

The Destruction at the Palace of Ayios Vasileios and Its Synchronisms

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Abstract: The newly discovered palace at Ayios Vasileios offers the first evidence for the use of Linear B clay tablets in Laconia. The palace was destroyed by a severe fire during which the room that hosted the Linear B archive was burnt down. The suggested date of this destruction is placed close to LH IIIB Middle. The present paper discusses the related evidence from the pottery and stratigraphy available so far. Moreover, the destruction of Ayios Vasileios is placed in a wider geographical context, suggesting that the mid-13th century in southern Greece was marked by several similar events. Finally, the paper offers some preliminary results about the date and character of reoccupation in the area of the court.

Keywords: Ayios Vasileios, Laconia, palace destruction, pottery, LH IIIB Middle

Introduction

The discovery of the palace at Ayios Vasileios and the first Linear B archive in Laconia, almost 150 years after the first excavations in Mycenae and Tiryns, fills a major research gap.⁴ It aspires to provide new data on some of the most highly debated aspects of the Mycenaean research such as the formation of the Mycenaean palaces, the development of palatial architecture, and the political organization in the southeastern Peloponnese. Since 2010, excavation has gradually revealed the remains of large building complexes and a large Court.⁵ The latter had a northwest-southeast orientation and may have been approximately 20m wide (Figs. 1–2).⁶ The size and presumed architectural design of the large Court with the surrounding buildings recall Cretan traditions and there are some features that were not encountered before the discovery of Ayios Vasileios in the context of the mainland architecture. Most prominent among these are the two excavated porticos, the West Stoa and the South Stoa, that are 5.5m wide and thus unusually deep, while their colonnades consist of alternating pillars and columns. The whole complex of the stoas and the court was constructed in LH IIIA2 Early – approximately at the same time when the first megara at Tiryns, Mycenae and Pylos were built – on top of an artificial platform.⁷

The palace of Ayios Vasileios suffered a severe conflagration that is obvious in all excavation trenches. The following paper discusses the date of this event based on the evidence of the pottery discovered firstly in the area of the two stoas, i.e. the area of the Linear B archive in the West Stoa

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⁴ See Aravantinos – Vasilogamvrou 2012 for the first Linear B tablets from Ayios Vasileios.

⁵ Buildings A, Δ and E. Vasilogamvrou 2013; Vasilogamvrou 2014; Vasilogamvrou 2015a; Vasilogamvrou 2015b; Vasilogamvrou 2018. In the north part of the plateau a cemetery with cist tombs was in use from MH III to LH IIB. See Moutafi – Voutsaki 2016; Hachtmann – Voutsaki, this volume.

⁶ Its northern end is not exposed yet, but the evidence from the geophysical prospection suggests that it may have extended up to the area west of Building A (Vasilogamvrou 2015b, 98–99, pls. 66–67).

⁷ Vasilogamvrou 2018, 155–165, figs. 13–17; Vasilogamvrou et al. 2021. The Great Megaron in Tiryns was constructed in LH IIIA1 or LH IIIA2 (Maran 2001, 23–25). For Pylos see Nelson 2001.



Fig. 1 The large Court of Ayios Vasileios with the West and the South Stoa. State of 2016 excavation. In red, the group of the in situ vessels from the West Stoa (drawing K. Minakakis, K. Athanasiou, I. Koulogeorgiou).

and secondly in the court.⁸ Before this, we shall present the main stratigraphic features in the area under discussion and some evidence for a possible reoccupation. The destruction of the palace was most certainly an event of major significance in Laconia, but it may also have had wider implications. To gain a deeper insight into these queries, the destruction of Ayios Vasileios is placed within a wider context to the extent that the available material allows it.

The Stratigraphy

In almost all trenches opened in the area of the court and the stoas, the excavation has reached the floor of the structures. Evidence of the conflagration is abundant, while the destruction debris was well preserved in particular areas. This is mainly observed in the West Stoa, where the debris from the collapsed upper story that contained the Linear B tablets was found lying directly on the ground floor of the stoa (Figs. 2, 4).⁹ Besides the baked Linear B tablets, many other finds and building material show evidence for exposure to fire and high temperatures. The pottery, for instance, is often vitrified, and the same is true for the ground floor of the structures that consisted

⁸ See Kardamaki 2017 for a preliminary discussion.

⁹ Vasilogamvrou 2015a, 73–74, pls. 58–60α; Vasilogamvrou 2015b, 108, fig. 3, pls. 71–73.



Fig. 2 The West and South Stoa and the large Court. The round pits are Byzantine. State at the end of the 2016 excavation. Bottom left: the rear room to the west of the West Stoa. Top left: the collapsed upper floor of the West Stoa (Linear B archive). Centre right: Wall 108 on the floor of the court (aerial photo N. Karadimas).

of pebbles and trodden earth. Almost everywhere it has been exposed, both in the stoas and in the court, it has a grayish-brown color with crackles on its surface.¹⁰

More precisely, the following stratigraphy was observed in the course of the excavation. Two groups of vessels were discovered lying directly on the floor of the West Stoa (Figs. 1–2) and close to the west pillar of the South Stoa respectively. In the West Stoa the vessels were covered by the building debris of the first floor¹¹ while in the South Stoa they were found under a stone rubble that probably derived from the fallen upper structures (Fig. 3). The layer on top of the floor of the West Stoa was red loamish, varying in thickness between 20 and 40cm. This was very often sealed by the lime-plaster floor and the building material of the fallen upper story and it may have formed a subfloor fill of the upper story. Many fragments of the Linear B tablets were closely

¹⁰ Vasilogamvrou 2015a, 73.

¹¹ Vasilogamvrou 2018, 163, fig. 17.

associated with or even lying directly on the lime-plaster floor.¹² The whole deposit was buried under a c. 30cm-thick layer of soil with mixed pottery from various periods up to the modern times.

In the South Stoa (Trenches $\Delta 12\gamma$, $\Delta 12\beta$, $\Delta 13\beta$, $\Delta 13\delta$, south part of $E 14\gamma$, $\Delta 14\alpha$) the situation is different. The part of the rear wall excavated so far survives only at a foundation level (Trenches $\Delta 13\delta$, $\Gamma 12\alpha$)¹³ whereas the vitrified floor in the southern part of the structure was found almost directly under the modern surface (southern part of $\Delta 12\gamma$, $\Delta 14\alpha$). In the northern part of the South Stoa the deposits are thicker, and the floor was covered by several layers, varying in thickness (from 5 to 15 and 40cm), color (grayish, brown or red) or consistency. In the eastern part of the South Stoa (Trench $\Delta 14\alpha$) a large piece of charred wood was lying directly on the floor.¹⁴ In trench $\Delta 12\beta$ a layer with gray soil on top of the floor of the stoa and the court was followed by a c. 40cm-thick brownish-red layer that covered most parts of the trench and contained post-destruction material. In Trenches $\Delta 13\beta$ and $E 13\delta$ a c. 40cm-thick grayish-brownish layer with post-destruction material that extended from the court to the South Stoa was lying on top of the floor (Fig. 12.53–57). This layer cuts another one with red soil and a few sherds of earlier date (Fig. 12.49–52). Some of the layers mentioned above contained few sherds and may derive from disintegrated building material or refuse during use of the buildings (thin layers on top of the floor of the court and South Stoa), while others seem to relate to post-destruction activities.

