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**Sanctuaries and their surroundings:  
The role of ‘space’ in the religion of the LBA to EIA of Greece\***

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Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to deal with a feature that has been only briefly addressed within discussions of sanctuaries from the Late Bronze to Early Iron Age of Greece. That feature, or non-existent feature, is ‘space’.<sup>1</sup> By this I mean the provision of space within sanctuaries, along with the space available directly outside the shrine for participation of worshippers. This feature will be used in conjunction with a discussion of the sanctuaries’ direct ‘surroundings’, that is, were they urban or isolated sanctuaries, and what features can be directly associated with them?*

**Introduction**

The past few decades of scholarly research have provided those interested in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age of Greece with a heightened understanding of these periods. The findings have led to an overall acceptance of some characteristics of Greek religion in these periods; the importance of platforms/benches for the display of votive offerings, hearths for cooking and often animal sacrifice, and, pottery associated with eating and drinking ritual actions. Within the field of cult practice and religion there have been recent noteworthy studies on the Dark Age and Early Iron Age of Greece. Papers by Antonaccio and Sourvinou-Inwood both agree that what occurs in Early Iron Age religion is in no way a ‘Renaissance’ (a relatively sudden re-use of old forgotten ideas and practices in a newly revised fashion) but, instead, a continuous and intensifying

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\* This paper is a work in progress as part of my PhD thesis ‘Ritual & Religion: Tracing Traditions through the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age of Greece.’ I expect that with the culmination of my PhD will also come greater knowledge of this topic, at which point my discussion and conclusions may differ.

<sup>1</sup> See De Polignac 1995 for his opinions on the lack of spatial determination at Dark Age sanctuaries; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995 for her reasoning against De Polignac’s theory.

development from the Dark Age.<sup>2</sup> Studies conducted by Wright and Van Leuven have considered sanctuaries of the Late Bronze Age from a variety of locations (citadel, settlement, and isolated), with the aim of providing a list of features that are common within Mycenaean shrines, a similar theme as set out by Renfrew.<sup>3</sup>

The discussion begins with a brief overview of Aegean settlement at the end of the Palatial Late Bronze Age (1250 BC) throughout the period of collapse, transition, and into the Early Iron Age (900 BC).<sup>4</sup> The sanctuary sites are then considered in the chronological framework of, firstly the Late Bronze Age; and secondly the Transitional period and Early Iron Age. All published sanctuaries on the Greek Mainland and Cyclades have been tabulated with a summary of their location and cult assemblage (see below), but due to space restrictions only few of these sites may be discussed in detail here, in order to illustrate the background to my conclusions concerning the role of space and surroundings.<sup>5</sup> Through this discussion it is hoped to demonstrate not only the lack of ‘space’ that seems to be common in the Late Bronze Age, but also how isolated sanctuaries alongside settlement sanctuaries are actually a necessary and widespread occurrence throughout the entire period considered.<sup>6</sup> One key difference which can be identified, however, is the isolated sanctuaries’ topographical location, which moves from a highland, to a lowland position.

### **Settlement during the transition from Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age**

It is not possible within the scope of this paper to discuss settlement in this period in detail. However, the basic characteristics of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age

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<sup>2</sup> Antonaccio 1994: 79-104; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 1-17; and see Hagg 1983: 208-210 for a general discussion addressing the notion of an eighth century BC Renaissance.

<sup>3</sup> Wright 1994: 37-78; Van Leuven 1981: 12-15, both of whom do not consider ‘space’ in their discussions; Renfrew 1985 : 11-26.

<sup>4</sup> For the most up-to-date discussion and references on the chronology of this period see Dickinson 2006: 20.

<sup>5</sup> The sites with detailed discussion were chosen due to the published material available as well as making sure each location type – citadel, settlement and isolated sites – were represented throughout the period. Those sites that are not discussed in further detail have linked footnotes from Table 1 and 2 with a brief description.

