

TOBIAS MÜHLENBRUCH

TIRYNS – THE SETTLEMENT AND ITS HISTORY IN LH III C^{*}

In the history of the Mycenaean culture three periods can be distinguished: the prepalatial period (LH I/II, ca. 1650/1600–1400 B.C.), the palatial period (LH III A/B, ca. 1400–1200 B.C.), and the postpalatial period (LH III C, ca. 1200–1050 B.C.).¹ Already Heinrich Schliemann, excavating Tiryns and Mycenae, noticed the indications of a massive destruction, which today is understood as the end of the palatial period, and concluded that both settlements had been destroyed at the same time. He assumed that this had also been the end of the Mycenaean culture (MÜHLENBRUCH 2003a, 47. – Schliemann in: SCHLIEMANN 1886, 97). Once the existence of a Mycenaean culture following the destruction of the palaces had been proven this view was challenged and the postpalatial period was considered as a phase of cultural decline (DESBOROUGH 1964).

It was the excavation led by Klaus Kilian in the Lower Citadel of Tiryns between 1976 and 1983 which increased our knowledge of LH III C in several aspects and raised the question as to whether there was continuity or change between the palatial and the postpalatial period. Studying the architecture, Kilian was able to distinguish four sub-phases – LH III C Early/Developed/Advanced/Late – each with several building horizons. It should be mentioned that Christian Podzuweit's definition of the sub-phases, based on the pottery of Kilian's excavation (see also STOCKHAMMER in this volume), diverged to a certain degree from the sub-phases as defined by Kilian (KILIAN 1978. – KILIAN 1979. – KILIAN 1981. – KILIAN 1982. – KILIAN 1983. – KILIAN 1988. – PODZUWEIT 1978. – PODZUWEIT 1979. – PODZUWEIT 1981. – PODZUWEIT 1983. – PODZUWEIT 1988. – PODZUWEIT 2007, 3–8).

In the following paper, I will first deal with the architecture of Tiryns (Fig. 1). Secondly I will present some new aspects of the economy. I will conclude with a survey of the postpalatial settlements in the Argolid and some historical remarks.

TIRYNS: THE SETTLEMENT

In LH III B Developed/End, Tiryns was a palatial settlement with the palace on the Upper Citadel. The structure of the palace shows a conception of architectural hierarchy (Fig. 2): the visitor was led to the centre, the so called “Megaron”, on a way that turned off rectangularly and so the visitor was directed through several gates and courts (e.g. KILIAN 1987. – KÜPPER 1996, 111–119. – MÜHLENBRUCH 2003b). The Middle Citadel might have been used as a garden or been covered with palatial buildings. To me it seems very likely that the large buildings in the Lower Citadel were also part of the palace system (Fig. 3) (DAMM-MEINHARDT unpublished). Unfortunately, the Lower Town has not been excavated for the most part. Only a few

* I would like to thank Sigrid Jalkotzy and Michaela Zavadil for inviting me to this workshop. My lecture is the summary of a part of my doctoral dissertation; my advisors were Joseph Maran in Heidelberg and Sigrid Jalkotzy in Salzburg (MÜHLENBRUCH 2004). Thanks to Anselm Drafeln, Elizabeth French, Sigrid Jalkotzy, Joseph Maran, Roland Oetjen and Bernhard Weninger for several discussions and reviewing my English text.

¹ DEGER-JALKOTZY 1995, 373: “the palace system did not prevail in the whole area of the Mycenaean culture.” – MÜHLENBRUCH 2004, 469 for my definition of “archaeological culture”. LH III B2 means LH III B Developed/End, LH III C Middle means LH III C Developed/Advanced.

houses north, west and east of the ridge of Tiryns can be reliably dated to LH III B, however, we do not know the expansion and the density of the settlement south of the Citadel. Tiryns might have been the second palace of Mycenae's ruler, the Wanax, because in the palace of Tiryns conglomerate, which can be found in the vicinity of Mycenae, was used to mark the way to the "Megaron" (KÜPPER 1996, 115–118. – MARAN 2004, 275).

After the destruction of the palaces at the end of LH III B, the "Antenbau" on the Upper Citadel was erected (Fig. 4). This building was excavated by Schliemann and Wilhelm Dörpfeld and had been placed in the eastern part of the former "Megaron". Kilian connected this fact with a palatial tradition, especially with the area of the "throne", and dated the "Antenbau" to LH III C. The most recent excavations on the Upper Citadel were carried out by Joseph Maran. He proved Kilian's assumption and placed other architectural aspects of the building in the tradition of the "Megaron" (MARAN 2000. – MARAN 2001. – MÜHLENBRUCH 2001, 48. – MÜHLENBRUCH unpublished). In my opinion, the erection of the "Antenbau" should be dated to LH III C Early because of these traditions.