The excavation in Trenches $\Delta 11\beta$, $\Delta 12\alpha$ and $\Delta 12\gamma$, yielded a c. 60cm-thick layer of large and medium-sized stones mixed with red soil on top of the ground floor.¹⁵ This stone rubble appeared across the colonnade of the West Stoa (Fig. 5), as well as the colonnade of the South Stoa – where it covered the group of vessels next to the western pillar of the South Stoa – and it was also attested in the north part of the South Stoa (Figs. 1, 3). The exact origin of the stone rubble is not yet clear, but it most probably derives from the upper story of the West and South Stoa.¹⁶ A concentration of stones was also excavated in the west part of Trench $\Delta 12\beta$.

In Trench $\Delta 12\alpha$, a wall with a north-south course was resting on a thin red layer which itself was on top of the vitrified floor of the court (Wall 108) (Figs. 1, 4–5).¹⁷ West of Wall 108 there was a c. 50cm-thick red soil that resembles the red layer from the West Stoa, but to the east the soil had a rather brownish-red color. This wall was therefore constructed on top of the vitrified floor of the court and represents a post-destruction architectural feature. Besides the burnt floor of the court, no other floor has survived in Trench $\Delta 12\alpha$ that could be associated with Wall 108.

While interpreting the stratigraphic data is a work in progress that will most certainly improve as the excavation continues, some aspects already seem clear. The debris from the fire destruction of the palace was not entirely removed when some kind of reoccupation occurred in the area. It was found almost intact in the West Stoa, where in some areas its upper preserved level was higher than the upper courses of post-destruction Wall 108 in the court. Some of the destruction debris also remained in place in the South Stoa (charred wood in Trench $\Delta 14\alpha$). This may suggest that a complete rebuilding and renovation of the old structures was not part of the post-destruction program and some areas may have gone out of use. In other cases this type of rebuilding amid destruction debris that was still visible or leveled was often called ‘Squatter Building’ or ‘Ruinenbewohnung’ and it was related to restricted building capacities or was viewed as an instant

¹² Vasilogamvrou 2015b, 108; Vasilogamvrou 2018, 160, 163, figs. 12, 15. In some cases, fragments of the lime-plaster floor of the upper story were found directly on the floor of the West Stoa without the intervening red layer (Vasilogamvrou 2015b, 107).

¹³ Vasilogamvrou 2015b, 113, fig. 2.

¹⁴ Vasilogamvrou 2015b, 110–111, pl. 75a.

¹⁵ Vasilogamvrou 2015a, 74, pl. 59b. Close to the west pillar base of the South Stoa, a thin red layer was observed between the lowest levels of the rubble and the floor. A similar deposit was encountered in the court in Trenches $E 13\delta$ and $E 14\gamma$ to the east, but the stone layers also contained fragments of charred wood and many mudbricks (Vasilogamvrou 2015b, 110–111, pl. 75).

¹⁶ In Trench $E 11\delta$, in the area of the colonnade, pottery joins connecting the upper with the lowest part of the stone rubble were observed. This probably suggests that the stone rubble results from a single-process event.

¹⁷ Vasilogamvrou 2015a, 74, pl. 58a.



Fig. 3 The stone rubble in the court (Trench Δ12α) and the north part of the South Stoa (Trench Δ12γ). View from the east. Excavation state 2012 (photo V. Georgiadis).



Fig. 4 Wall 108 and stone rubble in the court (Trench Δ12α) and the fallen lime-plaster floor of the upper story of the West Stoa. View from the north (photo N. Karadimas).

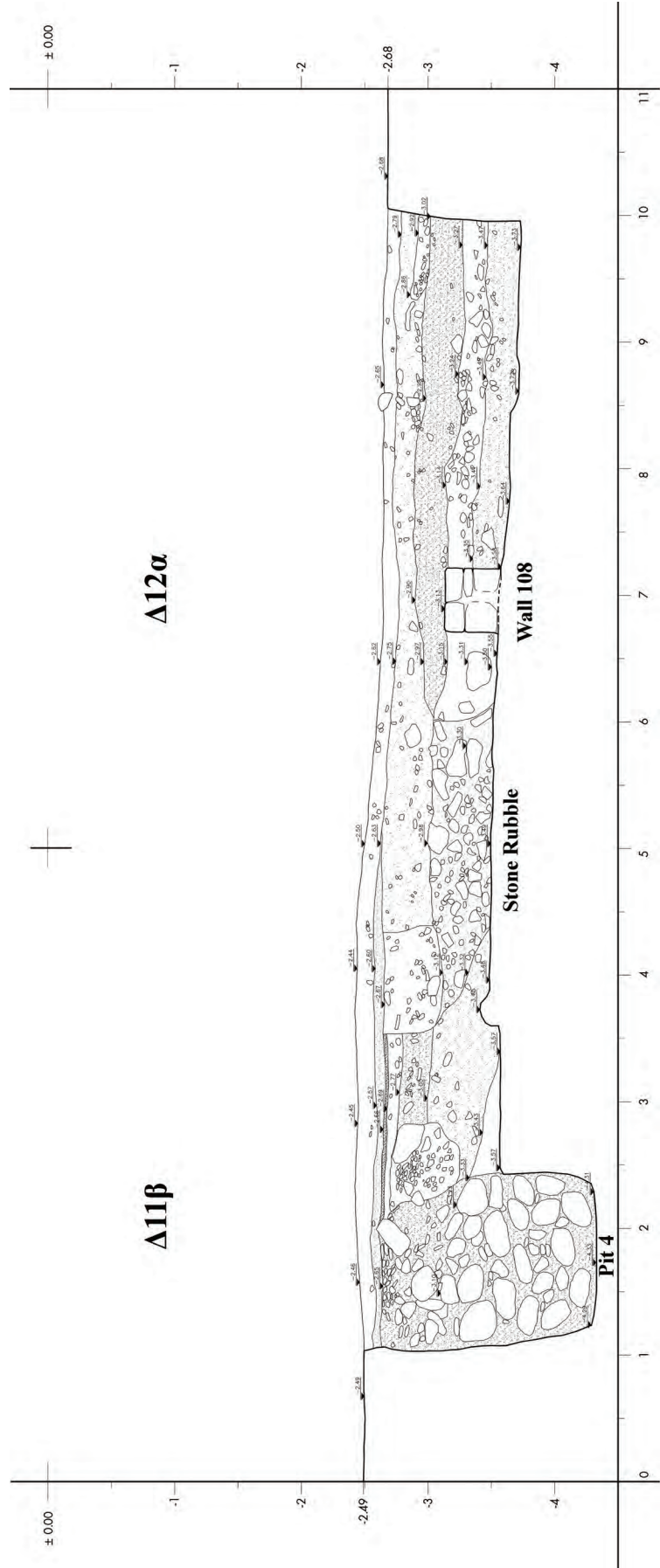


Fig. 5 Section of the north baulk in Trenches Δ11β and Δ12α with the stone rubble and Wall 108 built on top of the floor of the court (Section A—A', see Fig. 1) (drawing I. Koulougorgiou).

reaction after a sudden event – e.g. an earthquake.¹⁸ However, a selective rebuilding with deliberate preservation or rejection of earlier spaces based on a new concept is also possible and has been demonstrated by Joseph Maran in the case of the LH IIIC Early Post-palatial occupation in the Upper Citadel of Tiryns.¹⁹

In the following sections we discuss the pottery from the two stoas – West and South Stoa – and the court.

