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S. Deger-Jalkotzy

On the Negative Aspects of the Mycenaean Palace System

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ATTI E MEMORIE DEL SECONDO CONGRESSO INTERNAZIONALE DI MICENOLOGIA

Roma-Napoli, 14-20 ottobre 1991

a cura di Ernesto De Miro, Louis Godart, Anna Sacconi

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INDICE DEL VOLUME SECONDO

Storia	Pag.	553
L'organizzazione burocratica ed amministrativa della Mesopotamia nel		
periodo della III dinastia di Ur (2112-2004 a.C.), di LUIGI CAGNI		555
A propos des artisans wa-na-ka-te-ro, par Pierre Carlier	»	569
La bureaucratie palatiale: naissance et évolution d'un système de pouvoir		
en Egée, par Louis Godart - Athanassia Kanta - Anastasia		
Tzigounaki	»	581
The Religion of the Mycenaeans twenty-four Years after the 1967 Myce-		
nological Congress in Rome, by ROBIN HÄGG	»	599
L'Egypte et l'Egée au second millénaire, par JEAN LECLANT	»	613
Sul rapporto tra società omerica e mondo miceneo. «Contare» a Micene,		
di Domenico Musti	»	627
Peut-on qualifier Pylos de «ville»?, par MICHEL B. SAKELLARIOU	»	639
Comparative Aspects of Regional Cult Structures of the Late Bronze		
and Early Iron Ages in the East Mediterranean (Aegean, Cyprus,		
Levant-Palestine), by Gabriele Albers	»	647
La diffusion de l'ambre à l'époque mycénienne: hypothèse d'un rôle de		
la péninsule ibérique, par Catherine Aubert	»	663
Una protoformazione dell'inconscio: la Bildung di Minosse,		
di Maurizio Bonicatti	»	677
The Problem of Migration in Mycenaean Greece, by JAN BOUZEK	»	685
Considerazioni sulla crisi della civiltà micenea: il palazzo di Pilo,		
di Paola Càssola Guida	»	693
Aspetti di una raffigurazione del mondo fra età micenea ed età omerica,		
di Michele R. Cataudella	»	701
L'unité de la Grèce mycénienne, par PASCAL DARCQUE	»	709
On the Negative Aspects of the Mycenaean Palace System,		
by Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy	»	715
Tirreni e Rasenna: un popolo solo?, di CLAUDIO DE PALMA	»	729
Transformations in Mycenaean Religion, by B. C. DIETRICH	»	737

Mycindex: Late Helladic Trade in its Mediterranean Setting,		
by Albert Leonard, Jr.	»	741
Mycenaean Burials in Dromoi, by Kazimierz Lewartowski	»	749
La comunità religiosa di Pakijane e le possibili radici micenee dell'asylía,		
di Gianfranco Maddoli	»	765
Mycenaean Burial Sacrifices and the Origins of the Protogreeks,		
by Janos Makkay	»	775
Courètes Italiques: Quelques Réflexions,		
par Françoise Hélène-Massa Pairault	»	785
Υδρία με ηθμωτό κυάθιο από το ΥΚ/ΥΕ ΙΙΙ Γ νεκροταφείο Καμινίου Νάξου,		
από ΑΝΤΩΝΗΣ Ν. ΜΑΣΤΡΑΠΑΣ	»	797
Les peuples de la mer et la fin du monde mycénien. Essai de synthèse		
historique, par Cosimo Mégalomatis	»	805
Der Efeu und sein Symbolwert in der Minoisch-Mykenischen Kunst,		
von Brinna Otto	»	815
Θρησκευτικές παραστάσεις στις Κρητομυκηναϊκές σφραγίδες καί σφραγι-		
στικά δαχτυλίδια, από ΜΙΧ. ΕΔ. ΠΑΛΙΚΙΣΙΑΝΟΣ	»	833
La scrittura che viene da lontano: una questione di metodo,		
di Giulia Piccaluga	»	845
Zum Sarkophag von Hagia Triada, von Walter Pötscher	»	857
Osservazioni a proposito di I-pe-me-de-ja, di Maria Rocchi	»	861
L'antefatto miceneo di Roma, di Sergia Rossetti Favento	»	869
I Micenei ed il concetto di dimostrazione in Fisica ed in Geometria visto		
nelle costruzioni, di RAFFAELE SANTILLO	»	877
Evidence for Cult and Continuity from Linear B Documents at Thebes,		
by Albert Schachter	»	891
Considerazioni sul politeismo miceneo, di Luigia Achillea Stella	»	901
L'allume nel processo economico dei monti della Tolfa nel periodo delle		
testimonianze micenee, di Odoardo Toti	»	911
The Nilssonian Origin of Mycenaean Mythology, by Jon Van Leuven	»	923
Problemi della Beozia omerica, di PIETRO VANNICELLI	»	939

ON THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE MYCENAEAN PALACE SYSTEM

by Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy

It is not the aim of this paper to dispute the great moment which has to be ascribed to the Mycenaean palace period of the 14th and 13th centuries B.C. within the course of Greek history¹. I would rather like to jot down a few unorthodox views which have cropped up while I have been trying to define the position of the Mycenaean palace system within the evolution of the political institutions and the governmental structures of the Greeks².

There can be, of course, no doubt about the high achievements of the Mycenaean palace system in the field of economical, social, political and governmental organization and administration³. Yet it cannot be denied that the

¹ Most German reference books on Ancient Greek History either deny that the Mycenaean period was a part of Greek history or leave it altogether out of consideration. The reason has to be sought in the fact that, until recently, the decipherment of Linear B by M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, and consequently the identification of its language as Greek, has been rejected by leading German classical scholars (Exceptions to the rule are F. Schachermeyr – cf. Griechische Geschichte [²1969] – and F. Gschnitzer, cf. Griechische Sozialgeschichte von der mykenischen bis zum Ausgang der klassischen Zeit [1981]). This situation is, however, changing as the increasing acceptance of the decipherment in Germany is also having its impact on the research work in the field of Ancient History.

² Cf. S. Deger-Jalkotzy, Zum Charakter und zur Herausbildung der mykenischen Sozialstruktur, in A. Heubeck – G. Neumann (eds.), Res Mycenaeae. Akten des VII. Internat. Mykenolog. Colloquiums in Nürnberg 1981 (1983), pp. 89-111; Eadem, Landbesitz und Sozialstruktur im mykenischen Staat von Pylos, in M. Heltzer-E. Lipiński (eds.), Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1500-1000 B.C.). Proceed. of the Intern. Symposium at Haifa 1985 (1988), p. 31-52 (henceforth: Symposium Haifa); Eadem, Frühgriechische Herrschaftsformen in mykenischer Zeit, in Jahrbuch der Universität Salzburg 1985-1987 (1989) p. 133-51.