It is uncertain whether the Middle Citadel was used in the postpalatial period. In the Lower Citadel, the "squattering" with provisional houses was the first building horizon erected after the destruction of the palace (DAMM-MEINHARDT unpublished). At the end of LH III C Early, the "initial horizon" 19b1 (Fig. 5 with a synopsis of buildings of LH III C) is very important. It is the first horizon to cover nearly the entire western part of the Lower Citadel, and its principal plan remained unchanged in Mycenaean times. There must have been at least some planning of the orientation of the buildings, of the ways, as well as the courtyards, although their shape changed in the course of the postpalatial period. In horizon 19b1 a first shrine (room 117) was built with which a sequence of shrines was found covering the whole LH III C-period.

The shrines opened onto a courtyard. This postpalatial courtyard H 1 was larger than the palatial "Zwinger" and could have had a special meaning for the people, judging by the location and the vicinity of the shrines. In the east of courtyard H 1, the important building VIa was erected. It used the walls of LH III B-building VI. This could have been an attempt by the inhabitants to show or to construct continuity to the palatial period in order to legitimize an elitist position in the settlement.

As regards the Lower Town in LH III C, one has to ask if the foundation of a new quarter north of the ridge was the reaction to a synoicism or the resettlement of people who had lived in the Lower Citadel or a Lower Town.

After the end of the palace system, we may assume that Tiryns was independent from Mycenae and was led by charismatic persons, perhaps former officials of the palace, who were responsible for several parts of the reorganisation. In LH III C, they might have used the "Antenbau" for meetings with a primarily political character, chaired by a leader on the "throne". Building VIa in the Lower Citadel might have served as the house of a former official and his "oikos".² We may further assume that he also served religious functions as the shrines are located nearby. A second important oikos can be associated with room 8/00 in the Lower Town (MARAN 2004, 277–278). This fact may be interpreted in the sense that differences in the status of people in the Citadel and in the Town may have been eliminated.

We do not know many building activities from LH III C Developed, but at the beginning of LH III C Advanced, the large room 127 in the Lower Citadel was erected. Several interesting features indicate an elitist position of its inhabitants, and courtyard H 3 has to be seen as a "private" area in front of room 127. Room 115 dates to the end of LH III C Advanced. It was a hall reconstructed by Kilian with three aisles next to the shrine room 110 and it had, at least in part, religious functions (ALBERS 1994, 111). Several buildings in the Lower Citadel point to a destruction caused by an earthquake at the end of LH III C Advanced.

² This term is used without reference to Homer.

The elaborate “Megaron” W and house O in the east of the Upper Citadel can also be dated to LH III C Advanced or LH III C Late (Fig. 6). A Linear B-tablet, found near house O, raises the question of the possibility of a – very limited – use of this writing even in the postpalatial period.

In my opinion, the “Antenbau” still served as a meeting-hall of the leading persons at the end of the Mycenaean period. Other elaborate houses of LH III C Advanced may have been residences (building VIa and room 127.a.b) or been used as “private” meeting places by oikoi with living space nearby or in the upper storey (“Megaron” W or room 8/00/LH III C Early).

Room 115 could have served as a shrine for the most important oikoi or their leaders. Oikoi may have risen or declined; the groups may have cultivated all kinds of relationships. A possibly competitive behaviour may have caused conflicts, but may also have had positive effects for the community.

If we take a look at the building horizons of LH III C Late, we can still see an impressive settlement in the Lower Citadel. The large room 106.a.124 with a kiln and several storage-bins can be understood as the residence of an elite. Of particular interest is a seal impression, found in this building, referring to late sealing activities. The end of the Mycenaean period in the Lower Citadel is indicated by a layer of debris. A number of findings point to a small settlement in the Lower Citadel, e.g. room 104.a. It seems likely that most of the inhabitants left the Citadel, either for the Lower Town or for other settlements such as Asine.

We know little about Submycenaean building activities in Tiryns and only room 102a in the Lower Citadel is from this phase. However, the significant warrior grave in the Lower Town indicates an important settlement at that time in that area (GROSSMANN 1975).