Pottery from the West Stoa and the South Stoa

The pottery from the West Stoa and the west end of the South Stoa belongs to three different types of assemblages. The first comprises pottery that was found in situ on the floor of the building's ground floor. The vessels from the West Stoa are fully or very well preserved – in total 17 pots – while in the South Stoa – next to the western pillar base – the material is more fragmented. In both cases the pottery is heavily burnt and often deformed.²⁰ These two floor deposits provide the most secure evidence for the dating of the destruction of the two stoas; however, their dating is a challenging task as the entire material consists exclusively of plain vessels.

The second type of assemblage consists of fully or almost fully preserved pots – in total seven vessels – that were found in association with the debris of the upper story of the West Stoa or lying in the red layer that existed between the floor plaster of the upper story and the floor of the ground floor of the West Stoa. These vessels, which give additional evidence for the dating of the destruction of the West Stoa, may have formed part of the first floor room assemblages and some of these could have entered the red layer when the upper floor collapsed.²¹ They occasionally appear in concentrations, but unlike the in situ material from the ground floor, these vessels were not burnt. However, their surfaces were almost always covered by a layer of lime that was also observed on the surfaces of the in situ pots.²²

The third type of assemblage is the sherd material from the destruction and building debris of the West Stoa. Some sherds preserve a large part of their original section but most of the material is fragmented.

Pottery from the Ground Floor of the West Stoa and the South Stoa

The vessels that were discovered in situ on the ground floor level of the West Stoa and the west end of the South Stoa are all plain (Figs. 6–7).²³ Most of the material belongs to drinking/eating pots, i.e. carinated kylikes FS 267 (Figs. 6.6–7, 7.12), globular kylikes FS 264/265 (Fig. 7.9–10), angular bowls FS 295 (Figs. 6.8, 7.13–14), cups FS 222 (Fig. 6.1–5) and a few conical cups FS 204 (Fig. 7.15–16). The group of open vessels from the South Stoa also includes large fragments of two cooking tripods. The distribution of the material shows a noteworthy differentiation in terms of its typology. Globular kylikes and conical cups appear only in the South Stoa (Fig. 7.9–10, 15–16) while cups FS 222 are found only in the West Stoa (Fig. 6.1–5).

¹⁸ Kilian 1988, 135. See Damm-Meinhardt 2015, 249–250, for discussion. Catling 2009, vol. 1, 216–217, 236–237. According to Hector Catling, the buildings on the Aetos South Slope were damaged due to structural failure and earthquake.

¹⁹ Maran 2012, 158–159.

²⁰ For this reason, the identification of joining fragments is sometimes impossible. Thus, the number of pots, especially from the South Stoa, is approximate.

²¹ Some fragments of the plaster floor were found in almost vertical position (Vasilogamvrou 2015b, 107).

²² This lime deposition on the surfaces of sherds and vessels was observed only on the material related to the destruction deposits and the red layer on top of the floor of the West Stoa. It was not observed on the surfaces of later material (Byzantine tiles) found in the higher disturbed layers of the West Stoa nor on the LH IIIB/IIIC Early post-destruction sherds in the area of the court to the east of the West Stoa.

²³ See also Kardamaki 2017, 131, fig. 20.318–321.

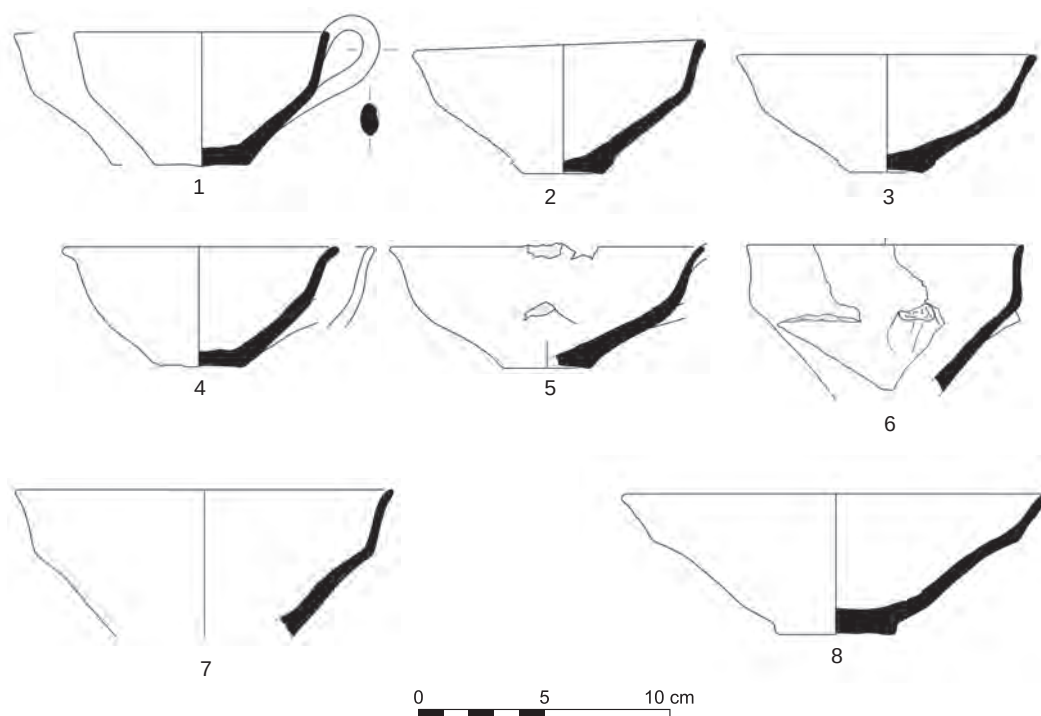


Fig. 6 The group of the in situ pottery from the West Stoa. Scale 1:3 (drawings A. Poelstra Traga).

Angular bowls and carinated kylikes appear in both contexts. Moreover, the in situ pottery of the South Stoa clearly reflects an earlier, LH IIIA2 style,²⁴ while the pots from the West Stoa demonstrate a more advanced typology with tall flaring rims or slightly pulled lips that are typical for LH IIIB.²⁵ This suggests that pottery of LH IIIA2 style either survived or was still produced at the time of destruction, although at the moment it is difficult to explain this spatial distribution of material.

The group of the shallow cups FS 222 from the West Stoa merits special attention. The type occurs in two shape variants, a shallow rounded (Fig. 6.4–5) and an angular (Fig. 6.1–3) one. Regarding the latter, this was taken as an indication for a LH IIIB chronology as the shape was absent in LH IIIA contexts of the site. Angular cups are represented by three specimens, but only one preserves a handle (Fig. 6.1).²⁶ Published examples of the shape are well known from LH IIIB and LH IIIC Early contexts, as at Dimini,²⁷ Pylos,²⁸ the House of Kadmos in Thebes,²⁹ the Acro-

²⁴ For similar LH IIIA2 rounded kylikes from Ayios Vasileios see Kardamaki 2017, 124, fig. 13.204. See also Thomas 2011, 212, fig. 21.228. For the angular bowl/kylix on fig. 7.13 see Thomas 2011, 213, fig. 22.239.

²⁵ French 1967, 176, fig. 17.K4–K5, K10; 177, fig. 18.B7 (LH IIIB Middle, Mycenae); Mountjoy 1976, 99, fig. 12.155; Thomas 2005, 514, fig. 27.1, 6. Simple flaring rims rarely occur prior to LH IIIB at Ayios Vasileios (cf. Kardamaki 2017, 104, 121, fig. 10.174). In Mitrou some LH IIIA2 Early angular bowls have flaring rims (Vitale 2008, pl. 44i).