<sup>6</sup> See Hagg 1981: 35-39 for the topic of ‘official’ and ‘popular’ cults in Mycenaean Greece. He accepts he may have oversimplified Mycenaean religion by attempting to conform to these two categories. The idea of ‘space’ at urban religious sites adds to the discussion of access and who uses these sites, to the point where Hagg’s two categories must be seen as far to restricting.

are outlined so as to avoid segregating religion from societal change and development. Mycenaean material culture during its apogee (LH III A - LH III B, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) was characterised by fortified palatial citadels dispersed around mainland Greece: at Mycenae, Tiryns and Midea (which is still under investigation) in the Argolid;<sup>7</sup> Pylos in Messenia;<sup>8</sup> Thebes and Gla in Boeotia.<sup>9</sup> In Attica there was most probably a citadel on the Athenian Acropolis.<sup>10</sup> The palaces are generally considered to have accommodated the residences of important figureheads, the *wanaktes*, and the administrative centres of the territories over which they presided.<sup>11</sup> Contemporary to the citadel sites were smaller settlements. Some of these were most probably subject to their closest palace, such as the settlement of Nichoria to the palatial centre at Pylos, while others not clearly so.<sup>12</sup> It is likely that during the palatial period many major and minor principalities were linked by networks of alliance and dependency, and may have been ruled by inter-related families.<sup>13</sup>

The destruction of the palaces c.1200 BC<sup>14</sup> changed the character of settlement; this may be observed in the LH III C period (1200-1090 BC).<sup>15</sup> At Nichoria the settlement remained inhabited and grew significantly, with burial and house architecture suggesting growth in elite power.<sup>16</sup> The finds from areas marginal to the palace centres, such as Methana and Lefkandi, also demonstrate an increase in settlement activity.<sup>17</sup> Resettlement has been observed, even at some of the palace sites themselves. At Mycenae, Tiryns and Midea efforts were made to reconstruct the areas to accommodate settlers,<sup>18</sup> although this was in no way done with palatial grandeur.

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<sup>7</sup> For Mycenae see French 2002; Shelmerdine 1997: 541-542; Taylour, French and Wardle 1981. For Tiryns see Kilian 1998; Shelmerdine 1997: 543. For Midea see Shelmerdine 1997: 543-547; Walberg 1998; Åström and Demakopoulou 1986: 19-25.

<sup>8</sup> Blegen, Rawson, Taylor and Donovan 1973; Shelmerdine 1997: 545-547.

<sup>9</sup> Shelmerdine 1997: 548.

<sup>10</sup> Shelmerdine 1997: 547-548.

<sup>11</sup> Dickinson 2006: 35.

<sup>12</sup> For Pylos see Foxhall 1995: 244.

<sup>13</sup> Dickinson 2006: 29.

<sup>14</sup> Shelmerdine 1997: 539.

<sup>15</sup> Dickinson 2006: 23.

<sup>16</sup> Foxhall 1995: 244-245.

<sup>17</sup> Foxhall 1995: 248.

<sup>18</sup> Dickinson 2006: 60.

While the LH III C material culture suggests some prosperity, during the course of this period this seems to diminish, with settlements gradually decreasing until finally being abandoned.<sup>19</sup> What characterises the Early Iron Age are settlements of significantly smaller proportions than those of the earlier palatial period. Dickinson acknowledges the ability of the populace to withstand the actual palatial collapse of 1200 BC and the situation immediately following, but believes that an overwhelming instability would have effected the surviving population in the initial stages of the Early Iron Age.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 1. Map of sanctuaries from all periods considered in text. Sites from the Late Bronze Age are shown in red, and sites from the transitional/early Iron Age are in black.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Snodgrass 2000: 363.

<sup>20</sup> Dickinson 2006: 71.

<sup>21</sup> This map is sketched by the author, so is not absolutely accurate. For plotted sanctuaries of the Late Bronze Age see Wright 1994: 39.

## **Late Bronze Age Sanctuaries**

Beginning with Late Bronze Age sanctuary sites, this paper aims to illustrate effectively what appears to be the standard Mycenaean practice regarding ‘space’ and ‘surroundings’ at religious sites, as well as outline their architecture and smaller finds. Sanctuaries associated with palatial citadels are assessed first, followed by settlement sites, and lastly those that appear to be in isolated surroundings (see Figure 1 for site locations).