TIRYNS: THE ECONOMY

Angela von den Driesch and Joachim Boessneck studied the archaeozoological finds from Tiryns. They deduced that the animals – largely cattle, sheep and goats, and pigs – were kept for working, breeding, slaughtering, the production of milk and wool, as well as for cult activities in a balanced proportion. We can assume that most of the slaughtering took place in the Lower Citadel.

After the end of the palatial period, there was a decline of the quantity of finds – according to Von den Driesch and Boessneck as part of a reorganization of the settlement. The time of a postpalatial prosperity, as proposed for LH III C Middle (DEGER-JALKOTZY 1991, 64), can be seen from the multitude of bones from this sub-phase. Only few finds could be dated to LH III C Late. Von den Driesch and Boessneck argued in favour of a decline in population at the end of the Mycenaean period in Tiryns (VON DEN DRIESCH – BOESSNECK 1990).

I do not believe that this model is compelling: It does not pay attention to the fact that the sub-phases consist of a different number of horizons. The result of evaluating the different durations of the sub-phases is a break in the aftermath of the end of the palace system and a more balanced relation between the horizons of the postpalatial period. This can be explained by another way of slaughtering in LH III B and LH III C: It is possible that in LH III B all animals were killed for the whole settlement in the Lower Citadel; in LH III C, however, everybody slaughtered for his own needs both in the Citadel and in the Town (MÜHLENBRUCH 2004, 456–459). (Of course we also have to take into account that bones might have been lost, moved, and removed from the Citadel, which weakens the arguments concerning the interpretation of the archaeozoological finds.)

Helmut Kroll analysed the archaeobotanical samples, in particular those from the Lower Citadel. He deduced a “traditional agriculture” in LH III B2 and LH III C. Kroll thought of a less intensive agriculture in LH III C in comparison with LH III B2, because some grains from LH III C Advanced were bigger than the grains from LH III B2 (KROLL 1982. – KROLL 1984).

It is very difficult to reconstruct the everyday life of the inhabitants of prehistoric settlements. The main reason is the lack of organic finds. Kilian convincingly suggested for the post-palatial buildings in the Lower Citadel a combination of residence, storeroom, and workroom, comparing the economy of LH III C with the system of the homeric oikoi (KILIAN 1985, 76, 80). Methodologically we have to bear in mind the “Homeric question” (ULF 1990) and the chronological distance of the Epics to LH III C, but it is useful to try to reconstruct the living conditions of the people in LH III C.

For the Lower Citadel, the preparation of food in residential contexts, a small scale metallurgy, the manufacture and use of artefacts made of stone and bone, the manufacture of textiles, and storage are attested. The extent and the degree of specialisation may have varied, as is indicated by the distribution of kilns, looms, and storage bins (e.g. RAHMSTORF 2001). In several buildings, figurines were found and can be interpreted as religious objects in the everyday life of the Mycenaeans.

THE SETTLEMENTS IN THE ARGOLID

In LH III B2, Mycenae was a palatial centre like Tiryns with a palace including a “Megaron” and buildings which were part of the palace, e.g. corridor-houses. After the destruction of the so called “Granary” at the end of LH III C Advanced, caused by an earthquake, only isolated houses were inhabited in Mycenae (FRENCH 1998. – FRENCH 1999. – FRENCH 2002, 135–140. – IAKOVIDIS 1983. – IAKOVIDIS 1986. – IAKOVIDIS 2003. – MÜHLENBRUCH 2004, 471–493).

Midea was an important settlement of the palatial period as can be concluded from the fortification wall and the so-called “Megaron” on the “Lower Terraces”. The site possibly served as a bulwark in the eastern part of the Argolid and it was destroyed by an earthquake at the end of LH III B2 together with Tiryns and Mycenae. Already in LH III C Early, a building with two aisles was erected, as a successor building to the “Megaron”. Judging by its elaborate furnishing it might have had a special function and been the Midean counterpart of the “Antenbau” in Tiryns. In LH III C Early or in LH III C Developed, Midea and the building above the “Megaron” were destroyed. Midea was inhabited until LH III C Late (DEMAKOPOULOU 1996. – DEMAKOPOULOU – DIVARI-VALAKOU – ASTRÖM – WALBERG 1996. – WALBERG 1995. – WALBERG 1998).

There are not many indications for Asine being densely inhabited in LH III B2 and LH III C Early. We do not know what happened to the settlement at the end of the palatial period. Several buildings, among them the shrine, can be dated to LH III C Middle. These houses were inhabited until the Early Iron Age and apparently reorganized in the course of the centuries. Therefore, it is difficult to recognize the planning of the structure of Asine in comparison to the settlement of Tiryns (FRÖDIN – PERSSON 1938. – SJÖBERG 2003).