²⁶ In the other two examples only 30% of the total perimeter is preserved. Pots published as handleless angular bowls (Wardle 1969, 284, fig. 9.94 [LH IIIB1 Mycenae]) are fragmentary and the identification cannot be certain.

²⁷ Adrimi-Sismani 2013, pl. 70.4.1 (exterior of North Building, dated in LH IIIB2); Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 369 nos. BE46705–BE46707, BE46709, BE46724 (Floor Deposit, Magazine 5, Megaron B, LH IIIB2).

²⁸ Blegen – Rawson 1966, 360, Shape 12, fig. 354. Shape 12 comprises cups with a variety of shapes, some of which have double curved sides.

²⁹ Raison 1968, pl. 37.279, 277 (Kadmeion). See also Andrikou, this volume.

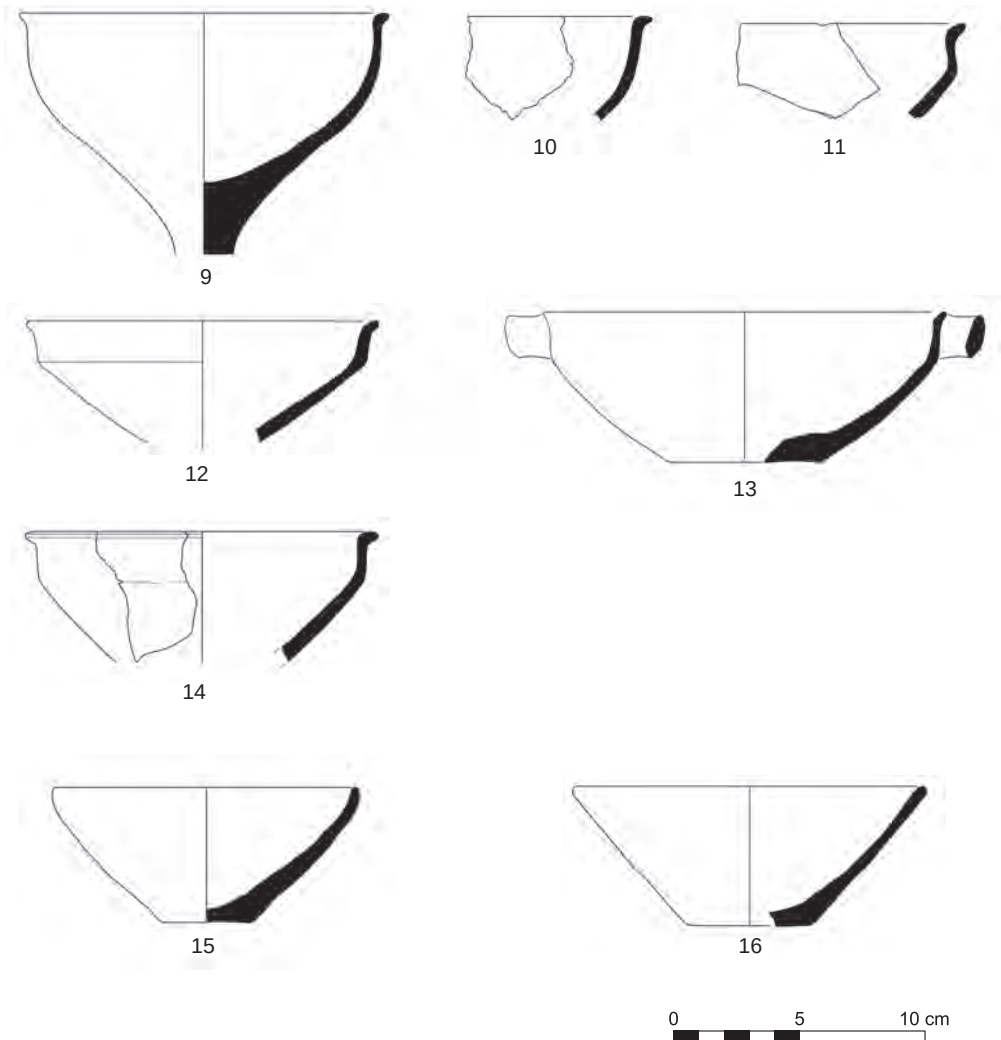


Fig. 7 The group of the in situ pottery next to the pillar base of the South Stoa, Trench Δ12γ. Scale 1:3 (drawings A. Poelstra Traga, E. Kardamaki).

polis of Athens³⁰ and also from Mycenae³¹ and Tiryns.³² The cups from Ayios Vasileios differ from most of the published examples accompanied by drawings in that they have narrower bases and a straighter upper part with a slightly pulled rim – rather than a flaring one. This rim type is very characteristic and is also typical for the angular bowls from the same context (Fig. 6.8). Plain vessels with similar rims appear in LH IIIB and LH IIIC Early 1,³³ but they are especially well attested in the deliberate deposit of Room 19 in the Temple Complex at Mycenae that was sealed at the beginning of Phase VIII (LH IIIB2). The contents of Room 19 are assigned to the use of the

³⁰ Broneer 1939, 381, fig. 63a (underground fountain). The shape is reported as a rare specimen among the material of the houses on the NE ascent (LH IIIC Early 1). In LH IIIB–IIIC Early levels at Kontopigado the shape is absent. For a similar depositional pattern of two angular cups FS 222 from a chamber tomb in Glyka Nera, Attica, to this of Minoan plain conical cups in funerary contexts see Sgouritsa 2019, 344–345, pl. 137. The date of the cups is suggested to be between LH IIIA2 and early LH IIIB.

³¹ Wardle 1969, 184, fig. 9.94 (LH IIIB1); Mylonas Shear 1987, pl. 20.55–56; fig. 11.55–56 (55 probably LH IIIB2 [Room 20, Building II], 56 probably LH IIIB1 [drain deposit north of Room 7]).

³² Hiesel 1982, 433, fig. 52.3.

³³ Blegen – Rawson 1966, fig. 350 (Shape 4, no. 75); French 1967, 176, fig. 16.C7; 177, fig. 18.B7; Mountjoy 1976, 99, fig. 12.136; French – Tylour 2007, CD-356; Catling 2009, vol. 2, 176, fig. 180.WS 66.

building during Phase VII that ended with the destruction in LH IIIB Middle.³⁴ A close similarity between the two deposits in terms of the rim typology is supported by the presence of an angular cup in Room 19 that closely resembles the angular cups FS 222 from Ayios Vasileios, except its handle reaches higher above the rim.³⁵

Pottery Presumably from the Upper Story of the West Stoa

The group of vessels that was found in the destruction debris provides additional evidence for the dating. The most common shape is the dipper with linear decoration or a dotted rim (Fig. 8.17–19). The vessels are relatively shallow with flaring rims and rounded bases, while two examples are the size of a miniature (Fig. 8.18). Their shape is slightly different from most LH IIIB published examples from the Argolid, which often have the so-called dimple or a tiny raised base and deeper curved or flaring profiles.³⁶ A tiny raised base is observed only once among dippers from the present deposit. On the other hand, the LH IIIA2 dippers usually have a more pronounced or everted rim and a more globular shape.³⁷ Dippers with profiles like those from Ayios Vasileios are common at Pylos and Kontopigado (LH IIIC Early 1).³⁸

