

Summary

Terracotta figurines have increasingly become the focus of research in ritual performances and religious identities during prehistory and Classical antiquity. This study analyses the distribution of this class of distinctive, but small and mostly handmade objects from the Mycenaean core settlement of Tiryns in the Argolid (but also published information from elsewhere) over space and time in several detailed case studies. The excavations of Tiryns – starting with Schliemann but continuing to the day – have revealed settlement strata spanning from the Mycenaean protopalatial period to the Early Iron Age on the citadel and in the surrounding plain. The site is thus an ideal starting point to study the commencement of terracotta figurines after the shaft grave period, the transmission of this type of artefacts during the palatial period and the gradual transformation and dissolution of figurine types in the postpalatial period, i.e. from approximately 1450/1430 to 1070/1060 BCE.

All fragments of terracotta figurines from the site stored in the Tiryns apothiki, the National Museum in Athens and documented in archival photographs and excavation diaries of the Tiryns-project had to be located, described, classified and catalogued. As a first step, this encompassed designing and implementing a database, wherein every fragment is recorded with regard to its shape, decoration and specific evidence for production steps and/or depositional factors (including colour photographs of every fragment and in most cases an ink drawing). This is combined with contextual information on every fragment, insofar as such was provided by the excavation documentation. Each data sheet contains only one fragment, even if the original figurine is mended from several parts (joints were nevertheless meticulously noted upon the data entry for the respective fragment), because the contextual data and preservation size of each single part are essential for stratigraphic analysis and for the reconstruction of the depositional history. More than 3,400 figurine fragments were catalogued in detail, comprising terracottas of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic shape as well as miniature models of inanimate objects – termed skeuomorphic – such as furniture and different means of transportation and also composite figurines derived from the coupling of two such classes, e.g. anthropomorphic figures seated on a skeuomorphic throne model or zoomorphic terracottas to which an anthropomorphic rider or charioteer was attached.

In a second step, the distribution of figurines in Tiryns' excavated settlement strata was mapped. These distribution maps provide the basis for a thorough typo-chronological and contextual analysis of Mycenaean figurines. By comparing different Tirynthian settlement areas over time (also analysing the funerary context of figurines in the necropolis of Prophitis Elias), I tried to establish patterns of associations between figurines, other objects and architectural spaces through a >thick description< of the archaeological remains. A number of select contextual case studies was chosen with the aim to establish the use-life of all classes of terracotta figurines in >private</domestic and public/communal spaces as well as potentially different modes of their deposition. The fluctuating frequencies of specific classes of figurines over time, the association or dissociation of some types in contemporaneous contexts and overall quantities of figurines in different settlement phases were used for a culture-historical interpretation of the place of figurines within diverse Mycenaean »Lebenswelten«. By referring to the agency of this class of objects in ritual performances, I interpret them as idiosyncratic markers in archaeological remains of ritual, which help to observe the shaping, transmission and transformation of Mycenaean religion over the course of the Late Bronze Age.

An overview of the history of research on terracotta figurines in the wider context of the ancient eastern Mediterranean region paves the way for examining the specific historical context in which terra-

cotta figurines appeared on the Greek mainland after their absence from the Helladic material culture for more than half a millennium. This also entails a discussion of the pros and cons of an archaeology of religion and of Mycenaean religion in particular, based on archaeological remains (sanctuaries), iconographic evidence (frescoes, glyptic, and pictorial pottery) and epigraphic sources (Linear B), although the later two categories are mostly relevant for the palatial period only. Here, I also specify the questions, which serve as guidelines for my subsequent analysis and interpretation.

In this introductory discussion, I evaluate several contested hypotheses pertaining to the use, function and meaning of Mycenaean figurines. The two most influential are: Figurines were used as profane toys versus figurines hold a religious meaning. As most discussions in figurine studies focus on anthropomorphic terracottas, they were either ascribed a function as adorants, as votives or as tools of protective magic (animal figurines were usually included under this rubric or were interpreted as sacrificial offerings, i. e. as a synecdoche of the sacrifice of a living animal). To gauge the probabilities of these interpretations, contextual analyses of the figurines' find spots seemed to be the best method to reconstruct their use-life and thereby function in different anthropogenic deposits over time. The most pessimistic view on Mycenaean figurines in a settlement context is that their find contexts in most cases point to refuse behaviour. Thus, no patterns related to their use would be discernible, i. e. a contextual study of figurines is deemed impossible or inconsequential for the interpretation of use/function and meaning.