³ This is true even if we do not share the vision of a linear continuity of Greek political and social institutions from the Mycenaean era to the first millenium B.C. See the instructive dispute between A. Morpurgo Davies and F. Gschnitzer in E. Risch – H. Mühlestein (eds.),

Mycenaean palaces were a rather short-lived phenomenon. By comparison, the Minoan palace era lasted for more than 500 years, let alone the palace systems of the Ancient Near East which managed to survive even so-called «Intermediate periods» and «Dark Ages». Moreover, the Mycenaean palaces, as well as the political-economic system that went with them fell a victim to the first really serious blow that hit them, never to be rebuilt or to be revived by later generations.

Many studies have been devoted to the reasons for this remarkably early and final collapse of the Mycenaean palaces around 1200 B.C.⁴. Archaeological data and research into the Linear B texts have increasingly led to the opinion that at least one of the reasons has to be sought in the very nature of the Mycenaean palace system itself⁵. Much blame has been thrown on the Mycenaean economy as it was highly specialized and centralized and depended, to a large extent, on international trade⁶. An economic organization of this kind was easily impaired by internal as well as external factors of interference⁷, such as crop failure, natural catastrophies⁸, social unrest⁹, war,

Colloquium Mycenaeum. Actes du sixième Colloque International sur les textes mycéniens et égéens tenu à Chaumont sur Neuchâtel (1979), p. 87 ff.; p. 109 ff. For recent discussions see D. Musti et al. (eds.), La transizione dal Miceneo all'alto Arcaismo. Dal palazzo alla città (1991. Henceforth: La Transizione).

- ⁴ For a synopsis of the history and present situation of research on the downfall of the Mycenaean palaces and the end of Mycenaean civilization see S. Deger-Jalkotzy, Die Erforschung des Zusammenbruchs der sogenannten mykenischen Kultur und der sogenannten dunklen Jahrhunderte, in J. Latacz (ed.), Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung (1991), p. 127-54, with references.
 - ⁵ For references see S. Deger-Jalkotzy (n. 4), p. 142 ff.
- ⁶ For an authoritative survey of the nature and the organization of Mycenaean economy see J. Killen, The Linear B Tablets and the Mycenaean Economy, in A. Morpurgo Davies Y. Duhoux (eds.), Linear B: A 1984 Survey [1985], p. 241-305). Ph. B. Betancourt, The End of the Greek Bronze Age, in Antiquity 50 (1976), p. 40-7 provided a concise interpretation of the archaeological background. He rightly stressed the fact that Mycenaean palatial agricultural and livestock production, too, was biased in order to meet the demands of the palace workshops of certain raw materials, and in order to supply the means for supporting the dependent personnel and to pay the corvée gangs (see n. 12).
 - ⁷ This point was first elaborated by Ph. B. Betancourt (n. 6).
- According to the archaeological records, an increased seismic activity in the later 13th and during the 12th cent. B. C. caused a series of considerable destructions of Mycenaean sites (for reference see K. Kilian, La caduta dei palazzi micenei continentali: aspetti archeologici, in D. Musti [ed.], Le origini dei Greci. Dori e mondo egeo [1986], p. 74 f. and fig. 1 a, b; Id., in E. French-K. A. Wardle [eds.]. Problems in Greek Prehistory. Paper presented at the Centenary Conference of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, Manchester April 1986 [1988], p. 134 and n. 2). Although it may be assumed that these catastrophies were greatly to the detriment of the economy and strained the labour forces of the palaces (see ns. 11, 12), they cannot have been the ultimate cause for the abandonment of the palace system (S. Deger-Jalkotzy n. 4, p. 144f.). As to possible other kinds of natural catastrophies which have been put forward as

interruption of trade routes¹⁰, and so on.

It may be further pointed out that the territories owned by the Mycenaean palaces were too small to cope with the large expenditure of their rulers spent on the demonstration of imperial power and courtly splendour, especially with regard to the monumental architecture of the time¹¹. These territories were even less capable of meeting the demands of the palace system for

the causes for the fall of the palaces, neither theories concerning draughts nor those concerning climatic changes have been confirmed by natural science (see ibid., p. 135 f.).

⁹ P. Halstead, in Problems in Greek Prehistory (n. 8), p. 527 has again produced the hypothesis that the destruction of the Myc. palaces has to be attributed to «violent popular reaction» (similar hypotheses quoted by Deger-Jalkotzy [n. 4], p. 135). It is, indeed, imaginable that palatial economic ill-management and the drop-out of imported supplements (see n. 10) could have led to economic crises, although «extreme cases of crop failure» still remain to be proved as to the late 13th cent. B.C. It is also imaginable that the population reacted with rebellions to such economic hardships, particularly in view of the heavy taxation and labour obligations which, according to the Linear B texts, the palace inflicted upon their subjects. In short, it is by no means unlikely that the Mycenaean palace system was impaired or even weakened by social unrest of whatever kind. Yet there is nothing in the archaeological record nor in the Linear B documents which would justify the vision of a Mycenaean forerunner of the French Revolution. It would just add another «pseudo-historical» story to those rejected by Halstead (see further Deger-Jalkotzy, l.c. p. 144f.).

¹⁰ N. K. Sandars' statement «...the advanced commerce of the Near East was itself a danger point, since its complexity absolutely demanded conditions of reasonable security» (The Sea Peoples [²1985], p. 49) certainly holds good for the Aegean world, too. On the widespread Mycenaean trade relations see e.g. M. Marazzi-S. Tusa-L. Vagnetti (eds.), Traffici micenei del mediterraneo. Atti del convegno di Palermo 1984 (1986); A. Harding, The Mycenaeans and Europe (1984). The decline and eventual breakdown of the Mediterranean trade relations during the late 13th cent. B.C. (see N.K. Sandars, l.c.; C. W. Shelmerdine, Architectural Change and Economic Decline at Pylos, in J. T. Killen-J. L. Melena-J. P. Olivier [eds.], Studies in Mycenaean and Classical Greek Presented to John Chadwick [Salamanca 1987; henceforth: Festschrift Chadwick], p. 565ff. with references n. 43) must have been a much more serious threat to the Mycenaean palace system than earthquakes (see n. 8) or social unrest (n. 9). On the economic 'collapse' between ca. 1250 and 1150 B.C. see also A. B. Knapp (below n. 38), p. 143ff.