A date in LH IIIB is probable for the two dippers with dotted rim, a pottery type that begins in LH IIIB1³⁹ and continues up to LH IIIC Early 1. Earlier examples are rare.⁴⁰ The handle of the miniature dipper with the dotted rim is decorated with horizontal stripes (Fig. 8.18), a decoration which is difficult to trace among published material that dates prior to LH IIIB2.⁴¹ The second dipper with a dotted rim has a handle decorated with horizontal stripes and vertical lines. At the base of the handle, the vertical lines are joined forming a ‘U’. A similar decoration is found on a spouted bowl FS 253 from Prosymna that has been dated by Penelope Mountjoy to LH IIIB1.⁴² Regarding the linear painted dippers, there are plenty of examples known from LH IIIA2 to LH IIIB.⁴³

³⁴ Moore – Tylour 1999, 17, 36, fig. 10.68–1414, 68–1420 (carinated kylikes); 38, fig. 12.68–1416 (miniature kylix with two handles); 39, fig. 13.68–1427 (cup FS 222), 68–1426 (bowl with two? handles).

³⁵ In the drawing the vessel is restored with a second handle, but this is suggested as a probable addition (Moore – Tylour 1999, 17). However, the vessel is nearly complete and most likely belongs to the type with one handle. For the photo see Moore – Tylour 1999, CD-207.

³⁶ French 1967, 152, fig. 2.52–262–52–263 (House of the Oil Merchant, LH IIIB1). But see also French 1967, 152, fig. 2.52–264, 52–168, and Wardle 1969, 277, fig. 7.71–72 (Citadel House, Room 3, LH IIIB1), for less flaring rims. For a similar but slightly deeper shape than the Ayios Vasileios dipper see Mylonas Shear 1987, fig. 15.99 (LH IIIB Middle) but with dimple base, and Kardamaki 2009, pl. 16.274 (Tiryns, LH IIIC Early 1).

³⁷ Shelton 2008, pl. 36k (Petsas House, Apotheke A). See Wardle 1969, 277, fig. 7.72 (Citadel House, Room 3, Deposits C, D, LH IIIB1), for dippers with a straighter upper part and rounded rims.

³⁸ Blegen – Rawson 1966, 364, figs. 357–358 (Shape 21), but rim more rounded. Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2012, 178, fig. 16.56 (LH IIIC Early 1, plain, rim slightly thickened).

³⁹ See Schönfeld 1988, 165, fig. 2.3. One dipper from Ayios Stephanos with blobs rather than dots and a shallow profile has been dated in LH IIIA2 (Mountjoy 2008, 375–376, fig. 6.38.3680). However, it may be later as it is related to one of the latest floors of the site (Tylour 1972, 235, dates the vessel in LH IIIB).

⁴⁰ One dipper from the Terrace below the House of Shields (French 1965, 187, fig. 9.4) is unusual as it is decorated with a single motif. The dipper has big dots, more like splashes, and an incurving upper part. However, the terrace also contains LH IIIB1 material (Schönfeld 1988, 184). One of the few LH IIIA2 examples comes from Prosymna (Blegen 1937, 430, fig. 125.235). The dipper that was intact comes from a swept-away burial in Chamber Tomb 21. The final burial in the tomb dates to LH IIIB1, but the dipper with the dotted rim was found within the LH IIIA2 displaced material (Mountjoy 1999, 127). However, one rounded plain kylix from the area covered by the swept-away material is typical for LH IIIB1 (Blegen 1937, fig. 125.271; 695. Cf. Thomas 2011, 515, fig. 28.16, 18).

⁴¹ But see Adrimi-Sismani 2013, pl. 46.2–3, for a handle from a dipper with horizontal stripes that is dated to LH IIIA2 (from Deposit A). Its rim shape anticipates LH IIIB examples. For LH IIIB2 see Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 401. For LH IIIC Early 1 see Blegen – Rawson 1966, 364, fig. 357.247 (Pylos); Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2012, 172, fig. 14.37–39 (Kontopigado). This decoration is even more typical on LH IIIB2–IIIC Early cups FS 215 (French – Stockhammer 2009, 194, fig. 7.4; Kardamaki 2009, pls. 26.558–559, 562; 27.589–592).

⁴² Mountjoy 1999, 142, fig. 35.265.

⁴³ Mountjoy 1999, 142, fig. 35.261–262 (Citadel House Area, Phase VII/VIII, and House of the Oil Merchant). See Podzuweit 2007, 125–126, pl. 63.1, for discussion.

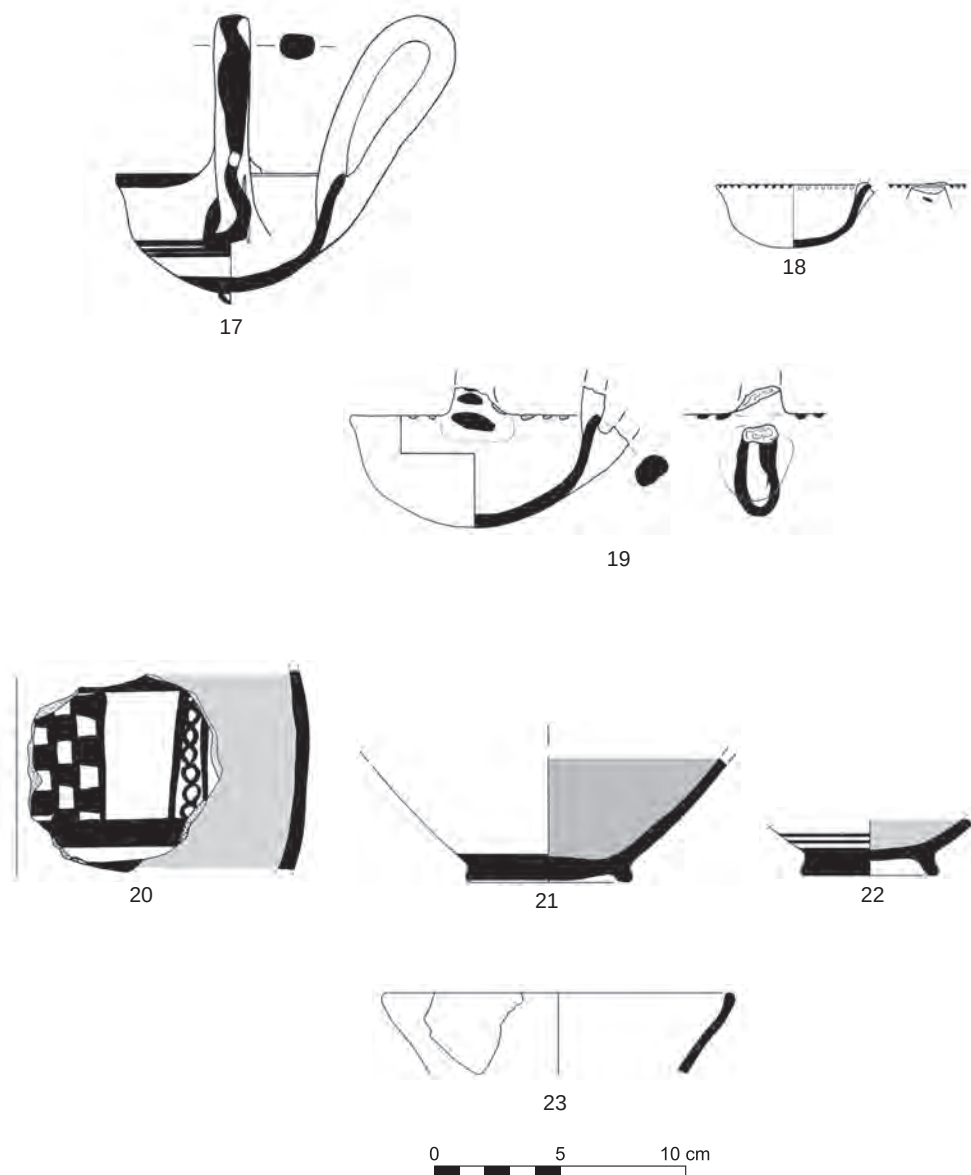


Fig. 8 Pottery from the red layer and the building debris above the floor of the West Stoa. Scale 1:3 (drawings A. Poelstra Traga, R. Jung, V. Hachtmann).