I took issue with this view and established three criteria, by which any contextual analysis in a settlement context can reconstruct more than just the »deposition of trash«:

- First, the exact location of every single terracotta fragment in any deposit, i.e. the three-dimensional documentation of find spot and stratigraphic context helps to distinguish between terracottas found in a fixed architectural setting such as rooms in a structure or spread in open settlement areas such as yards, streets or even pits, fills and eroded or accumulated settlement strata.
- Second, a distinction of differing extents of preservation indicates distinct modes of deposition and re-deposition, including post-depositional factors) between figurines from the same as well as different contexts.
- Third, a comparison of the stylistic and typological homogeneity or heterogeneity of figurines derived from the same locale constitutes the basis for assessing variability in assemblages.

The last criterion derives from comparing contemporary closed contexts with each other and then comparing the range and variation in type and technological profile (including shaping techniques and pottery wares) over time between temporally fixed contexts of the early palatial, late palatial and post-palatial period.

Before implementing this methodology in select case studies for the early palatial, late palatial and postpalatial period, I argue for the performative potential of Mycenaean terracotta figurines. My hypotheses take as a point of departure the idiosyncratic historical context on the Helladic mainland at the start of the protopalatial period in LH II B to early LH III A, when terracotta figurines were first introduced into funerary and settlement contexts: I outline that anthropomorphic terracotta figurines were eventually derived from Cretan prototypes, where figurines were an integral part in the material assemblages of the peak sanctuaries, to a lesser degree also in settlements, but apparently never in funerary contexts. Yet, at the moment when peak sanctuaries started to become less and less frequented, signalling a decline in the power of Neopalatial elites which had appropriated them as spaces for the manifestation of societal status through religious performance, terracotta figurines are evidenced for the first time on the southern Greek mainland and the Cycladic islands of Keos, Melos and Kythera. In contrast to the deposition of Minoan figurines, the best contextual data on the mainland points to their use as grave gifts, i. e. in the funerary realm which is the traditional Helladic stage for the contestation, affirmation and continued performance of individual status and social hierarchy.

Another point of deviation from Minoan customs is the eclecticism observable in the types of

figurines deployed on the mainland: Instead of representing male and female adorants, the Helladic corpus of anthropomorphic figurines is overwhelmingly dominated by females. Additionally, the motif of the *kourotrophos* – which was absent from the Cretan coroplastic repertoire – is evidenced already for the first Mycenaean types – the naturalistic and Proto-Phi. The same holds true for enthroned figurines – the motif is rarely attested in terracotta during the Old- and Neopalatial periods on Crete, whereas contemporary Near Eastern imagery is dominated by seated male figures. Thus, from the commencement of terracotta figurines on the Greek mainland this class of artefacts can be shown to be an amalgam and hybridisation of different cultural influences, but fitted to specific Mycenaean needs: as a transport medium of new religious ideas, which helped to install and support an emerging palatial elite whose perceived superiority over other segments of the society was apparently founded on religious ideology. Figurines were an effective, because inconspicuous means of promoting such an ideology: Due to the portability of the figurines and their comparatively cheap production they materialised and thereby spread the concepts and images of new deities appropriated in the context of elite representation. The new medium of three-dimensional presentation, even if only in miniature, proved to be a *novum* with tremendous impact on Helladic societies.

Under this premise, I offer a historically contingent reconstruction of why and where certain types of figurines would occur or fall out of use. Yet my assertion that the figurines' importance lies in their embeddedness in a specific historical situation also entails that I strongly disagree with Robin Hägg's dichotomous concept of an official versus popular religion during the Mycenaean period. Contrary to Hägg's expectations I could not observe a clear-cut distinction in the artefactual assemblages of official and popular cult. I therefore contest that Hägg's classification of artefact associations for each sphere of cult is correct, arguing that, first, large wheeled figures ascribed to the official level of cult by Hägg were not found in the palatial *megara* so far and sometimes also featured in domestic and funerary contexts, and, second, that small handmade figurines – as indices of a popular level of Mycenaean religion – were attested in the so-called settlement sanctuaries and the immediate surroundings of the palatial *megara* and thus in the sphere of official cult. Most importantly, neither can the figurines be characterised as a traditional, Helladic component nor did they originate from indigenous beliefs/customs, since they were absent from the austere Middle Helladic material culture.