11 Cf. also M. K. Dabney-J. C. Wright, Mortuary Customs, Palatial Society and State Formation, in R. Hägg-G. C. Nordquist (eds.), Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid (1990), p. 47ff. The enormous building activities in LH III B 2 (for Tiryns see K. Kilian, in Problems in Greek Prehistory [n. 8], p. 134; for Pylos J. C. Wright, Changes in Form and Function of the Palace at Pylos, in: C. W. Shelmerdine-Th. G. Palaima [eds.], Pylos Comes Alive. Industry and Administration in a Mycenaean Palace [1984], p. 19-29; C. W. Shelmerdine, Architectural Change and Economic Decline at Pylos, in Festschrift Chadwick [n. 10], p. 559ff.) are probably better explained as a measure of precaution than as the expression of ostentatious desires of their rulers (cf. Shelmerdine, l.c.; Deger-Jalkotzy, in Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung [n. 4], p. 139). The expenditures of these constructions must have at the utmost strained the economic potentiality of the palaces, as well as they added to the taxes and the labour exacted from the general population (see P. de Fidio, Fattori di crisi nella Messenia della tarda età del bronzo, in Festschrift Chadwick [n. 10], p. 127-36).

supporting and feeding the masses of dependent personnel listed in the Linear B texts¹². As a consequence, excessive exploitation of the soils led to the deterioration of agricultural products¹³, the environment was badly damaged e.g. by excessive wood-cutting¹⁴, the general population was suppressed and impoverished by overload of taxes and labour obligations¹⁵.

It seems to me that these dark sides of the Mycenaean palace period can be explained as a consequence of the extreme centralization which not only ruled the palace economy and bureaucracy but was altogether a characteristic and constitutional feature of the Mycenaean palace system. How it came into being, we can but theorize since there are no literary sources of the earlier periods and we are therefore left to the analysis of the archaeological data.

Up to now, there has been no evidence as to the existence of palaces during the early Mycenaean period of MH III/LH I and LH II. Nowhere so far have there been reported any finds which could be related to complex and multifunctional residential megastructures nor to magazines of large-scale capacity¹⁶. Nor are there any records of written administrative documents¹⁷, nor of the use of seals for administrative purposes¹⁸. The evidence which we do possess rather points to courtly residences of what may be called the

Additionally to the personnel who were directly or indirectly in their service (cf. S. Hiller, Dependent Personnel in Mycenaean Texts, in Symposium Haifa [n. 2], p. 53-68), the palaces also had to feed the labour gangs which were recruited from the rural population (cf. A. Uchitel, The Archives of Mycenaean Greece and the Ancient near East, in Symposium Haifa [n. 2], p. 24 ff.; the author's attempt to explain the women and children of the Pylos series Aa, Ab, Ad and the teams of the o-ka-Series also in terms of corvée workers is, however, open to dispute (A. Uchitel, in Historia 33 [1984], p. 257-282).

¹³ H. Kroll, Zum Ackerbau gegen Ende der mykenischen Epoche in der Argolis, in AA 1984, p. 211ff.

¹⁴ H. E. Wright, Jr., Vegetation history, in W. A. MacDonald-G. R. Rapp, Jr., The Minnesota Messenia Expedition. Reconstructing a Bronze Age Environment (1972), p. 188ff.

¹⁵ Cf. above n. 12; P. de Fidio (n. 11).

¹⁶ This point was rightly stressed by O. T. P. K. Dickinson, «The Origins of Mycenaean Civilisation» Revisited, in R. Laffineur (ed.), Transition. Le monde égéen du Bronze Moyen au Bronze Recent (= Aegaeum 3. Liège 1989), p. 131f.; Th. G. Palaima, in Festschrift Bennett (n. 17); see also S. Deger-Jalkotzy, in Colloquium Nürnberg (n. 2); Eadem, in Festschrift Chadwick (n. 10), p. 148ff.

¹⁷ On the development and Mycenaean use of writing see J.-P. Olivier in these Proceedings. Cf. further Th. G. Palaima, Comments on Mycenaean Literacy, in Festschrift Chadwick (n. 10), p. 499-510; Id., The Development of Mycenaean Writing System, in J.-P. Olivier-Th. G. Palaima (eds.), Texts, Tablets and Scribes. Studies in Mycenaean Epigraphy and Economy offered to E. L. Bennett, Jr. (1988. Henceforth: Festschrift Bennett), p. 269-342, with full bibliography.

¹⁸ For recent studies into the Mycenaean use of seals see the papers by Th. G. Palaima, J. Weingarten, V. Aravantinos, in Th. G. Palaima (ed.), Aegean Seals, Sealings and Administration (= Aegaeum 5. 1990); V. Aravantinos, in Pylos Comes Alive (n. 11), p. 43-8.

«acropolis» type: They were situated in an elevated position on the top or upper slopes of hills commanding over the surrounding areas. Some of them were fortified¹⁹. It is in the neighbourhood of such sites that those tombs appear which are generally accepted as the funerary monuments of a ruling class or else of a ruling family²⁰. It seems therefore justified to identify a site

¹⁹ Cases in point are Kakovatos (for references see K. Kilian, L'architecture des résidence mycéniennes: origine et extension d'une structure du pouvoir politique pendant l'âge du Bronze Recent, in: E. Lévy [ed.], Le système palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome. [Strasbourg 1987], pp. 203-25); Peristeria (for references see R. Hope Simpson - O. T. P. K. Dickinson, A Gazetteer of Aegean Civilization in the Bronze Age, vol. I: The Mainland and Islands [Göteborg 1979. Henceforth: GAMS], p. 167); Pylos (C. W. Blegen et al., The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia III. [Princeton 1973], 4ff. [fortification], p. 39 ff.; K. Kilian, I.c.); Malthi (GAMS p. 174); Kiapha Thiti (H. Lauter, Die protomykenische Burg auf Kiapha Thiti in Attika, in: R. Laffineur [ed.], Transition. Le monde égéen du Bronze Moyen au Bronze Récent [= Aegaeum 3. Liège 1989] pp. 145-9). For Mycenae a forerunner of the LH III palace was postulated by A. J. B. Wace, BSA 25 (1921-3), pp. 195-203, 247 ff., 269. G. E. Mylonas, Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age (Princeton 1966) p. 59 f. provided a conjectural sketch plan of it. Although the architectural remains are scanty, early fresco finds, indeed, suggest that an early Mycenaean mansion (residence) occupied the area of the later place (Wace, l.c., p. 159). The same may have been true for Tiryns (cf. K. Müller, Tiryns III. Augsburg 1930, p. 178). For a possible LH I-II mansion at Koukounara/Katarrachaki see Y. Lolos, The Late Helladic I Pottery of the SW Peloponnese and its Local Characteristics (1987), p. 28ff.

