleusis Megaron B

- Enclosed temenos entered from north
- Megaron unit:
 - Rectangular building, 6 x 9.7m, Approached via portico, 6 x 2m
 - Raised platform in front, 2.90 m x 2.50 m
 - Paved courtyard 1.30-1.40 m below building & platform
- Used throughout LBA from LH IIB
- 3 rooms added in LH IIIB



Eleusis Megaron B

- Sealed deposit of ash, burnt animal (pig) bones & broken pottery:
 - Commensality: drinking, pouring & storage vessels
 - Burnt animal sacrifice on the platform (open air altar)
- Temenos wall created enclosed liminal space
 - Privacy of the ritual
 - Revealed/concealed knowledges



Broken pottery



Burnt animal bones

Mycenaean Cult on Crete

- Significant change to “Minoan” practices:
 - Shift of popular cult into urban environment from LM IIIB
- Small urban shrines placed at the edge of settlement
 - Small rooms with benches which housed cult statues (& deity?)
 - Processional approach
 - Subsidiary storage rooms

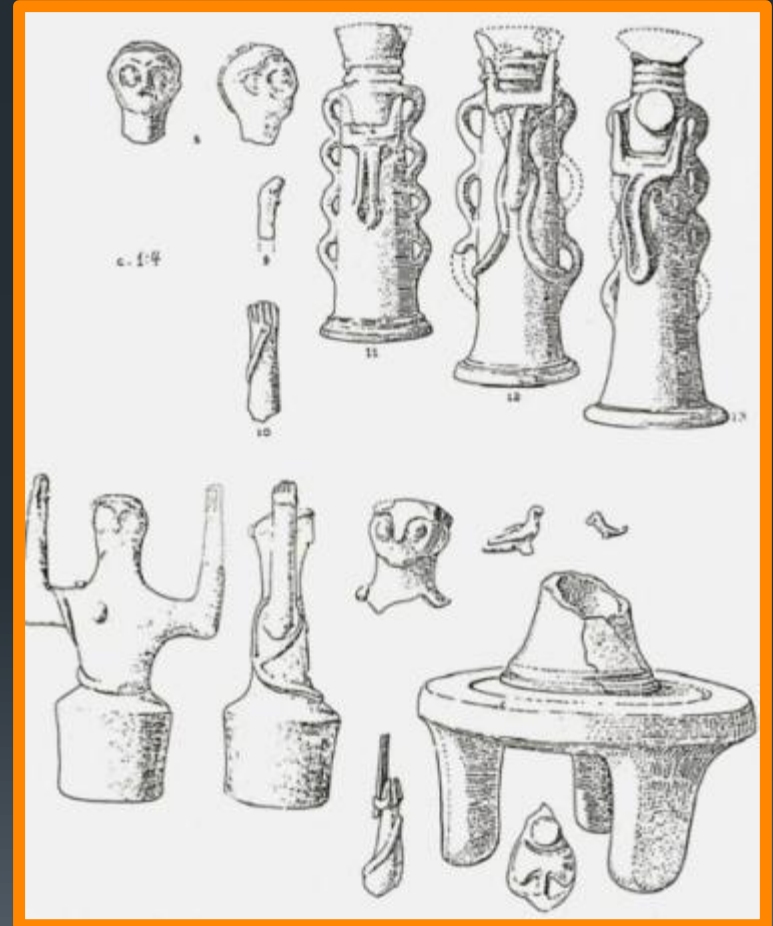


Gournia, shrine



Mycenaean Cult on Crete

- Clay female figures: cult image
 - Usually 50cm+
 - Designed to be displayed & viewed?
- Cylindrical clay stands (“snake tubes”) supported large offering bowls:
 - Usually placed on the bench in front of the cult statue
- Horns of consecration



Cult equipment, Gournia

Survival of Minoan Aspects

- Ecstatic aspect & epiphany continues from earlier Minoan practices?
 - Poppies, horns of consecration & birds on headdress of “cult image”
- Minoan cult equipment:
 - Double axes
 - Offering tables
 - Stands for double axes (Ayia Triadha)



“Poppy Goddess”, Knossos

Summary

- Much evidence for Mycenaean ritual action comes from the citadels & palaces:
 - Institutionalisation & palatial control of cult
- Restricted spaces – more for housing cult equipment than for popular gatherings
- Importance of hearth/fire to Mycenaean religious practices
- Rituals entailed:
 - Processions (carrying around & displaying cult images)
 - Burnt sacrifices
 - Commensality
- Crete: hybridity of practice?