Sherd Material in the Destruction Debris of the West Stoa

As was to be expected, the sherd material from the West Stoa has a broad chronological span from LH I to LH IIIB. Most sherds date to LH IIIA and possibly derive from building material or the subfloor fill of the upper story (red layer, see above). Very few sherds date to LH IIIB. To these belong the sherd of an open vessel that is decorated with checkers and a triglyph and has a monochrome interior (Fig. 8.20), and two bases of deep bowls FS 284 (8.21–22), one of which has an unusual decoration on the exterior base (Fig. 8.22).⁴⁴ The above mentioned sherd has a

⁴⁴ The bases of the deep bowls with monochrome interior usually have a single band on their exterior, and this is the case with the second deep bowl base identified in this deposit. There are rare deviations from this decoration that have two bands or a band and a thin line above (Mountjoy 1999, 151, fig. 39.295; Podzuweit 2007, pl. 10.10).

combination of motifs that we would not expect before LH IIIB2.⁴⁵ Its narrow decorative zone and preserved linear decoration make it likely that the sherd comes from a large Group B deep bowl (FS 284).⁴⁶ Checkers on deep bowls are unusual but there are some examples.⁴⁷ It is worth noting that by the time of the destruction the sherd was in secondary use, possibly as a lid.⁴⁸ One sherd from a conical open shape may be the only example of a LH IIIB plain conical kylix identified in the area excavated so far (Fig. 8.23).

The pottery that was found among the thick stone rubble west of the later Wall 108 (court) and across the colonnade of the West Stoa, seems to belong to LH IIIB1. There is a plain carinated kylix FS 267 with a flaring rim (Fig. 9.23) and a base of a probable painted kylix FS 258 (Fig. 9.24).⁴⁹ The thick layer of red soil that was found between the stone rubble and Wall 108 contained a fragment of a kylix FS 258 with a decoration of whorl shells (?) arranged diagonally (Fig. 10.33).

The rarity of deep bowls FS 284 and plain conical kylikes FS 274 may be due to the function of the area under discussion, or, alternatively, due to a regional Laconian style and need not imply a destruction early in LH IIIB1.⁵⁰ The combined evidence available so far from the in situ plain pots that find good parallels in LH IIIB Middle contexts at Mycenae, the dippers with dotted rims and the probable fragment of a Group B deep bowl and two other deep bowls with monochrome interior, seems to suggest a date at the end of LH IIIB1 and probably close to LH IIIB Middle for the destruction of the palace.⁵¹ The presence of Group B deep bowls in LH IIIB Middle is confirmed in Tiryns and possibly Mycenae.⁵² Finally, since deep bowls FS 284 of Group A are extremely rare at Ayios Vasileios they cannot significantly contribute to the chronological discussion (see below).

⁴⁵ For the same type of triglyph from a krater from the Menelaion see Mountjoy 1999, 276–277, fig. 93.153. The sherd probably comes from the area of the mansions (Dawkins 1910, 8–9) and was dated convincingly by Mountjoy on stylistic grounds to LH IIIB. For triglyph FM 75:25 with circles on the interior see Catling 2009, vol. 2, 286, fig. 290.A 74 (LH IIIC Early 1). Also, at Midea: Demakopoulou – Divari-Valakou 2001, fig. 17 (LH IIIB2 deep bowl B but circles not attached to each other). Paneled patterns and triglyphs are, in general, very rare before LH IIIB. Schönfeld 1988, 179, figs. 1.18; 3.12, reports three examples. At Nichoria triglyphs are reported from the LH IIIA2/LH IIIB1 layers (Shelmerdine 1992). Checkers on open shapes are rare before LH IIIB2 and especially LH IIIC Early (see, for example, Mountjoy 2008, 382, fig. 6.41.3712, 3722). One krater from the cemetery of Lazarides on Aegina is dated in LH IIIB2 (Efstratiou – Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 2016, fig. 135) but a slightly later date cannot be excluded.

⁴⁶ Group B is defined as having a 3cm-wide rim band, two bands at the belly underneath the handles and a monochrome interior. Narrow decorative zones are very typical for LH IIIB2 deep bowls (Voigtländer 2003, pls. 124.Si 41; 125.Si 55–Si 56).

⁴⁷ See Voigtländer 2003, pl. 133.Ki 8 (named *krateriskos*, LH IIIC Early).

⁴⁸ The fractures of the sherd are worked to give it a round shape. Secondarily produced round sherds may have been used as lids (for discussion see Rahmstorf 2008, 37–52).

⁴⁹ The decoration with one line on the edge of the base and one at the base of the stem is rare but see D. Sfakianakis in: Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe 2018, 288, fig. 84, for a LH IIIB kylix from a larnax burial, Tomb 2 at Metochi Kalou, Trapeza, on Crete for a disc decorated in the same way. However, the stem of the kylix from Trapeza is decorated with a group of lines in the typical Cretan style.

⁵⁰ Conical kylikes appear to become more common in later parts of LH IIIB1. See, for example, the rarity of plain conical kylikes in Tsoungiza during LH IIIB1 that are represented only by few sherds (Thomas 2005, 512). In another destruction deposit from the east part of the court, which is currently being processed, plain conical kylikes FS 274 are well represented in the sherd material.

⁵¹ The frequency of the kylikes FS 258 and the ratio between kylikes and deep bowls are very different between the various contexts assigned to LH IIIB1 and LH IIIB Middle at Mycenae and Tiryns respectively. Therefore, the destruction contexts of Mycenae and the LH IIIB Middle assemblages of Tiryns cannot be compared directly (Kardamaki 2009, 388–389). For the division of the second half of LH IIIB, the chronological system of Christian Podzuweit is followed with LH IIIB Developed and Final (Podzuweit 2007, Beil. 80). This correlates with LH IIIB2 Early and Late in the system of Vitale 2006, 201, tab. 3 (see Kardamaki 2009, 388–392, tab. 33, for discussion).

⁵² In the LH IIIB Middle destruction horizon of the Citadel House Area (Mycenae Phase VII), the presence of a deep bowl B is not certain since most fragments are assigned by French – Taylour 2007, 23, to Phase VIII (LH IIIB2 infill) (see French – Taylour 2007, CD-204). At Tiryns Schönfeld 1988, 155, tab. 1.60, records ten fragments of deep bowls B in the LH IIIB Middle horizon at Tiryns.