For further early Mycenaean residences see O. T. P. K. Dickinson, The Origins of Mycenaean Civilisation [Göteborg 1977), pp. 87 ff. - The era before the palaces has left very few settlement remains, either because the sites were continuously inhabited and rearranged, or simply because early Mycenaean habitation sites still wait for excavation. If. K. Kilian's reconstruction of the early residence of Pylos is correct (Kilian, l.c.), a certain influence by Minoan palatial design may have shaped the architecture of some mainland centres, but see Dickinson's objections (in: Transition [above n. 16], p. 131). Otherwise, architectural borrowings from Minoan Crete remain to be demonstrated. Nor does it seem as if the mainland centres had much in common with the urban megastructures of Kolonna on Aigina (for early Mycenaean Aigina-Kolonna cf. W. Wohlmayr, in: Transition [above n. 16], pp. 151-3). These observations may appear as contradictory to the well-known (which therefore needs no references) ubiquitous and strong Minoan influence upon Mycenaean artistry and craftsmanship and to the many testimonies of commerce with various regions of the Aegean (which also left a certain impact on mainland workmanship) and beyond. Yet as M. K. Dabney and J. C. Wright (n. 11), p. 48 ff. rightly have concluded, «the preconditions for the advent of a palatial society had not yet arisen on the mainland», and hence, we may add, the need for borrowings of Minoan palatial architectural elements had not come up. The same may have been true of the complex urban structures and organizations of Aigina and of the Cyclades. On Mycenaean architectural developments see further G. Hiesel, Späthelladische Hausarchitektur (1990).

Tholos tombs, shaft graves, outstanding tombs of other types: As O. T. P. K. Dickinson has already pointed out, there was a diversity of early Mycenaean tomb types in general (ABSA 78 [1983], p. 60f.) and of «more important tombs» in particular (in Transition [n. 16], p. 133f.). It may well be true that these variations originated in different local traditions from the MH period (as Dickinson implies); yet the individual endeavour of exalted persons (families) to exhibit status, wealth and power should not be underestimated. Ostentatious tombs may therefore be defined by a combination of several factors such as form, situation (cf. C. B.

which produces tombs of this kind and/or a mansion (citadel) as a centre of political power.

It seems difficult to tell what the social and political structure of the early Mycenaean period may have been. There is a general agreement that there existed social stratification and that the leading ranks were constituted by a wealthy and martial aristocracy. Early Mycenaean monarchy, however, is much under discussion²¹.

Without entering into this discussion here, we maintain that early Mycenaean political organization knew of monarchial power which was based on personal alliance and perhaps upon the principles of «Grundherrschaft»²².

Mee-W. G. Cavanagh, The Spatial Distribution of Mycenaean Tombs, in ABSA 85 [1990], 225-43; W. G. Cavanagh-C. Mee, The Location of Mycenaean Chamber Tombs, in R. Hägg-G. C. Nordquist [eds.], Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid [1990], p. 55-63), size, effort expended on its architecture (cf. J. C. Wright, Death and Power at Mycenae, in Thanatos [below n. 21], p. 173), quality and quantity of buriagifts, exclusive burial rites. The same holds, by the way, good for the palace period, too (cf. Cavanagh-Mee, in Celebrations of Death and Divinity, see above), although by then the tholos tomb seems to have become a prerogative of royalty (see below n. 37). On early Mycenaean tombs see further O. Pelon, Tholoi, tumuli et cercles funéraires (1976); Id., in Celebrations (see above), p. 107-12; C. B. Mee-W. G. Cavanagh, Mycenaean Tombs as Evidence for Social and Political Organisation, in OJA 3 (1984), p. 48ff.; see also the relevant papers in R. Laffineur (ed.), Thanatos (below n. 21).

by most scholars. This view is still maintained by e.g. P. Carlier, La royauté en Grèce avant Alexandre (1984), p. 19ff.; O. Pelon (n. 20); C. B. Mee-W. G. Cavanagh, in OJA 3 (1984), p. 48f.; C. Renfrew, The Emergence of Civilisation (1972), p. 366f. speaks in terms of «chieftains», obviously guided by the model of Homeric society. Against these views, an oligarchic rule was postulated for the Shaft Grave period by O. T. P. K. Dickinson (n. 19), p. 56f.; M. Alden, Bronze Age Population Fluctuations in the Argolid from the Evidence of Mycenaean Tombs (1981), p. 319f.; I. Kilian-Dirlmeier, in Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz 33 (1986), p. 159-98. Early Mycenaean monarchy has also been doubted by P. Darcque, in R. Laffineur (ed.), Thanatos. Les coutumes funéraires en Egée à l'âge du bronze (=Aegaeum l. 1987), p. 185ff. and G. Touchais, in Transition (n. 16), p. 116.

This term signifies a kind of government which is based upon personal allegiance towards a sovereign in return for the allocation of certain rights or prerogatives (often, but not exclusively in the field of property and economic privileges), as well as for the allocation of a share in the political decisions. In my view, some Mycenaean social terms and titles, and some peculiarities of the landholding system as it appears from the Linear B texts suggest that the palatial government was superimposed upon an earlier social and political structure which was characterized by principles as described above (S. Deger-Jalkotzy [n. 2]; Eadem, in Festschrift Chadwick [n. 10], p. 137-50). This view may also be supported by the archaeological records on «important» tombs (above n. 20). At various sites, the synchronous use of several outstanding tombs of early Mycenaean date can be observed. This phenomenon has caused much discussion: For the Grave Circles at Mycenae see recently R. Laffineur, Mobilier funéraire et hiérarchie social aux cercles des tombes de Mycènes, in Transition (n. 16), p. 227-38, with bibliography; for tholoi see O. Pelon (n. 20), p. 406f.; M. Alden (n. 21); J. C. Wright, in Thanatos (n. 21), p. 176. For co-existence of tholos and outstanding chamber tombs cf. P.