THE ARGOLID IN LH III B/C

Now that I have presented the development of the settlements chronologically, I want to conclude with some historical remarks: My reconstruction is that in LH III B2 Mycenae was the centre of the Argolid. Tiryns was the second palace of Mycenae’s Wanax (LAUTER 1987, 225. – MARAN 2004, 274), and Midea was a fortification and the seat of a governor. Asine can be seen as a small village with a harbour. There were also farms in the Argolid and possibly also in the neighbourhood of Tiryns, as we do not exactly know, whether there was a Lower Town in LH III B.

The destructions at the end of the palatial period in Mycenae, Tiryns and Midea can be traced back to an earthquake. Unfortunately we do not know anything about the consequences of this event for Asine.

In LH III C Early, the inhabitants set up a completely new settlement structure at Tiryns. In my opinion, an elite formed from former officials of the palace was responsible for the new

plan, as only they had the appropriate knowledge, experience, and contacts. Tiryns may now have been independent and the new centre of the Argolid (MARAN 2004, 284). The foundation of the Lower Town north of the Citadel may point to the resettlement of people who had possibly lived south of the Citadel or in other settlements in LH III B. It is difficult to evaluate the settlement of Mycenae in LH III C, because there were later building activities, but it can be assumed that probable fugitives from Midea left Tiryns again in LH III C Early to build up Midea. The successor of the “Megaron” demonstrates the existence of an elite in Midea in the postpalatial period. Midea lost its importance in the course of LH III C, judging by the archaeological record. Asine, however, gained importance – perhaps in consequence of the decline of Midea and possibly Mycenae. The importance of Tiryns in the Early Iron Age is obvious from the graves in the Lower Town (GROSSMANN 1975). Argos is an unknown factor in Late Helladic Argolid, but we can assume a boom in the Submycenaean and/or Proto-/Geometric period, because later it was the most important and eponymous settlement of the Argolid (TOUCHAIS – DIVARI-VALAKOU 1998). The model of a postpalatial prosperity has to be specified for each of the sites. In Tiryns, judging by the architecture, the small finds, and the archaeozoological and archaeobotanical finds, it lasted from the end of LH III C Early until late in LH III C Late.

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³ R 134.135 as marked on the plan were not rooms, but only terrace-walls (R 134 here does not mean R 134 = R 140 from horizon 21c1); R 138 is uncertain.

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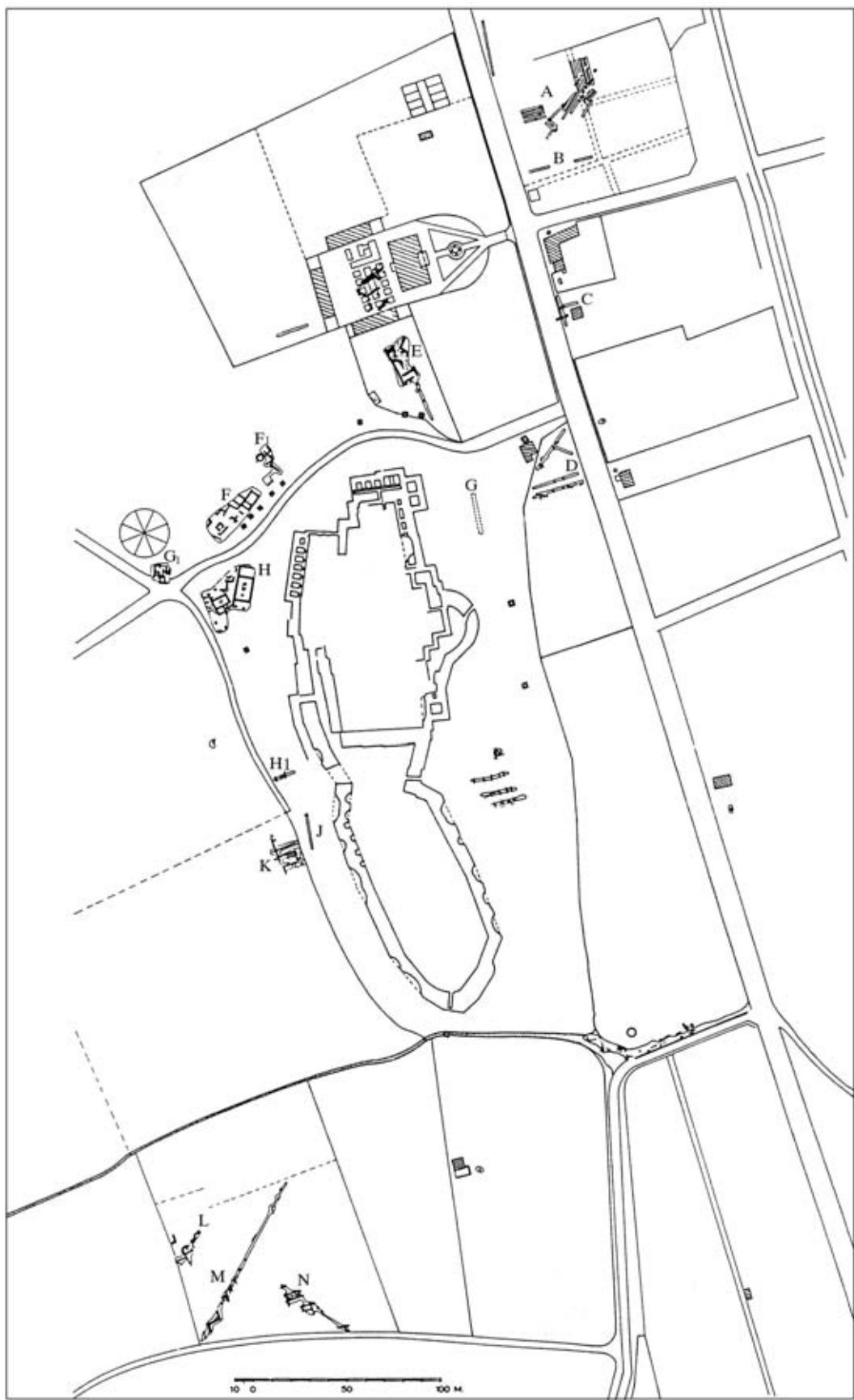