Moreover, I question the validity of such a concept with regard to Mycenaean religion: Recent developments in religious studies have pointed out that official and popular levels of cult are usually linked to book religions such as the monotheistic world religions and that the distinction of such levels is only valid, if a canonical and authorised version of religious conduct, performance and belief exists. All these prerequisites cannot be proven in the case of Mycenaean religion: As evident from the Linear B texts, a distinctive pantheon existed on the mainland, religious performance and ritual was highly organised and in many respects palatially controlled, specific spaces were set apart for public worship, as is obvious from the mentioning of several sanctuaries and there are epigraphic hints at the institutionalisation of priests and other religious functionaries. Yet, in how far these essentials of a canonised religion were in the process of becoming during the course of the palatial period and how valid they were in the post-palatial period after the demise of the palatial elite, is far from clear. Also, distinctive traits of foreign influences, especially Minoan, and thus of characteristics which point to syncretism, militate against the assumption of a closed and fixed religious system in the Mycenaean cultural sphere and over the time span of more than four centuries.

Instead, I analyse the find spots of Mycenaean figurines according to spatial criteria. I draw a distinction between public and private spaces of ritual performance and defined some preliminary characteristics of such contexts in the archaeological record: Multifunctional rooms with restricted access seemed to be a good indicator for a domestic sphere and hence private ritual. Structures and spaces with a restricted variation in object classes, but often with a high amount of non-functional artefacts, i. e. ritual parapher-

nalía or votives, which are accessible to the whole community, may be characterised as settlement or open-air sanctuaries and thus places of communal ritual. Yet, the case of the Mycenaean palatial megará cautions against such a narrow definition of communal cult places. The access to these locales is restricted to certain segments of the society but such spaces bear architectural or decorative markers, which are not attested in the average building, thus pointing to a special, if not always obviously cultic status. The latter shows that a contextual and comparative approach to find spots of figurines is a *sine qua non* in any theory building with respect to ritual and religious performances in the Mycenaean period.

The subsequent part of my study is devoted to the typological analysis of the terracotta figurines from Tiryns. The focus lies on the discussion of the earliest anthropomorphic types – naturalistic, Proto-Phi and Phi A –, since in Tirynthian settlement strata reliable contextual evidence for these is meagre at best. Hence, after defining the general characteristics of the respective type, I proceed to give an overview of the distribution of such figurines in the different settlement areas of Tiryns and their general extent of preservation as well as technological properties observed. A discussion of stylistic traits of the Tirynthian examples also entails the stratigraphic dating and a comparison of these depositional dates with the proposed date range of the type established in contexts elsewhere. Subsequently, the general distribution of the earliest anthropomorphic terracotta types on the Greek mainland, the islands and further abroad are used to substantiate my hypothesis that the naturalistic and Proto-Phi-figurines on the Greek mainland may be interpreted as an indicator of the process of >Mycenaeanization< during LH IIB to early LH IIIA.

Another case study is devoted to the Tau-figurines, which are frequently encountered in the Tirynthian coroplastic corpus, yet show a narrow chronological and geographic distribution: The type is highly standardised and in its canonical form restricted to the later stages of the palatial period. I distinguish several stylistic groups within the type and pinpoint these to certain pottery recipes and minute technological differences, which I interpret as evidence for different workshops producing terracotta figurines in the Argolid. An overview of the find spots of Tau-figurines on the Greek mainland establishes that the geographic distribution of the type is rather narrow with most prolific numbers stemming from the Argolid and that examples from workshops defined on the basis of the Tiryns-material can be identified on other sites, too. This indicates a pioneering role of Argive pottery workshops in creating, disseminating and probably exporting at least certain types of terracotta figurines on an interregional scale. Since Tau-figurines seem to occur predominantly at palatial sites and are not attested in any contemporaneous assemblage of imported Mycenaean figurines in the Levant or Cyprus, this may point to a very idiosyncratic meaning of the type, which restricted its circulation to contexts of Mycenaean palatial influence and was not transferable elsewhere.