The Temple (within the cult centre at Mycenae) dates from the LH III B<sup>22</sup> and is located on the lower west slope of the citadel, within a complex of independent cult rooms.<sup>23</sup> On-going investigation has suggested that, at the time of the Temple’s construction and main use, the fortification wall was located further up the slope, thus placing the complex outside the citadel. When the wall was rebuilt to encompass the cult centre, probably during the mid-LH III B and possibly as late as the LH III B2, any re-use of the temple was significantly limited.<sup>24</sup>

The shrine itself is rather small, with the main room providing space for no more than five or six people. Directly outside the building is located an open space with a large round stone altar roughly at its centre. Although not a particularly large space, this area could possibly accommodate a limited assembly of people. However, we should bear in mind that when the building was constructed, the citadel wall did not occupy its current location.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, direct access from the settlement on the lower hill would have been unhindered and, in theory, the number of people who could participate in rituals or merely observe them could have been larger.

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<sup>22</sup> The Temple was built at the very beginning of this period, LH III B1, and went through numerous phases until the violent destruction at the end of the LH III B2. Limited use in the LH III C. For chronology see Taylour, French and Wardle 1999: 1-3.

<sup>23</sup> Taylour, French and Wardle 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Wardle 2003: 320-323.

<sup>25</sup> For detail on the chronology associated with the positioning of the citadel wall, see Wardle 2003: 320-321.

*Table 1: Religious sites of the Late Bronze Age Palatial period (LH III B) and a summary of their cult assemblages*

Site	Surroundings	Cult building	Cultic furniture	Female figurines	Animal figurines	Pottery related to drinking / dining
The Cult Centre, Mycenae	Built outside palace fortifications <sup>26</sup> , near city gate	✓	✓	✓	Snakes only	✓
Palace at Tiryns, Lower citadel <sup>27</sup>	Inside citadel, adjoining palace fortifications	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Palace of Nestor, Pylos <sup>28</sup>	On North-Eastern outskirts of palace	✓	✓	-	-	✓
Citadel at Midea <sup>29</sup>	Inside citadel, adjoining palace fortifications, near city gate	✓	- <sup>30</sup>	✓	✓	✓
Phylakopi, Melos	Adjoining city fortifications	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agios Konstantinos, Methana	Within large settlement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ayia Irini, Kea	Inside fortifications, near gate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agia Triada – Agios Vasileios	Isolated hill top	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Profitis Ilias Cave, near Tiryns	Isolated hill top	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Agios Georgios, Kythera	Isolated hill top	-	-	-	✓	- <sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> See discussion below for the chronology and references for this on-going theory.

<sup>27</sup> Cult rooms exist as part of the Lower citadel. Built directly against the fortification walls, one room includes the common feature of a bench for the display of votives. This room is very small, and there is a very small amount of room outside for possible worshippers to gather. See Kilian 1988: 193-196.

<sup>28</sup> The whole palace complex displays signs of Feasting on a massive scale, due to the quantity of cooking pots and Kylikes. However, the sanctuary area has been identified in the far North-East corner of the complex. Room 93 is accepted as the shrine, with a small open courtyard containing a raised altar, directly in front of Room 93. See Whittaker 1997: 31; Blegen, Rawson, Taylor and Donovan 1973: 302-305.

<sup>29</sup> This site is still being excavated. So far both figurines and pottery have been found in and around what could be religious rooms adjoining the fortification walls. The information from this site is far from complete, but there is no doubt that some religious activities were being practiced here, close to the citadel fortifications. See Demakopoulou & Divari-Valakou 2001: 181-189; Walberg 1998: 80-81.

<sup>30</sup> Midea is still undergoing excavation work, so this detail is not yet clear.

<sup>31</sup> Although animal bones were found scattered at the site.