Fig. 1 Tiryns as excavated 1969

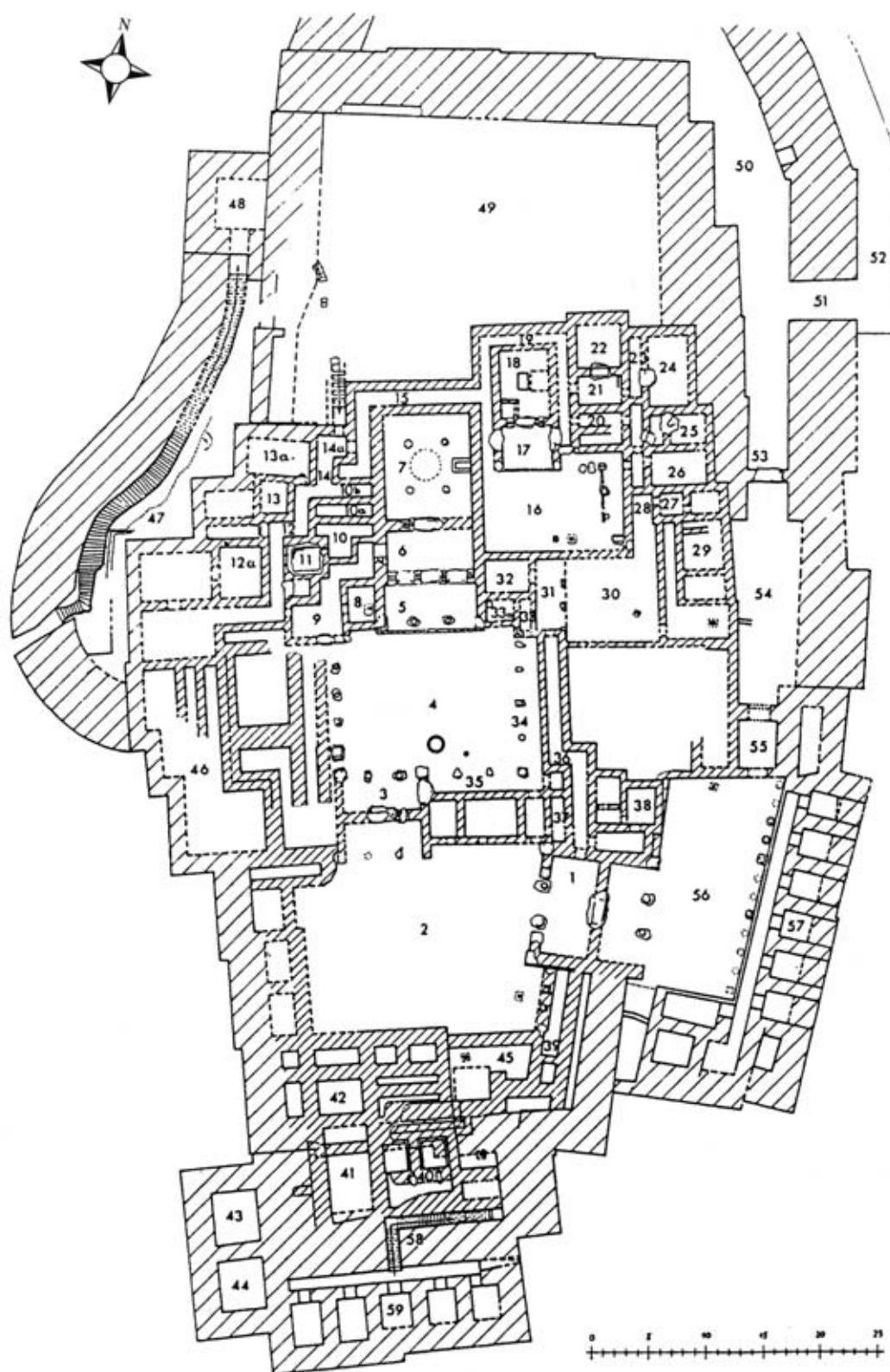


Fig. 2 Tiryns, Upper