The political power of early Mycenaean rulers seems to have been confined to petty principalities or petty kingdoms: Judging from the distribution of centres of power as defined above, one is attempted to assume that they commanded over small-sized territories, corresponding to the geographical units formed by the physical setting of Greece²³. It has been, however, often claimed that Mycenae possibly held sway over a considerably larger

Darcque, in Thanatos (n. 21), p. 185ff. There is, however, also evidence that some tombs or some specific burials still stood more out than the others: although I. Kilian-Dirlmeier (above n. 21) rightly attributes the people buried in the two Shaft Grave Circles at Mycenae to a homogeneous aristocratic social group, there is no doubt that certain graves or individual burials excelled among the others (cf. also Cavanagh-Mee [n. 20], p. 56ff.) and that eventually the burials of Circle A surpassed those of Circle B. This is particularly true if A. Xenaki-Sakellariou is right in lowering the chronology of SG III and of the first phase of interments of SG IV to a transitional LH I-II phase (in Transition [n. 16], p. 177-82). Further, in LH II A at Mycenae the erection of the first tholos tombs coincided with SG I, V [and with the last burials of SG IV of Circle A] and with Tomb Rho in Circle B. Although the tholos tombs were robbed, it is imaginable that the Shaft Graves still prevailed in wealth and in exclusiveness of rare items (cf. the contents of SG IV and V). As to Messenia, a similar situation would appear from Tholos 1 at Peristeria or from the evidence of Koukounara/Gouvalari (where Tholoi 1 and 2 surpass those of mounds alpha and beta by size as well as by the quality of the offerings. G. S. Korres, Timvi, tholi ke tafiki kikli tis Messinias, in Prakt. A' diethnous sinedriou Peloponnisiakon spoudon, Sparti 1975 [1976], p. 337ff.; Y. Lolos [n. 19], p. 165ff.) Thus it might appear that among the early Mycenaean aristocracy there were clans or families of still a higher rank. In my opinion, they produced the rulers of the early Mycenaean principalities (cf. the restored sceptre of Shaft Grave IV as mentioned by K. Kilian [n. 39], p. 294). As to the nature of this sovereignty, we are again left to the analysis of burial gifts (on the lack of settlement evidence see n. 19). Taking them in the sense of «society as a projection of itself» (C. Renfrew [n. 21] p. 416f.), individual might and spirit of enterprise and economic power must have been decisive qualities required from early Mycenaean rulers. Yet at the same time, it would seem from the funerary offerings that their monarchic power was quite different from the paramount rule of the palatial royalty of LH III A and B: The early Mycenaean grave gifts testify for the fact that status symbols (cf. Kilian-Dirlmeier [n. 21], p. 176ff., 190), wealth (for recent analyses cf. Cavanagh-Mee, in Celebrations [n. 20], p. 57ff.; P. Darcque, l.c.; R. Laffineur [see above]) and noble occupations (for boar hunting see C. E. Morris, in Celebrations [n. 20], p. 149ff.) were accessible to all members of the leading class.

Their size may have resembled with the territories of the Greek city-states (poleis) of the first mill. B.C.; cf. also C. Renfrew (n. 21), p. 369 (although the author had the palace states in mind); J. T. Hooker, Mycenaean Greece (1976), p. 57. As to the distribution of early Mycenaean residences, see above n. 19. For distribution of early Mycenaean residences, see above n. 19. For distribution of early Mycenaean princely tombs as defined above n. 20 see GAMS (n. 19); O. Pelon (n. 20); O. T. P. K. Dickinson (n. 20). For tholos tombs in particular see Mee-Cavanagh (n. 20), with distribution map; P. Darcque (n. 21), p. 202f. Add the tholos tombs at Psarion in Triphylia (ArchDelt 36 [1981] Chron., p. 156; 37 [1982] Chron., p. 137f.; 38 [1983] Chron., p. 111ff.); Kallithea-Laganidia in Achaia (PAE 1987, p. 69ff.; 1988, p. 32ff.). See further the monumental tholos-imitating chamber-tomb Nr. 2 at Pellana in Laconia (ArchDelt 37 [1982] Chron., p. 112-3); for Thebes see Dickinson, in Transition (n. 16), p. 134 n. 11.

territory²⁴. If so, her predominance within or even beyond the Argolid must have been quite different from the centralistic government of the later palace states. This statement is based on the archaeological records, in the first place²⁵. Secondly, the presupposition of an early Mycenaean centralistic state would render it difficult to understand how during the subsequent periods of LH III A and III B three palatial centres²⁶ could have been established within the Argolid. On account of the archeaeological evidence it would therefore seem more appropriate to interpret Mycenae's predominance during LH I and LH II in terms of hegemony or of a network of interdepencies. It may well be that Thebes held a comparable position in Boeotia²⁷.

To sum up, the political map of early Mycenaean Greece seems to have been characterized by the coexistence of small-scale principalities or petty kingdoms. They all had a share in the prosperity of the time, and their leaders strove for the display of wealth, status and power. At the outset of the era the rulers of the Argolid, of Messenia (and perhaps those of Boeotia, too) had the lion's share²⁸ and seem to have set the cultural trends²⁹. Yet by LH II A, or LH II B at the latest, the distribution of finds of goods of value and prestige³⁰, the homogeneous cultural standard displayed by each local centre³¹, the spread of the tholos type of tombs³² do not suggest that the

chungen (1983), p. 91ff.

Among others, see O. T. P. K. Dickinson, Origins (n. 19), p. 88; Mee-Cavanagh, in OJA 3 (see n. 20); F. Schachermeyr, Die griechische Rückerinnerung im Lichte neuer Fors-

As already stated, there is so far no evidence of LH I-II palatial structures, nor is there any sign of centralized administration nor of bureaucracy. Moreover, while the splendour of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae was perhaps unrivalled in LH I, outstanding tombs and rich grave offerings occur a other places of the Argolid during LH II: Berbati, Prosymna, Dendra, Kazarma (for references see GAMS), Kokla (ArchDelt 36 [1981] Chron., p. 94ff.; K. Demacopoulou, in Celebrations [n. 20], p. 113-23). Cf. further above n.19 for evidence of an early residence at Tiryns. Thus, while it is imaginable that Mycenae was the most powerful centre of the Argolid, it does not seem likely that she exercised a centralized government over this region.

²⁶ See G. Walberg's presentation of the first Linear B inscriptions found at Midea. This architectural megastructure may thus safely be called a palace.

²⁷ Cf. O. T. P. K. Dickinson, Origins (n. 19), with references.

It is generally assumed that early Mycenaen trade connections with Crete, the Aegean and beyond were first inaugurated by the inhabitants of the Argolid and of Messenia (cf. A. Harding-H. Hughes-Brock, in ABSA 69 [1974], p. 145 ff., 152 on amber trade). For general synopses see A. Harding, The Mycenaeans and Europe (1984); O. T. P. K. Dickinson, Early Mycenaeans Greece and the Mediterraean, in Traffici micenei (n. 10), p. 271-6; cf. also (M. K. Dabney)-J. C. Wright (n. 11), p. 49 and n. 41.