Troullos, Kea	Isolated hill top	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Marmaria, Delphi	Open isolated area	-	? <sup>32</sup>	✓	-	-
Apollo Maleatas, Epidauros	Isolated hill top	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

This phase of the area also includes other cult buildings of the same period, yielding precious artefacts such as an ivory lion and an ivory head, which could have belonged to a cult statue, as well as an antique Egyptian faience plaque of Amenhotep III, most probably the result of diplomatic contact.<sup>33</sup> Also, its location high on the western slope, beyond Grave circle B and the tombs of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, results in the temple being closer to the palace than the habitation area that lies at a much lower level. These factors suggest that wealthy worshippers frequented the cult centre at Mycenae. Regardless of the location of the citadel wall placing the sanctuary inside or outside the citadel, it is clear that this religious site must in some way be associated with the palace. Other examples of sanctuaries from citadel-sites such as Tiryns, Pylos, Phylakopi, and most likely Midea, demonstrate remarkable similarities in construction style and internal furniture, rendering the basic characteristics of the Mycenae Temple as quite typical of citadel-associated shrine buildings.<sup>34</sup> In addition to these architectural similarities, Tiryns, Pylos and Phylakopi all share with Mycenae a lack of space for worshippers to gather. Each site has a small internal space, in which provision is made for display of votives on podiums or benches, as well as a very small court directly outside the shrine.

<sup>32</sup> The finds may be associated with a flat stone, which could be taken as a type of podium or altar. However, this is in no way certain.

<sup>33</sup> Wardle 2003: 321. For references on the whole 'cult complex' area see, Taylor, French, and Wardle 1981, 1999; French 2002: 84-92.

<sup>34</sup> Tiryns: see Kilian 1988: 190-196. Pylos: see Blegen, Rawson, Taylor and Donovan 1973: 302-305; Whittaker 1997: 31. Phylakopi: Renfrew 1981; Renfrew 1999. Although the site at Phylakopi is located on the island of Melos some distance from the mainland, and not necessarily considered palatial, it did show connections to the Mycenaean world. In addition, I consider it together with the citadel sites due to the large size of this settlement, the cyclopean fortification walls, and the existence of a megaron unit, all being characteristics of citadels on the mainland. Midea: Demakopoulou & Divari-Valakou 2001; Walberg 1998. Unfinished excavations result in my caution using the details of this site, however, the evidence of cult practice is undisputed.



To address settlement-associated sanctuaries, *Agios Konstantinos* on Methana, dates from the LH III A-B period (early 14<sup>th</sup> to late 13<sup>th</sup> century BC).<sup>35</sup> The building identified as the main cult area is Room A, which is rectangular in plan and consists of only one room. It is located within a large Mycenaean hilltop settlement. Due to the site having been only partially excavated, it is unclear whether Room A occupied a central or a peripheral location within the settlement. Room A is very similar to the above mentioned citadel-associated shrines, in the sense that it could not accommodate many people internally, as well as having no provision for an external gathering area. This shrine maintains the notion of the practice of ritual display, with numerous votives and burnt animal bone within the shrine. In addition, it has the similar trait of very limited space for individuals to participate in ritual at one time.

Phase VIII of the sanctuary of *Ayia Irini* at Kea (Late Bronze Age level) includes a rectangular building comprising of six small rooms and is located just inside the gate of a large settlement.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the building yielded cult furniture such as benches and podiums allowing the display of votives, while it completely lacked any provision for external space, and very little internally.

The outline above has demonstrated that the sanctuary-sites associated with settlements or citadels are characterised by a lack of ‘space’ both within the sanctuaries themselves, and in the area surrounding them. This observation suggests either that the people using them did not gather there in large numbers, or that only a limited number of people actually made use of the cultic structures. Moreover, similarities were observed in relation to the ‘surroundings’ of the sanctuaries considered above. At Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, Midea, Phylakopi and *Ayia Irini*, the sanctuaries are located at the periphery of the settlements or citadel.

The Mycenaean obviously placed enough importance on these religious structures to place them either inside or, as in the case of Mycenae, very close to the settled area. On the other hand, they did not provide them with sufficient internal or

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<sup>35</sup> See Konsolaki 2002 : 25 – 31, for the sites findings.