Citadel in LH III B2

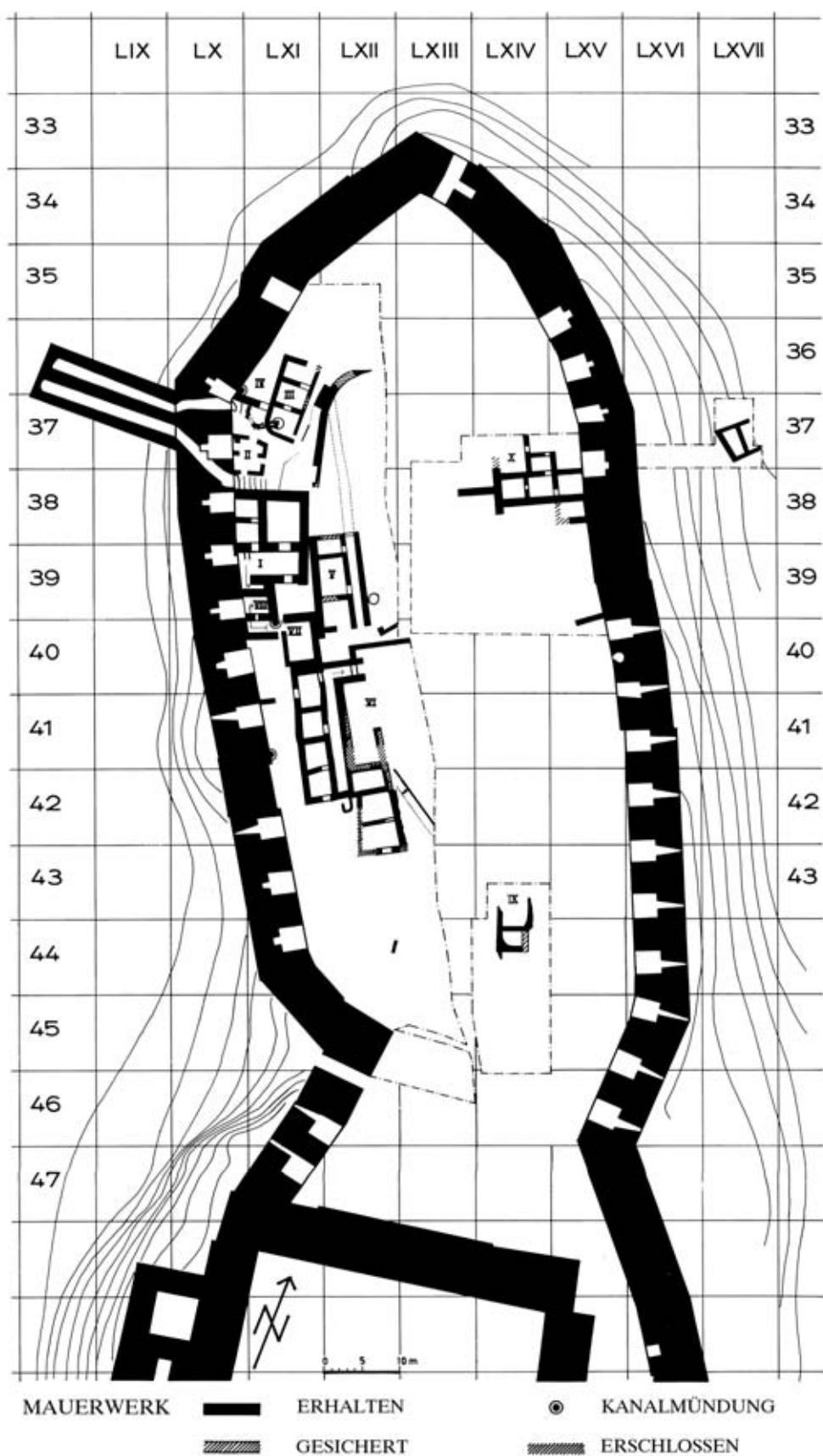


Fig. 3 Tiryns, Lower Citadel in LH III B2