In the last typological example, I draw on new evidence for postpalatial figurines, which obviously did not originate from a Mycenaean potting tradition: Handmade, sometimes burnished impasto figurines of Italian derivation, which can be clearly distinguished from Mycenaean terracotta figurines on technological grounds, first appear in LH III C Early settlement strata but continue in varying proportions until the end of the Late Bronze Age and probably also into the Early Iron Age. Here, a process of hybridisation is best observed in the most numerous zoomorphic examples. While some of the anthropomorphic examples adopt certain traits of Mycenaean figurines, such as polos or columnar stem, others show a mixture of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic characteristics not encountered in traditional Mycenaean terracottas. In the case of the zoomorphic handmade, burnished or impasto figurines these are on average smaller than contemporaneous late Mycenaean examples but apparently present the same or similar species as mainland animal figurines. Yet the Italian influences also led to a process of creolisation of traditional Mycenaean pottery products as is evidenced by shallow arinated bowls with bull protomes on top of the strap handle and unpainted animal figurines which are products of Mycenaean pottery recipes and obviously burnt in traditional pottery kilns.

Although no direct production contexts of Mycenaean figurines have been excavated, contexts of production and consumption of certain classes of ceramic products in the Mycenaean palatial period offer valuable hints. My basic contention is that Mycenaean figurines were evidently produced by specialised pottery workshops, because the types are highly standardised and products of apparent Argive provenience show a wide interregional distribution. This militates against the assumption that Mycenaean figurines served as simple toys for children, since all evidence for the production of toys in premodern societies so far points to household production of such objects, which did not aim at standardisation and had a very restricted distribution.

By reviewing the evidence for specialised pottery production in the Argolid under the auspices of the palatial administration, I focus on amphoroid craters with pictorial decoration, especially those depicting scenes of chariot processions. Apart from the sharing of general motives in pictorial pottery and certain composite figurine types, I identify a few stylistic analogies between pictorial painting and figurines and adduce similarities in paste composition between decorated fine-ware and Mycenaean figurines as support for my argument that both represent products of the same workshops. Drawing on research in chemical provenancing of ceramics by Neutron Activation analysis as far as it pertains to Mycenaean pottery workshops, I indicate preliminary parallels between certain wares of my classificatory system based on the Tirynthian figurine corpus with sherds of Mycenaean fine-ware pottery sampled for NAA and ascribed to distinct chemical fingerprints in the Argolid. Although the results obtained so far are inconclusive, the exercise may be worthwhile pursuing in the future, since it already became obvious that Argive pottery products – including figurines – were probably closely monitored by the palatial administration during the palatial period. Thus, there are several clues derived from such an analysis of the wider context of production, which also point to links between figurines and elite interest as hypothesised at the outset of the study.

Contexts of consumption are the focus of the monograph's main chapter: Here I present case studies of contextual analyses for figurines found in different functional and/or depositional contexts. I concentrate on three spatial categories: Architectural complexes of domestic character in the Lower Citadel and in the northern settlement sector outside the citadel are selected to refine and elaborate on characteristics of >private</domestic cult involving figurines. Contexts testifying to artisanal activities in the Lower Citadel and in the Northern Suburb are analysed with respect to the role of figurines in craft production and the area, in which the postpalatial settlement sanctuary of Tiryns is located, is investigated to characterise communal cult in more detail. The selected case studies encompass contexts ranging from LH III A2 to LH III C Late to enable a diachronic overview of figurine consumption in the environment of a prototypical Mycenaean settlement. Moreover, floor or room contexts are contrasted and compared with deposits, which evidently do not attest to the primary use of figurines but to various modes of deposition.

Starting with a short discussion of a few anthropomorphic figurines found in chamber tombs of the adjacent Prophitis Elias necropolis I remark upon the rarity of figurines in late palatial burials, which is in stark contrast to their distribution in contemporaneous settlement contexts. This trend can be observed in other classes of material culture as well. It probably points to a shift in the arena of display for figurines and other objects from the early to the late palatial period: The display of material culture as a means to signal social status or for defining one's identity now takes place in the settlement rather than the funerary context, which was the contested arena of social strategies in the Early Mycenaean period.

A detailed stratigraphic analysis of the earliest well-preserved architectural complex in the Lower Citadel with a sequence of super-imposed floor levels in the so-called Tiefschnitt (deep trench) retraces the evolution and apparently continuous use of this terrace building from LH III A Late to the end of LH III B Middle. Despite the meagre evidence for early palatial settlement strata in Tiryns so far, some