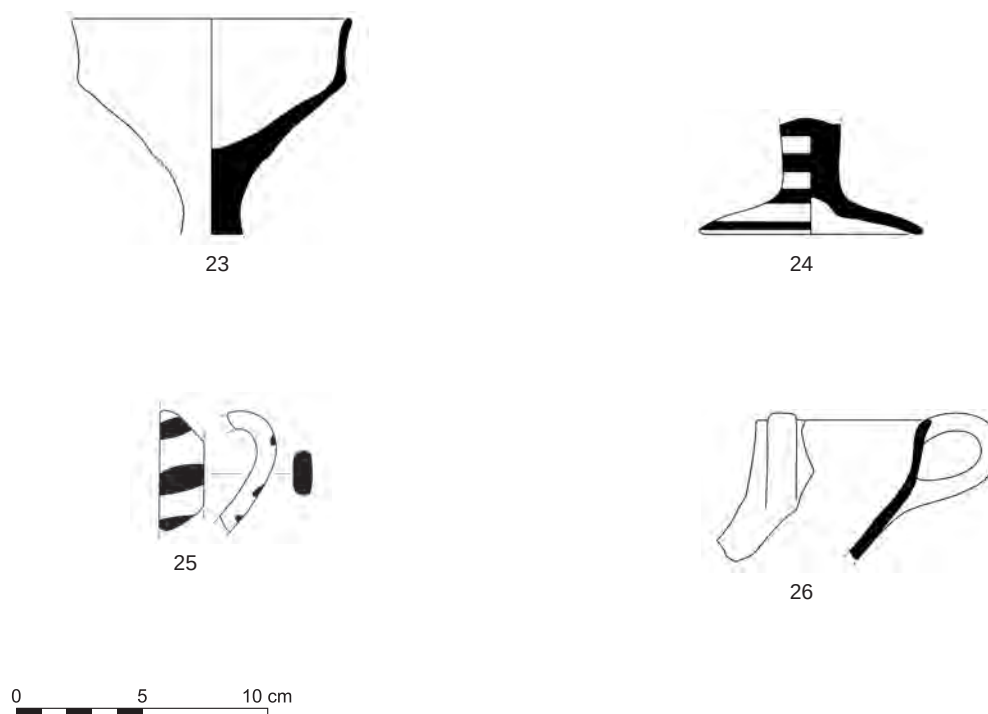


Fig. 9 Pottery from the stone rubble in the colonnade of the West Stoa and in the court. 23–24. Trench $\Delta 11\beta$; 25–26. Trench $\Delta 12\beta$. Scale 1:3 (drawings A. Poelstra Traga).

Pottery from the Court and the East Part of the South Stoa (Trenches $\Delta 12\alpha$, $\Delta 12\beta$, $\Delta 13\beta$)

The pottery from the area of the court is fragmented and only a few sherds preserve a large part of their original profile. This sherd material comes from secondary layers. The brownish-red layer to the east of Wall 108 in Trench $\Delta 12\alpha$ contained mainly small but also some large fragments. The material covers a wider chronological range, and dates from the pre- and main destruction phase to the time of the construction and use of Wall 108. Several sherds fit well in LH IIIB1. There are rims of plain vessels like a one-handed deep bowl FS 283 (Fig. 10.29) and probably kylikes (Fig. 10.30–31).⁵³ Painted sherds include a stemmed bowl with monochrome interior (Fig. 10.28).⁵⁴ The latest fragment, however, seems to come from a bowl FS 295B with round horizontal handles (Fig. 10.27). The vessel, of which one third is preserved, was found in the lower parts of the brownish-red layer to the east of Wall 108. The earliest examples of the type, or a variant of the type that was classified by Christian Podzuweit as his bowl Type no. 6,⁵⁵ date to LH IIIB2 Late, but it was common in LH IIIC Early.⁵⁶ It cannot be excluded that it appears in earlier phases

⁵³ For profiles see Wardle 1969, 286, fig. 10.103 (LH IIIB1, Mycenae), and Thomas 1992, fig. 57.9 (Zygouries).

⁵⁴ Thomas 2005, 503, fig. 22.18.

⁵⁵ For the shape see Podzuweit 2007, pls. 43.13–14; 44. Podzuweit's bowl type 6 includes bowls with short or medium-tall everted rims that can be linear painted or decorated with various motifs (e.g. lines, horizontal chevrons). Bowls assigned to FS 295B may have flaring or short everted rims (Mountjoy 1986, 153, fig. 197.2; French 2011, CD-444). Most vessels cited by Mountjoy and French do not have a pattern-painted rim but there are some examples that probably belong to Podzuweit's bowl Type no. 6 with decoration on the rim (French 2011, CD-337–338, LH IIIC Early 1). At Tiryns bowls FS 295B with horizontal handles seem to have slightly different – taller – rims from the published examples from Mycenae.

⁵⁶ See Mountjoy 1986, 153, fig. 197.2. LH IIIB2: Podzuweit 2007, pl. 44.13. LH IIIC Early 1: French 2011, CD-437, CD-444 (Room XXXIV, Mycenae); Kardamaki 2009, pl. 29 (Western Staircase/Zone 1, Tiryns). Podzuweit 2007, Beil. 51–52, 58, suggests LH IIIB Developed and LH IIIB Final (early and late LH IIIB2) as the main phase of his bowl type no. 6 with isolated examples in LH IIIB1.

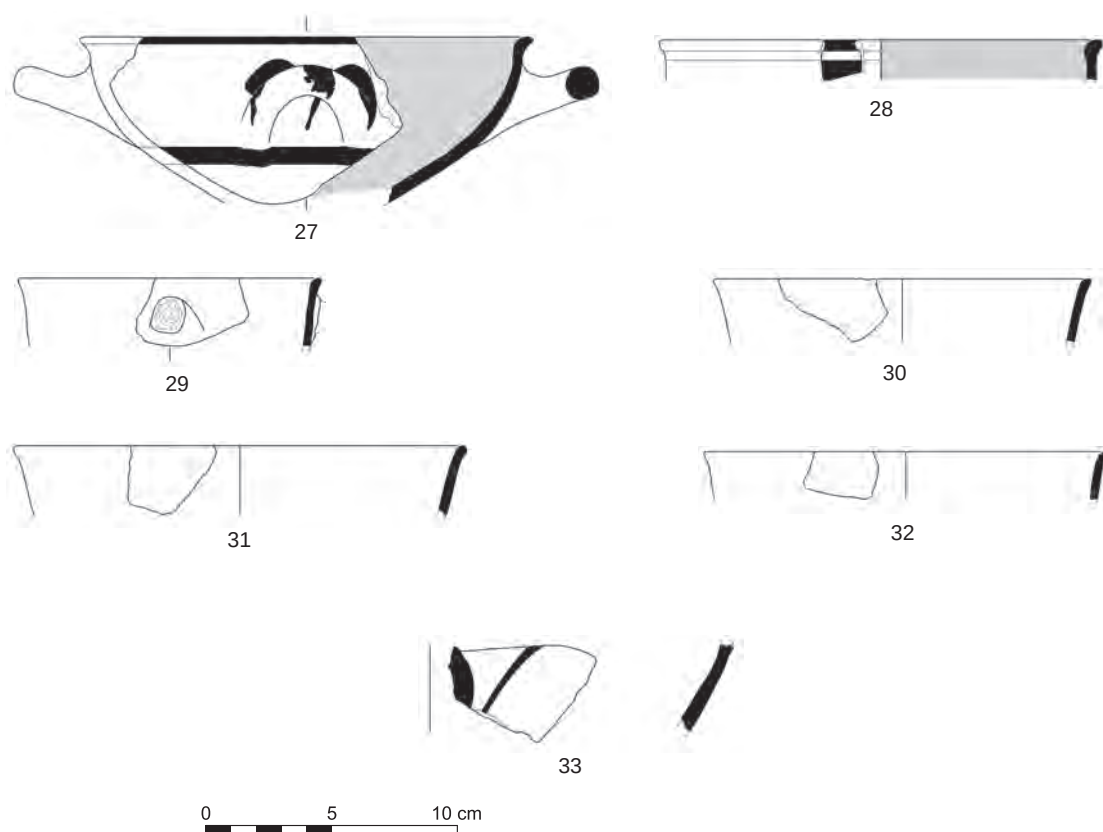


Fig. 10 Trench Δ12α. 27–32. pottery found east of Wall 108 (court); 33. pottery found west of Wall 108. Scale 1:3 (drawings A. Poelstra Traga).