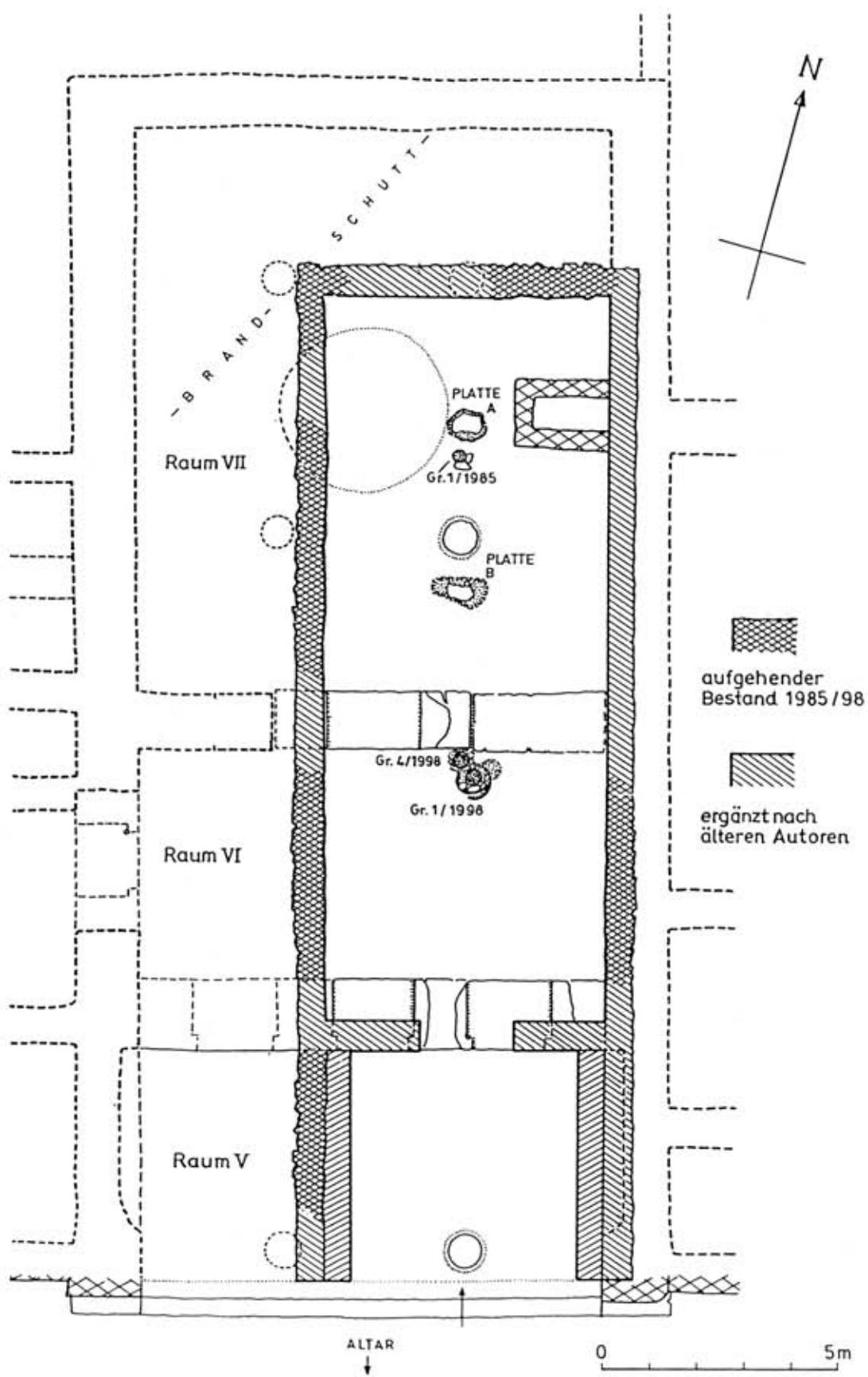


Fig. 4 Tiryns, Upper Citadel: "Antenbau"