<sup>36</sup> For the previous and current definition of the chronological phases at *Ayia Irini* see Caskey 1979: 412; for details concerning the cult furniture see Caskey 1981: 128.

surrounding space for worshippers to gather *en masse* and, most probably, participate or view cult rituals. One could suggest that, during this palatial phase of the Late Bronze Age, large-scale religious gatherings were uncommon in cult practice. Thus, there would have been no need for such a space. However, evidence such as the massive quantities of kylikes and other drinking and cooking apparatus found at the Palace of Nestor, along with frescoes at palaces such as Mycenae and Pylos and the site of Ayia Irini displaying scenes of ritual processions, suggests that large-scale ritual activity did indeed take place within the context of Mycenaean cult practice.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, it seems that these urban-shrines for small-scale worship were intended for limited numbers of votive offerings and rituals practiced by the chosen few. Consequently, large-scale religious gatherings involving the greater populace required an alternative practice area. More and more sites located at some distance from settlements are currently being discovered that were in use during the LH III B period.

The site of *Agia Triada* – Agios Vasileios (LH III B) is located near a pathway which leads from Mycenae to Cleonae and Corinth, crossing a ridge at about 700m above sea level.<sup>38</sup> The finds included approximately one hundred Phi type figurines that were found on the natural bedrock not associated with any architectural remains. These figurines along with clay quadrupeds, at least one rhyton, and a number of kylikes and other drinking vessels, date from the LH III B and, as observed in the previously discussed sanctuary sites, imply the practices of depositing votives and participating in drinking activities.<sup>39</sup>

The *Profitis Ilias cave* near Tiryns (LH III B) consisted of a large building on a hilltop.<sup>40</sup> Its south side had rock-cut storage areas and, on at least three sides, the building was surrounded by a stone-paved area. There is a 2.35m deep fissure in

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<sup>37</sup> The evidence of the kylikes and cooking equipment at the Palace of Nestor, together with buried finds of burnt animal bone and the information from the Linear B tablets, would without a doubt lead me to agree with Saflund that this was the venue for large scale feasting, see Saflund 1980: 238. For frescoes see Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996: 134.

<sup>38</sup> Hagg 1981b: 39.

<sup>39</sup> Kilian 1988a: 185 – 190.

<sup>40</sup> The site of Apollo Maleatas on the Kynortion hill above Epidauros shows great similarities to Profitis Ilias. Comprising a large ash altar in which many votives and animal bones were found within the ashes, along with a laid pavement and associated cult buildings, as part of an isolated religious site. See, Lambrinudakis 1980: 59-65.

the bedrock that ends on the floor of a cave beneath. It is within this feature that some kylikes and a cup were found smashed. Similar vases were found within fissures in the cave floor.<sup>41</sup>

This site (along with Apollo Maleatas) is different from many other documented Mycenaean sanctuaries due to having two major features in conjunction: its isolated location, which made it in essence accessible to all, and its built features of the outdoor paved court and storage areas. The ceramic artefacts such as the female figurines, kylikes and cooking vessels are very similar to those excavated at the other sites discussed above, such as Mycenae, Agia Irini and Agia Triada.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the practice of dedicating votives, along with the ritual actions of drinking and dining may be identified in this context, with the addition of unhindered access, storage areas, and participation due to the open-air setting.

Although there is not the space to discuss them at length here, three other sites must be placed into this category. Associated at an elevated distance with the settlement of Kastri on Kythera, 'Agios Georgios' has been identified as a Minoan type peak-sanctuary.<sup>43</sup> Troullos on Kea, located on a hilltop 65m above sea level, and about 500m to the north-west of Agia Irini has also been identified as a religious site, yielding vessels, figurines and a paved enclosure.<sup>44</sup> Finally, the Marmaria area at Delphi, where about 175 figurines were found in the open air, not associated with any architectural features.<sup>45</sup> Material for comparison with these isolated sanctuary sites should be sought in Minoan Crete, where the peak-sanctuaries and cultic caves were located on hills or mountains above low-lying settlements. Peatfield characterises Minoan peak and cave cults by their general prominence and visibility in association with nearby settlements, along with always being in relatively close proximity, a few hours walking distance.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Kilian 1988a: 190.

<sup>42</sup> Mycenae: Taylour, French, and Wardle 1999. Agia Irini: Mountjoy 1999b: 867. Agia Triada: Kilian 1988a: 185-190.

<sup>43</sup> This sites open air location, along with movable finds such as libation tables and clay animal figures, have provided this interpretation. See Sakellarakis 1996: 81-99.

<sup>44</sup> Caskey 1971: 392-395.

<sup>45</sup> Hagg, 1981: 38.