²⁹ P. A. Mountjoy, Mycenaean Decorated Pottery (1986), p. 9ff.; Eadem, in ABSA 85 (1990), p. 246ff.; Dickinson, in Origins (n. 19), p. 108f.

³⁰ For synopsis cf. Dickinson, l.c., p. 87ff.

³¹ See P. A. Mountjoy (n. 29) on the remarkably homogeneous styles of LH II pottery.

³² Cf. Mee-Cavanagh, in OJA 3 (1984), p. 48ff. fig. 2; for supplements see above n. 23.

lords of Mycenae and of the Messenian centres (and possibly those of Thebes, too) impeded the economical interests and dictated the cultural development of the other Mycenaean provinces. Although they still may have disposed over a larger sphere of influence if not of power (see above), they apparently did not keep out the competition of the other centres. It seems as if by LH II a certain stage of social, economical and political equilibrium prevailed among the early Mycenaean state polities.

The transitional era from LH II B to III A 1 around 1400 B.C. must have experienced a great deal of political change³³ which eventually led to the emergence of the Mycenaean palace system during LH III A³⁴. It may be

During LH II tholos tombs were built in Messenia, in the Argolid, in Elis, Achaia, Arcadia, Laconia, Attica, Euboea, Thessaly, in Acarnania and on Zakynthos. It may, however, be reminded that tholos tombs were the most conspicuous but not the only type of princely tombs (see n. 20).

33 As K. Kilian, Ältere mykenische Residenzen, in Schriften des Deutschen Archäologenverbandes Nr. 9: Mannheim (1987), p. 120-4; Id., in Le système palatial (n. 19), and J. C. Wright, in Celebrations (n. 20), p. 48 have already pointed out, the various construction phases of the mansion at the Menelaion during LH II B-III A 1 (see H. Catling, in ArchDelt 29 [1973-4], p. 302-12) might be viewed as the architectural expression of the search for a new concept of government and administration. There are some more archaeological indications that new economic and political dynamics may have developed at that stage: see the erection of the splendid Tomb of the Genii at Mycenae (A. J. B. Wace, in ABSA 25 [1921-3], p. 376ff.; for chronology see GAMS,p. 35). At Argos, a building has been found furnished with a remarkable array of fresco decoration; it is called «megaron» by the excavators, and LH III A 2 is given as a terminus ante quem for its construction (BCH 102 [1978], p. 664). At Athens the richest chamber tombs and particularly T. I date from this period (S. Immerwahr, The Athenian Agora, Vol. XIII [1971], p. 151; for II B/III A 1 chronology cf. F. Schachermeyr, Die ägäische Frühzeit II [1976], p. 243ff.). Cf. further the emergence of new centres in Achaia (Aigion: ArchDelt 37 [1982] Chron., p. 149; Th. Papadopoulos, Excavations at Aigion [1970]. Voudeni/Patras: for a huge and richly furnished chamber-tomb which was founded in LH II B/III A 1 see Allagi Patron 24.1.1989). See also the spread of Mycenaean settlements in inner Thessaly (for Larisa, Souphli Magoula, Pharsala see GAMS), in the Spercheios Valley (Arch Delt 33 [1978] Chron., p. 136f.) in Phokis (Elateia: S. Deger-Jalkotzy-Ph.Dakoronia, Elateia, in Anzeiger d. phil.-hist. Klasse d. Österr. Akademie d. Wissenschaften 127 [1990], p. 76-86). Fine LH II B/III A 1 pottery may further indicate the existence of an important site on the islet of Mitrou, East Locris (ArchRep 1988-89 p. 47 Fig. 63). In the course of LH III A, several of these sites were either given up again (cf. the mansion near the Menelaion or the «megaron» at Argos) or fell back into insignificance (like Aigion, Elateia, Volos [see n. 35]). It has to be noted that we are confining ourselves to the Greek mainland, leaving out sites like Phylakopi or Hagia Triadha where the earlier local governments might have influenced the LH/LM III developments (see further ns. 38, 42).

³⁴ S. Deger-Jalkotzy, in Res Mycenaeae (n. 2), inter alia; J. C. Wright, Umpiring the Mycenaean Empire, in Temple University Aegean Symposium 9 (1984), p. 58-70; Id., in Thanatos (n. 21), p. 176; K. Kilian (below n. 39); Id., Ältere mykenische Residenzen (cf. n. 33); Th. G. Palaima, in Festschrift Bennett (n. 17), p. 336ff. For a recent theoretical approach P. Halstead, On Redistribution and the Origin of Minoan-Mycenaean Palatial Economies, in

assumed that during LH III A smaller principalities were incorporated into the larger territories which were governed by the palaces³⁵. The Linear B texts, too, contain some evidence which could suggest that earlier economical and social structures were overlain by the centralistic palace system³⁶. By LH III A the palaces apparently had eliminated within their territories everything which might have functioned as a secondary centre or a subcentre of power³⁷. The Linear B documents also suggest that the palaces of the mainland³⁸ radi-

Problems in Greek Prehistory (n. 8),p. 519-29; see also J. C. Wright, l.c., and in Celebrations (n. 20), p. 51f.

of some of the sites mentioned n. 33 had something to do with this process, but more research is required. As to Messenia, the Hither Province of the kingdom seems to have been created in LH III A 1 (cf. S. Deger-Jalkotzy, E-QE-TA [1978], p. 201f.; K. Kilian below n. 39; C. B. Mee-W. G. Cavanagh [n. 20], p. 53). As to the Argolid, K. Kilian (l.c., and above n. 33) has claimed that the palaces were established in LH III A 1. Kilian considers Argos, to as a palatial site, but see G. Touchais in these Proceedings. In any case, by LH III A 2-III B 1 the tholos tombs of the Argolid were confined to the vicinity of the palaces, cf. Mee-Cavanagh, l.c., p. 51f. Note further that around the Bay of Volos the cemetery at Nea Ionia (together with the tholos tomb of Kapakli) declined by LH III A 2 and that the tholos tomb of Pefkakia went out of use after LH III A 1, while at Dhimini at the same period the tholos tomb-type was adopted (cf. A. Baziou-Eustathiou, in ArchDelt 40 [1985] Mel. p. 17-70, and at this Congress).

³⁶ S. Deger-Jalkotzy, inter alia in Jahrbuch Salzburg (n. 2), p. 135, 142.