of the data on figurine distribution in the late LH III A and early LH III B contexts of the terrace building hint at a differential consumption of certain figurine classes, but more reliably show the range of typological and stylistic variation to be expected during this time span. Differences in the distribution of female and composite figurines become more pronounced in the last stage of the building, dating already to LH III B Middle. I associate fragments of Linear B tablets, which were found in destruction strata above and around the building, with certain activities taking place in the building and interpret the finds from different rooms in view of objects mentioned in the tablets, thus linking/combining archaeological remains and epigraphic data. This contextual analysis suggests that the complex housed multiple functions during this phase, including domestic quarters and a metallurgical workshop and was under the supervision of the palace administration. The installation of an oven with parts of a crucible in situ in one of the rooms, coupled with extensive ash layers, scrap bronze and a bronze ingot hidden in one of the walls allow the identification of a metallurgical workshop in the southern sector of the building. High frequencies of figurine fragments in and around this building and the example of a wheelmade female figure in a debris stratum just south of the room with a small-scale industrial oven attest to the custom of setting up figurines and large figures in workshop areas to protect the craft and especially metallurgical activities. In a wider regional perspective, the Tirynthian attestation for ritual protection of palatial craft activities is also evidenced in an example of a wheelmade figure found in a workshop context in Thebes.

Next, I discuss the contested issue of figurine consumption on the Upper Citadel, which encompasses the Mycenaean palace proper to the north, making use of evidence from the so-called Epichosis, the Western Staircase, finds made during the excavation of Heinrich Schliemann and old photographs of terracotta figurines in the Tiryns-archive, which are nowadays lost. By giving close attention to the range of types represented and comparing these unstratified figurines with well-stratified and closely dated examples from the Lower Citadel, I narrow the date of the deposition of the Epichosis material down to the end of the palatial period. The analysis also highlights that the range of figurine types probably in use on the Upper Citadel was highly selective and exceptional in comparison to other settlement areas in Tiryns. Last but not least, I argue that the so far unparalleled large wheelmade figure of an ithyphallic male found in the Epichosis together with a Levantine bronze statuette of a standing armed figure excavated by Schliemann and fragments of Mycenaean fish rhyta probably attest to the cult of a male deity in close proximity to the megaron, whose ritual focused at least partly on the performance of libations and might have been influenced by Near Eastern iconographic prototypes. Taken all the evidence together (also from sites as Midea and Mycenae), I reject the statements of Hägg and Kilian that small figurines were not used by the palatial elite and in the surrounding of the megaron, thus weakening one of the strongest arguments adduced for the dichotomy of official versus popular cult.

The ensuing discussion is devoted to the remains of ritual and religious paraphernalia concentrated in the west of in the Lower Citadel and dating from the late palatial to the end of the postpalatial period. The area featured a settlement sanctuary during most of LH III C which is often referred to in publications on Mycenaean ritual and religion. In the course of the stratigraphic and typological analysis of figurine fragments found in the area of Building Complex A, Building VI and the so-called Zwinger (ward) located to the east of Casemate West 7 (Kw 7) in the fortification wall during LH III B Developed and Final, it became obvious that my statistics of figurine types and numbers deviated from results published so far. This was in part due to the greater importance I attach to the state of preservation of every single fragment found in this area and because of new joints of figurine parts from different stratigraphic layers and units. Yet the comparison of figurines found in the late palatial building complexes and the open area west of Building VI highlight two important points, which altered the long-established picture of the whole area substantially: First, figurine fragments in the ward were mostly fragmented, but in types closely comparable to contemporaneous figurines used and deposited in the Build-

ing Complex A and Building VI, so the evidence is best interpreted as waste stemming from these structures, whereas Kilian assumed that they originated in the chamber of Casemate West 7 which he interpreted as a palatial shrine. Recent evidence for a major rebuilding phase at the end of LH III B Developed opens up new avenues of interpretation: It is quite possible that the chamber of Casemate West 7 was blocked up during these activities and was thus in use for a very short time only. Second, and more importantly, that the fragments in the ward cannot be characterised as refuse of such a shrine is evident, when one compares the figurines from the ward with a huge assemblage of terracotta figurines in a debris accumulation outside the fortification walls but beneath the opening of Casemate West 7 which Kilian adduced as evidence for repeated episodes of cleaning of his supposedly »late palatial cult chamber«: The figurines found in this deposit are mostly of postpalatial types, far better preserved than the average terracotta figurine in settlement deposits and represent predominantly female figurines. Yet not a single example of Tau-figurines – a type well attested in the ward – was identified in the debris layers outside the fortification wall. The chronological gap between the two assemblages and the differences in types preclude an interpretation whereby both assemblages stem from identical activities and the same locale. The best stylistic and typological comparisons for the majority of the figurines outside the fortification wall are with terracottas found in and around the first postpalatial sanctuary, Room R117. Therefore, I interpret most strata of this deposit as an act of probably intentional votive deposition – in my opinion the material ultimately derived from the cleaning of the destruction layer of the settlement sanctuary Room R117.