<sup>46</sup> Peatfield 1983: 275. For discussions of Peak Sanctuaries in general see: Peatfield 1983, 1987, 2001; Rutkowski 1986; for specific sites, Jouktas: Karetsou 1981; Petsopha: Rutkowski 1991; Psychro Cave: Watrous 1996.

Using the present evidence from the Mainland, it is not possible to match every isolated sanctuary site to a settlement, or *vice versa*, as was the case in Minoan Crete. The only examples where this approach was possible in this area are the sites of Troullos on Kea and Agios Georgios on Kythera, which have been identified with a nearby settlement, that the sanctuary most probably served, and this may also be the case for the isolated site of Apollo Maleatas.<sup>47</sup> Although future research may change this situation, so providing each settlement with a connected isolated open-air sanctuary.

### Transitional – Early Iron Age Sanctuaries (LH III C - 900 BC)<sup>48</sup>

Table 2: Religious sites of the Transitional and Early Iron Age (LH III C-900BC) and a summary of their cult assemblages

Site	Surroundings	Cult building	Cultic furniture	Female figurines	Animal figurines	Pottery related to drinking / dining
Amyklai, Sparta	Isolated hill top	-	-	✓	✓	-
Aphaia, Aegina	Isolated hill top	-	-	✓	✓	✓
House G, Asine	Within settlement (possibly part of house, or larger religious building)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Only one kylix
Building T, Tiryns citadel	Inside citadel fortifications	✓	✓	-	✓ one fragment	-
Nichoria, Messenia	Part of small settlement	✓	✓	-	-	animal bones
Lefkandi, Euboea <sup>49</sup>	Hill top	✓ ?	✓	-	-	-
Kalapodi, Phokis	Open area	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Isthmian Shrine	Open area	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Olympia, west Peloponnesus	Open Area	-	-	✓	✓	✓

<sup>47</sup> Wright 1996: 68.

<sup>48</sup> See fig 1. (sites in black). For an accurate map of the Transitional and Early Iron Age, Dickinson 2006: 220.

<sup>49</sup> The question mark, and reason for not using this site as an integral part of my argument, is due to the uncertainty surrounding its classification. The fixed furniture, such as raised podiums, and ash altars may suggest cultic practice. However, the building also contains a deep shaft in which two burials were located. For further discussion see Popham, Touloupa, and Sackett 1982; Ainian 1997: 50.

Two sites dating from approximately the end of the LH III B / LH III B2-LH III C are Amyklai, on a hill in the middle of the Spartan plain, and Aphaia on Aegina, perched at the top of a rocky outcrop on a mountain ridge in the north-east corner of the island.<sup>50</sup> A significant feature attested at both sites is that neither has yielded any architectural remains; they have only produced huge numbers of figurines and other votive-offerings. The combination of these factors suggests a more intense focus on the dedication of votives. The total absence of architecture and the open air setting must have had resulted in all aspects of the worship being visible by everyone who ascended the mountain; in other words a much more inclusive form of cult than that practiced at the small built shrines discussed above.

Two of the most unique finds from the Amyklaion is an almost life-sized head surmounted by a polos and a hand grasping a kylix stem.<sup>51</sup> Both of which may have belonged to the same figure. These two finds are Mycenaean in style and comparable to the Lord of Asine (House G at Asine).<sup>52</sup> However, its size is unparalleled, as such large-scale sculpture did not occur in any medium for several centuries afterwards.<sup>53</sup>

The most noteworthy element at *Aphaia* (LH III B - LH III C) is the sheer number of figurines in conjunction with the site's location and surroundings. Excavation produced 698 terracotta figurines belonging to many different stylistic groups, all belonging to the Mycenaean tradition: Phi, Psi and kourotrophoi types are all represented in large quantities, as well as animal figures, mainly bovids.<sup>54</sup> The ceramic finds are of particular interest in terms of ritual: jugs, conical cups, large numbers of stirrup jars, rounded cups, bowls and kylikes. All of these would generally be taken to suggest ritual drinking activities.

As far as their 'surroundings' are concerned, both these transitional shrines are completely isolated from any settlement. Moreover, both sites have produced significantly higher numbers of votive figurines than settlement or citadel shrines

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<sup>50</sup> Amyklai: Demarkopoulou 1982. Aphaia: Pilafidis-Williams 1998: 1.