³⁷ Cf. also G. Hiesel, Späthelladische Hausarchitektur (1990), p. 249f. Apart from the palaces and their immediate vicinity, there so far is no evidence for mansions or comparable architectural complexes with large-scale storage facilities and records of bookkeping during LH III A and III B. Nor is there any evidence that representative elements of the palatial architecture like the megaron hall (see n. 40) and palatial elements of furnishing (frescoes, painted floors etc.) were echoed by the architecture of the local settlements. According to the prevailing opinion of scholars, the same is true for the tholos tombs: see, however, above n. 20. The only exception to the rule so far seems to have been Gla. Sp. Iacovidis interprets this site as the residence of two high ranking officials who apparently controlled enormous storage facilities (see Gla I [1989]). Although the absence of Linear B texts and the fact that the architecture of the two-winged «melathron» was denied essential features of palatial architectural design (cf. Iacovidis, l.c., p. 299f.) ought to prevent us from calling Gla a «palace» (pace Hiesel, I.c., p. 213ff.), it certainly was an important centre. Perhaps it was related to the Kopaïs and hence with the palace of Orchomenos. As for the large chamber-tomb cemeteries (and in the Pylos district for the tholos-tomb cemeteries, as a Messenian variant of the idea of communal burials), their outstanding tombs and burials have been attributed to some kind of local élites (I. Kilian-Dirlmeier [n. 21], p. 193ff.; cf. also Cavanagh-Mee, in Celebrations [n. 20], p. 59ff.; for Koukounara/Gouvalari see Y. Lolos [n. 19], p. 165ff.). I agree with this, assuming that these people did not dispose of a locally based authority. They rather were a landholding group among the high-ranking palace officials like te-re-ta/telestai/ and the palace people among the landholders of the da-mo/damoi/ (cf. above n. 2). However, this issue needs still furhter investigation.

³⁸ The Mycenaean centres of LM III A-B Crete, as well as those of the Cyclades (Phylakopi) are left out of consideration. Their local background seems to have led to a differentiation from the mainland system, cf. e.g. Th. G. Palaima, Preliminary Comparative Textual

cally centralized all economic, administrative and bureaucratical operations and monopolized all aspects of public life. The emergence of the Mycenaean palace states was further accompanied by the establishment of a centralized monarchy³⁹. The royal hall (megaron) received its canonical shape in LH III A and remained an exclusive feature of the palatial architecture. It confirms, by various details, the sacral character of Mycenaean palatial kingship as indicated by the evidence of the Linear B texts⁴⁰. The documents of the palace administration also testify for the fact that all affairs of state and all economic matters were under the paramount control of the monarchs.

The Mycenaean palace system, then, does not appear as a continuation of the early Mycenaean conditions. It rather brought them to an end. In consequence it has often been maintained that the Mycenaean palace system was introduced after the model of Minoan Crete. There is, indeed, much that can be said in favour of this view. Yet on the other hand, the political organization and administration of the contemporary Near Eastern states and empires should not be ruled out as another source of inspiration⁴¹. Particularly with regard of its highly centralized structures, the Mycenaean palace system seems to have had more in common with the contemporary states and empires of the Near East than with the Minoan palace organization⁴². However, the Near Eastern centralized bureaucracies⁴³ were maintained by large revenues which came out of vast dominions. By contrast, the small territories governed by the Mycenaean palaces and the limited range of natural resources were not in the long run able to support the hydrocephalic centres. In my opinion, the Mycenaean palace system was from the beginning

Evidence for Palatial Control of Economic Activity in Minoan and Mycenaean Crete, in R. Hägg-N. Marinatos (eds.), The Function of the Minoan Palaces (1987), p. 301-6. See also A. B. Knapp, Mediterranean inter-island relations in the Late Bronze Age, in ABSA 85 (1990), p. 115-53.

³⁹ Material on wa-na-ka/wanax/ collected by P. Carlier (n. 21), première partie. See also P. Carlier's contribution to this Congress. K. Kilian, The Emergence of the wanax Ideology in the Mycenaean Palaces, in OJA 7 (1988), p. 291-302.

⁴⁰ K. Kilian (above ns. 19, 33, and below n. 41).

⁴¹ S. Deger-Jalkotzy (ns. 2, 36); K. Kilian (see n. 40); Id., Zur Funktion der mykenischen Residenzen, in Minoan Palaces (n. 38), p. 21-38.

⁴² On the differences between Minoan and Mycenaean use of writing and bureaucracy cf. e.g. Th. G. Palaima (n. 38); Id., in Festschrift Bennett (n. 17), p. 230-4. On the differences in the use of seals cf. above n. 18; also I. Pini, Minoische Siegel außerhalb Kretas, in R. Hägg-N. Marinatos (eds.), The Minoan Thalassocracy. Myth and Reality (1984), p. 123-31. Compare further the Minoan residential subcentres who were engaged in agricultural production, storage and administration (the so-called Minoan «villas») to the apparent lack of such subcentres within the mainland palace system (n. 37).

⁴³ As to their characteristics see the various papers of the Symposium Haifa 1985 (n. 2).

doomed to fail because it was not suited to the physical setting nor to the

geographical conditions of Greece.

The extremely centralistic and monopolizing character of Mycenaean palatial government had another weakness which they shared with the centralized and bureaucratic empires of the Near East. As soon as the centre was fatally hit, the whole system collapsed like a house of cards⁴⁴. That is what happened at the end of LH III B, no matter who or what was responsible for the blow.

I should like to touch upon a further point. There is no doubt that the products of the Mycenaean palatial workshops were highly appreciated by their contemporaries. We, too, have become used to singing the praize of their high technical and artistic qualities and of the great contribution of the Mycenaean palatial culture to the history of Greek art. Yet on the other hand, it has to be remembered that palaces so far have been found only in Messenia, in the Argolid and in Boeotia. Palaces have been further claimed for Laconia, for Athens and for the area around the bay of Volos⁴⁵. As for the rest of the Mycenaean world, the evidence does not point to the existence of palaces, whatever social organization and political structures there may have been established⁴⁶. In this view the remarkable uniform artistic styles of LH III A and of the greater part of LH III B47 reveals a further negative aspect of the Mycenaean palace system. Among scholars this Mycenaean koiné⁴⁸ is kept, as has been said, in high esteem. But in the inverse ratio it means that the Mycenaean provinces outside the palace states had no share in the development of the arts and skills of the 14th and 13th centuries B.C. The fashions were set by the palace aristocracy while the styles created by the palace ateliers as well as their technical standard was more than a match for the local workshops of the minor centres. Thus the Mycenaean regions and the local centres outside the palace states became provinces in the disparaging meaning of the word. An instructive instance is provided by the LH III A and III B pottery found at

The incorporation of the Further Province into the kingdom of Pylos (Deger-Jalkotzy, n. 35) and other signs of even closer concentration of power during LH III B (see also C. Shelmerdine [n. 10], p. 565ff.) may have been a preventive measure which, however, must have contributed to, if not accelerated, the collapse of the palace state of Pylos (cf. also G. A. Lehmann, in S. Deger-Jalkotzy [ed.], Griechenland, die Ägäis und die Levante während der «Dark Ages» [1983], p. 238f.).