In my review of the installations in Room R123 of the late palatial Building VI, which had been interpreted by Kilian as a domestic shrine with a house altar, I point out that there is no other example of such a concentration of installations with evident cultic associations in any domestic context known to me. Instead, I argue for an identification of Room R123 and Building VI as one of the many settlement sanctuaries mentioned in the Linear B tablets, thus representing a cult focus in the Lower Citadel during the latest stages of the palatial period.

Kilian furthermore envisioned a continuity of cult from the palatial to the postpalatial period without any hiatus and almost on the same spot: He interpreted >Room 119< in the earliest reoccupation phase after the societal collapse at the end of the palatial period as the first provisional cult room in a succession of settlement sanctuaries spanning the whole of LH III C. Yet figurine joints point to an extensive disturbance of the assumed floor deposits of >Room 119<. Instead, I reinterpret the material published by Kilian as the inventory of his earliest postpalatial sanctuary as structured deposition, i.e. the ritual disposal/burying of votives and cult paraphernalia in a bothros after the destruction of Room R117. This reconstruction of events is given precedence over Kilian's hypothesis, since figurine parts below floor levels of >Room 119< join with fragments found in levels of the later Room R117 and its vicinity.

A diachronic comparison of figurine frequencies and their extent of preservation in and around the successive LH III C settlement sanctuaries Room R117, Room R110 and Room R110a highlights one essential, but previously obfuscated feature of communal cult in postpalatial Tiryns: The repertoire of votives and cult statues comprises only female figurines and figures. Also, a progressive reduction in votives towards end of the Late Bronze Age can be traced in the material assemblages of the LH III C shrines. Traces of wear on one of the large figures found in Room R110 testify to some rites performed: According to iconographic evidence from fresco painting and epigraphic hints in the Linear B texts, processions formed an important part of Mycenaean communal ritual during the palatial period. Synoptically, the data strongly argue for a continuity of religious processions from the palatial to postpalatial period.

In contrast to communal religious performances domestic contexts and >private< ritual during the postpalatial period can best be observed in the Northern Suburb with archaeological remains mostly pertaining to the earlier part of LH III C and Room R127 in the Lower Citadel where the material

analysed covered the later part of the postpalatial period: These contexts offer ample evidence for the association of figurines with hearths (as foci of domestic rituals) and entrance spaces (or similar liminal spheres), and attest to the increasing preponderance of animal figurines in the domestic sphere. Thus, zoomorphic figurines in Tiryns seem to be restricted to >private</domestic cult and are almost the sole class of terracotta votives by LH III C Advanced. I explain the exclusion of female figurines first from votive assemblages in the domestic arena and successively from communal cult as signifying the gradual weakening and extinction of palatial idioms and ideology in the religious discourse of Tirynthian postpalatial society. As an aside – when comparing figurine types attested as votives in public cults of the Early Iron Age with those observed in the latest Late Bronze Age domestic contexts, a transformation of >private</domestic to public/communal cult is already foreshadowed at the very end of the Mycenaean period.

Moreover, after analysing the contexts of Tiryns Northeast I propose a new interpretation of the archaeological remains in some strata as representing a workshop area of small-scale (metal?) industries. I also argue for the identification of Room R127 and Room R126 in the Lower Citadel as areas where the preparation and staging of banquets took place. Two important aspects also emerge from my tentative reconstruction of the architectural sequence of Building VIa, which is mostly based on evidence for residual figurine types found below and around the structure: According to my interpretation the building was first inhabited in LH III C Late and the obvious re-use of figurines from late palatial strata in a context of the latest postpalatial activities in the Lower Citadel attests to the attempt of a person or a family to associate its social aspirations with the palatial past – hence providing us with a rare example for the invention of traditions.

To sum up, I suggest explaining the pervasiveness of Mycenaean figurines in all kinds of contexts and social arenas as due to their performative potential in which I detected a narrative quality – they abbreviated, froze and thereby perpetually reiterated the enactment of certain religious rituals. Because of their inconspicuous nature, Mycenaean terracotta figurines represented a socially malleable medium, which offered great capacities for the performance of diverse and perhaps sometimes even contradictory interpretations of ritual practice and religious discourse over time.