<sup>51</sup> For further discussion on the figurine assemblage from Amyklai, see Demarkopoulou 1982: 43.

<sup>52</sup> Hagg 1981: 95; Whittaker 1997: 10.

<sup>53</sup> Morgan 1999: 383.

<sup>54</sup> Pilafidis-Williams 1998: 30-80.

during the LH III B period. Their location on isolated hilltops suggests that the cult-centre would be visible from the surrounding area. The total absence of architecture would have probably urged the worshippers to connect the cult area with the landscape setting. Thus, rather than a sacred cult building, there would be a 'sacred landscape' where rituals were performed and dedications left. The evidence of these isolated sites prospering after the palatial collapse shows that they must have been free of palatial control, and able to continue their religious practice in the same way as they had while the palaces were functioning.<sup>55</sup>

The remaining sites (Table 2) were in use during the period following the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces (LH III C), while some belong exclusively to the Early Iron Age (1050-800 BC).

Building T on the upper citadel at Tiryns (12<sup>th</sup> century BC) stood directly on top of the eastern half of the ruined Great Megaron and was more than likely surrounded by the levelled debris of the former palace.<sup>56</sup> The narrow megaron called Building T, consisted of two rooms: an approximately square porch to the south and an elongated room to the north. The latter was divided into two aisles by a central row of columns, and there was no central hearth.<sup>57</sup>

The Nichoria hill is located in the south-western extremity of the Messenia valley. Two important Early Iron Age buildings have been identified in area IV within the settlement: Units IV-1 and IV-5.<sup>58</sup> Ainian argues that Unit IV-1 was constructed as an apsidal building comprising a main room (Room 1) and a shallow porch to the east. Approximately in the centre of this structure, was a circular pit, filled with soft black soil and charcoal, evidently a hearth. To the east of the hearth laid a flat circular stone, most probably the base of a wooden column. Against the middle of the rear wall, a circular stone platform was found. The surface of the platform was covered by a thin layer of carbonised material.

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<sup>55</sup> Wright (1994:76) suggests that there are spatial and chronological similarities between urban cult centres and those in isolated settings. He believes that this represents an extension of the official palace based religion.

<sup>56</sup> Maran 2001: 119.

<sup>57</sup> Maran 2001: 113-115; Ainian 1997: 159.

<sup>58</sup> Ainian 1997: 74-76.

A large number of animal bones, some of which bore traces of bite and knife marks, were found scattered over the floor.<sup>59</sup> These could indicate activities of cooking and eating. Whether these activities were of a sacrificial nature is difficult to decide, however, one would expect to find large quantities of drinking and cooking vessels in a space used for a large gathering rather than for private occasions.

Another two sites, which should be mentioned here due to their construction, furniture and finds being similar to the site at Nichoria, is Megaron B at Thermon in Aetolia, and Poseidi in Chalkidike.<sup>60</sup> Both these sites hold a controversial position in being identified as religious sites, the religious connection often being made due to the existence of later temples on the same spot or nearby vicinity.

The last sites to be discussed here are located in isolation from any habitation. *Kalapodi* (LH III C - 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC) is located a few kilometres to the west of Atalanti, in the south-western district of Phokis.<sup>61</sup> The site lies in a well-chosen location between the Corinthian Gulf, Lokris, and Thessaly; it was most probably accessible by a number of different settlement groups. From the evidence presently available, it appears that cult activity was concentrated on an open rectangular terrace, identified as an altar providing a fixed space for cult practice.<sup>62</sup> The earliest finds from the site consist mainly of pottery, chiefly monochrome open vessels such as kylikes, cups, and kraters. *The Isthmian shrine* (1050 BC - 146 BC) was a sanctuary founded in an area between a number of small scattered Mycenaean settlements of the Late Bronze Age.<sup>63</sup> Similarly to Kalapodi, it is located in the vicinity of many important junctions, near the Corinthian and Saronic gulfs, the road to Kenchreai and along the main route from Athens to Corinth.<sup>64</sup> The absence of architectural remains is worth emphasising once more. The Early Iron Age finds include mostly pottery, but also terracottas and metal objects, all found within a mixture of ash and burnt animal bone. The earliest

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<sup>59</sup> Ainian 1997: 78.