⁴⁵ Above n. 35.

⁴⁶ This point has been raised in Festschrift Chadwick (n. 10) and in A. Rizakes (ed.), Achaia und Elis in der Antike (1991), p. 20.

On the differentiation of pottery styles in LH III B 2 see F. Schachermeyr (n. 33), p. 261ff.; E. S. Sherratt, in ABSA 75 (1980), p. 175-202.

⁴⁸ The term was coined by A. Furumark, Mycenaean Pottery I: Analysis and Classification (1941), p. 462ff., 520ff.

various non-palatial sites of the Mycenaean world. Pieces of outstanding quality are invariably classified as imports from one or another palatial centre. The local products generally appear as more or less successful copies of the fine palatial pottery wares, although they sometimes exhibit a special local preference of certain shapes or decorative motifs⁴⁹. A glance at the exciting variety displayed by the pottery styles of LH III C Middle⁵⁰ may justify this statement: During that last blossom of Mycenaean civilization the centres of each Mycenaean province⁵¹ not only developed individual pottery styles but also contributed to the overall stylistic characteristics⁵². Copiously decorated vases were exchanged among the various centres, either as merchandise or as diplomatic gifts⁵³. There also is much evidence of the interchange of know-how and ideas, quite in contrast with the pottery productions of LH III A and III B.

A similar story is told by the finds of metal objects and of so-called luxury goods. From their distribution on the mainland sites⁵⁴ it is generally deduced that imported raw materials were channelled through the palaces and that finished articles of value reached the provinces outside the palace states at second hand. Diplomatic contacts and most probably foreign trade, too, seem to have been monopolized by the palaces: As to LH III A 1, an inscription of a statue basis found in the burial chapel of Amenophis III and listing Aegean toponymics⁵⁵, contains but four mainland Mycenaean names, and it is certainly no mere chance that these names are Mycenae, Thebes⁵⁶, Messenia (= Pylos), Nauplia (= Tiryns). Again the situation changed fundamentally in LH III C when the foreign trade relations were re-established

⁴⁹ See P. A. Mountjoy, Regional Mycenaean Pottery, in ABSA 85 (1990), p. 245-270; for LH III B 2 see above n. 47. Exceptions like a distinct LH III A 2 style at Ialysos (cf. C. Mee, Rhodes in the Bronze Age [1982],p. 83f.) or the Cypriote Mycenaean pottery prove the rule.

⁵⁰ As first characterized and evaluated by F. Schachermeyr, Die ägäische Frühzeit IV (1980), p. 101-63. See also P. A. Mountjoy (below n. 52).

⁵¹ F. Schachermeyr, l.c.; S. Deger-Jalkotzy, in La transizione (n. 3), p. 63ff.; Eadem, in Zweihundert Jahre Homerforschung (n. 4),p. 147ff.

⁵² P. A. Mountjoy, Mycenaean Decorated Pottery (1976), p. 155ff.

⁵³ On the exchange of LH III C Middle stirrup-jars between Attica, Crete, Kos and Naxos see Sp. Iacovidis, Perati II (1970), p. 415. A good examples is further provided by the distinctive Achaian vases found at various sites of LH III C Greece, cf. S. Deger-Jalkotzy, in Achaia (n. 46), p. 23; Eadem, in Elateia (n. 33), Abb. 8. P. A. Mountjoy (n. 49), p. 267ff. (who, however, dates these stirrup-jars and amphorae in LH III C Late).

⁵⁴ For Crete and the other islands see above n. 38.

⁵⁵ E. Edel, Die Ortsnamenliste Amenophis III (Bonn 1966). K. A. Kitchen, Aegean place names in a list of Amenophis III, in BASOR 181 (1966), p. 23-4.

⁵⁶ E. Edel, in Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde 115 (1988), p. 30ff. A. Bartonek, The Name of Thebes in the Documents of the Mycenaean Era, in Minos 23 (1988), 39-46, esp. 44ff. for the Egyptian testimony.

after the turmoils caused by the downfall of the palaces. The rich burial gifts found in the cemeteries of Arcadia, Achaia, Phocis, of the islands⁵⁷ testify for the fact that by LH III C Middle all provinces of Mycenaean Greece enjoyed prosperity and that economic enterprise and foreign relations were open to them all⁵⁸.

Drawing to a close we may state that there can be no doubt about the high cultural achievements of the Mycenean palaces and of their great contribution to Greek art and to Greek civilization in general. It may be added that the Mycenaean palace system was the first experiment of the Greeks⁵⁹ with big power policy. It was at that period that Mycenaean expansion reached its zenith and that the Mycenaean palaces took over the leading economical and possibly also political rôle throughout the Aegean. They entertained relations with the states and empires of the Ancient Near East and presumably with the peoples of the «High Barbary»⁶⁰, too. Their farreaching economical and political activities were made possible by the creation of a social and governmental system which may be called a state even in the sense of modern jurisprudence⁶¹.

However, the experiment failed. The Mycenaean palace system brought about all negative aspects which we have been discussing and which eventually led to the fall and to the abandonment of the palaces. In my view, the Mycenaean palace system was bound to fail because it rested on principles which were not in keeping with the Greek conditions. The Greeks themselves seem to have preserved a quite ambiguous attitude towards this great era of their past. Their myths and epics tell about the wealth and glory of a remote antiquity. But the ruins of the Mycenaean palaces were also contaminated with stories about hybris and abuse of power, about all sorts of scandal, about deceit and murder. Of course, these tales cannot be taken as a historical tradition. But they may well have transported the message that the Mycenaean palace system was not a suitable kind of government for Greeks.

⁵⁷ For synopsis see F. Schachermeyr (n. 50); for a general survey Deger-Jalkotzy (n. 51).

⁵⁸ I have stressed this point already in Achaia und Elis (n. 46), p. 20ff. For materials see the papers of the Palermo Conference 1984: Traffici micenei (above n. 10); See further A. Harding, The Mycenaeans and Europe (1984); A. B. Knapp (n. 38), p. 146 f. with further references.

⁵⁹ See above n. 1.

⁶⁰ Cf. N. K. Sandars, The Sea Peoples (21985), p. 81ff.

⁶¹ Cf. S. Deger-Jalkotzy (n. 2 and n. 3).