Fig. 5 Tiryns, Lower Citadel: Buildings in LH III C Early–Late

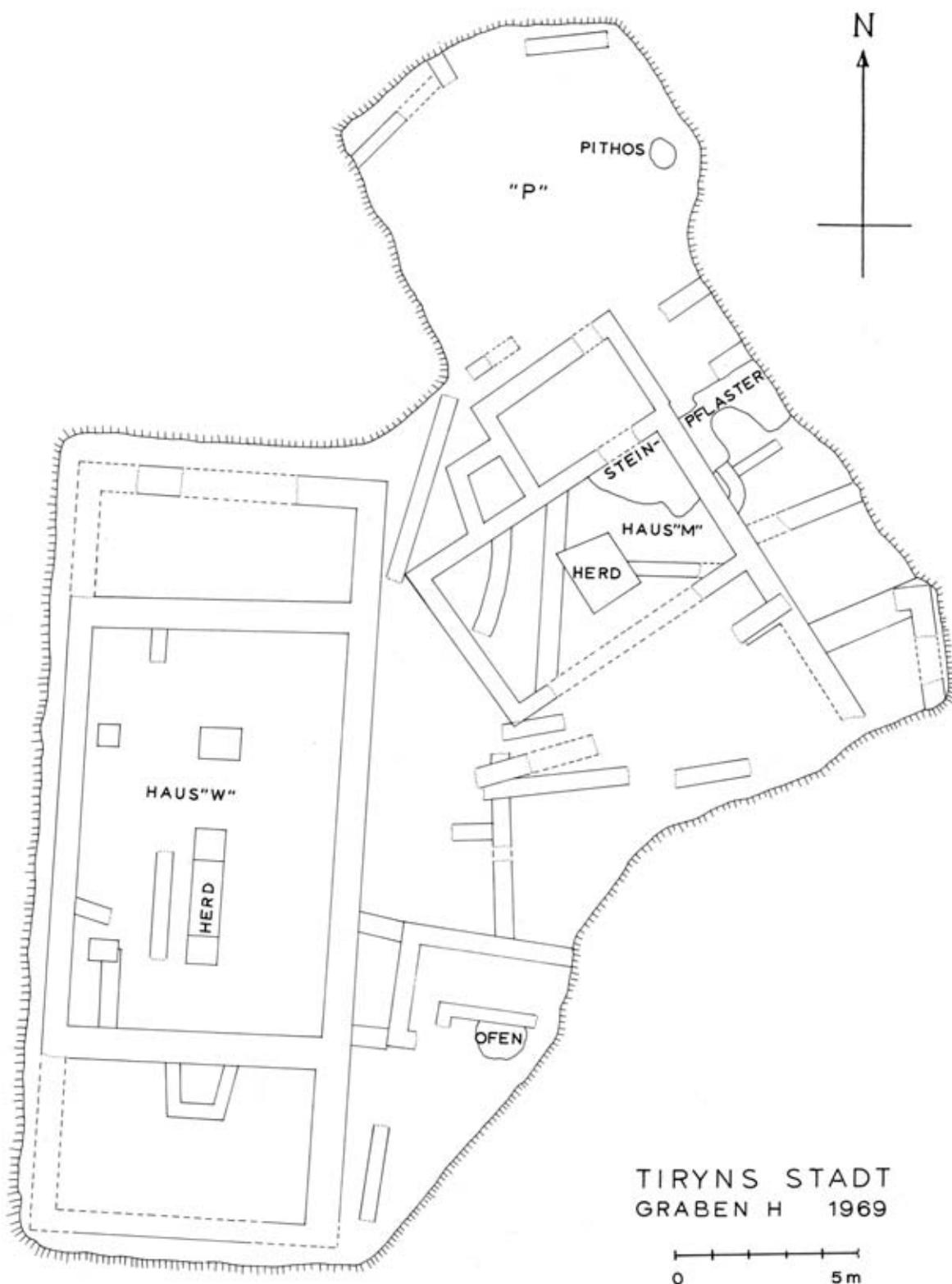


Fig. 6 Tiryns, "Megaron" W, Trench H