<sup>60</sup> Thermon: Papapostolou 2006: 51–60. Poseidi: Vokotopoulou 1994; Ainian 1997: 43.

<sup>61</sup> Morgan 1996: 47.

<sup>62</sup> Morgan 1999: 382.

<sup>63</sup> Morgan 1995: 109; Morgan 1999: 375.

<sup>64</sup> Morgan 1996: 47.

vessels were almost exclusively open shapes of the types commonly used for drinking and dining. Therefore, emphasis at this time seems to have been placed on sacrifice and communal dining.<sup>65</sup>

The shrine at *Olympia* – West Peloponnesus (established in the late 11th century BC, with its peak in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC) is also located in isolation, away from any settlement.<sup>66</sup> The analysis of the pottery found there indicates that the most common shapes are small open vessels and drinking cups.<sup>67</sup> However, the bodies of two large sized kylikes were also brought to light, and may be placed in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century BC on stylistic terms. These kylikes are exceptionally large, with a diameter of approximately 25cm, making it very unlikely that they were ordinary drinking vessels.<sup>68</sup>

It should be stressed that these shrines, although isolated, were centrally located. Furthermore, they had not been established in elevated, easily visible areas, as was the case in the preceding Late Bronze Age. Obviously, emphasis must have been placed on them being in a location not only central to surrounding settlement, but also on the trade and communication routes between regions. Although the topographical position has changed from the elevated isolated sanctuaries of the Late Bronze Age, what remains is that these isolated shrines are still very much open and accessible by all.

## Conclusions

Parallel to the social and political changes that occurred throughout Greece due to the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system, and the following transitional and Early Iron Age, developments also occurred in religion. Throughout the entire period in question (Palatial LBA, transitional and EIA), the landscape was employed for the setting of open-air religious shrines accessible to the masses, alongside smaller more confined shrines located within settlement areas.

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<sup>65</sup> Morgan 1996: 46.

<sup>66</sup> For detail on other finds from this period at Olympia, Eder 2001: 203; Morgan 1999: 380.

<sup>67</sup> Eder 2001: 204.

<sup>68</sup> Eder 2001: 206.



During the Mycenaean period (LH III B) the ‘space’ dedicated to sanctuaries or the lack of it was a noticeable factor. Sanctuaries appear to have been located generally on the periphery of settlements and citadels, so that they could be accessible to people passing through the gates. Although this is the case for sanctuaries within settlements, there were also isolated cult centres characterised by a focus on open space, offerings and ritual. After the destruction of the palatial centres, the religious activity of the populace seems to have shifted mostly to these isolated hills. The need for a contained cult building appears considerably less important, and there was a greater need for a sacred area open to all, complemented by a much higher number of dedicatory figurines which is most probably reflecting the attitude and lifestyle of the inhabitants.

In the Early Iron Age countryside isolated sanctuaries begin to re-appear, though they are no longer situated in elevated locations. On the contrary, in the Early Iron Age the newly founded sanctuaries are situated in lowland areas, and consequently more closely associated with routes between regions and ease of accessibility. Finally, it seems then that the idea of isolated sanctuaries was not novel in the Early Iron Age, as it was very much established in the historic mainland. We also see ritual continuity, such as drinking and dining along with the practice of dedicatory figurines being deposited at the sites.

Placing the sanctuaries at easily achievable distances within a region and along the routes between regions, made them ideally located for gatherings on a regional stage, thus adapting old ideas and rituals to facilitate the transition into the Iron Age. Future research will make the relationship between isolated sanctuaries and settlement sites clearer. It is hoped that the discussion of ‘space’ in the theory outlined in this paper concerning small-scale worship within settlements, and larger scale at the open-air sites used by the general populace, may become more convincing with the study of more sites. In addition, this will allow further discussion concerning why in the Late Bronze Age these open-air sanctuaries were placed in elevated locations, whilst in the Early Iron Age they were in lowland settings. Continued research in this area will also provide further information to address the oversimplified topic of official and popular religion.

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