as well. On the other hand, the absence of deep bowls in this layer should be noted (see below). This would make LH IIIB2 Late or LH IIIC Early unlikely as the phase of construction of Wall 108. Based on this evidence, as well as the pottery from the West Stoa, rebuilding activities in the southwestern part of the court may have started soon after the destruction and perhaps in early LH IIIB2.

Most of Trench Δ12β relates to the court (Fig. 1). Here, the floor of the court was covered by a thin layer of gray soil; it contained little material, among which there is the rim of a Zygouries kylix (Fig. 11.34). On the west side of the trench stone rubble was lying directly on the floor. Among the stones a plain kylix with shallow bowl (similar to FS 258) (Fig. 9.26)⁵⁷ and one handle with horizontal splashes (Fig. 9.25) were found; the latter is rather wide for a LH IIIB1 dipper and could be later, but it is too fragmented to allow a secure identification.⁵⁸ Above the gray soil there was a brown-reddish layer that also extended above the stone rubble to the west of the trench; in addition to LH IIIB1 kylikes (Fig. 11.36–37), this layer contained deep bowls FS 284 and plain conical kylikes FS 274 (Fig. 11.38–45, 48) of LH IIIB2/IIIC Early date (see below).⁵⁹ It is perhaps noteworthy that rims with a slightly pulled lip like these observed on the pots of the West Stoa (Fig. 6.2–3, 8) are missing. The painted conical kylix FS 274, a feature mainly related to LH IIIC

⁵⁷ See Wardle 1969, 287, fig. 11.106 (LH IIIB1, Mycenae).

⁵⁸ It could come from a dipper FS 236 or a spouted bowl FS 253. LH IIIB1: Mountjoy 1999, 141–142, fig. 35.265 (bowl FS 253 with handle decorated with stripes in the upper part and a band in the lower part). LH IIIB2: Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 401 (handles probably from dippers). LH IIIC Early 1: Mountjoy 2008, 362, fig. 6.33.3594 (dipper).

⁵⁹ Cf. Wardle 1969, 286, fig. 10.104 (LH IIIB1, Mycenae); Mountjoy 1976, 101, fig. 13.163 (LH IIIB1, Mycenae).

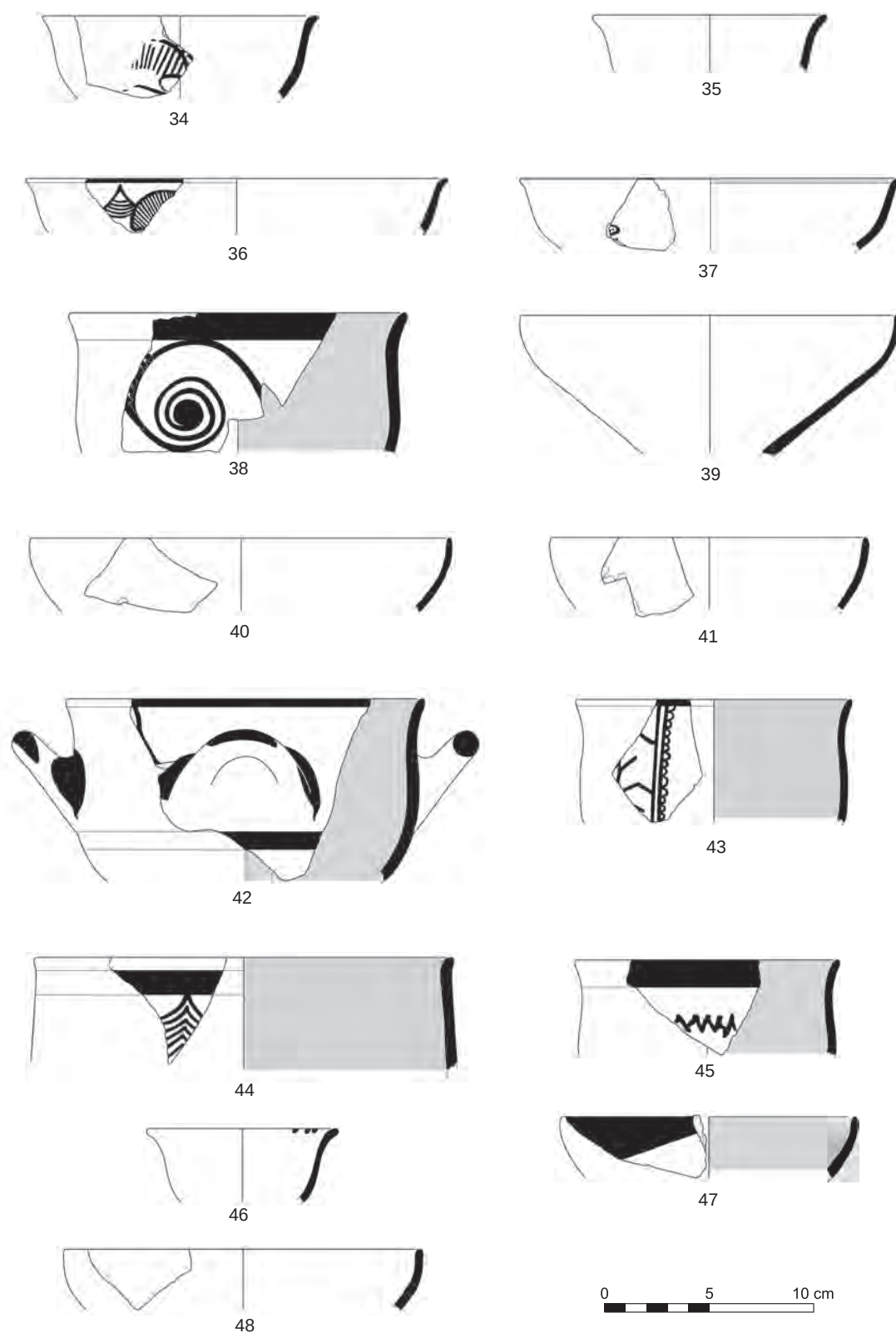


Fig. 11 Trench Δ12β. 34–35. gray layer on top of the floor of the large Court; 36–41. brownish-red layer in the court and the South Stoa, spits 4–5; 42–48. brownish-red layer in the court and the South Stoa, spit 3. Scale 1:3 (drawings A. Poelstra Traga).

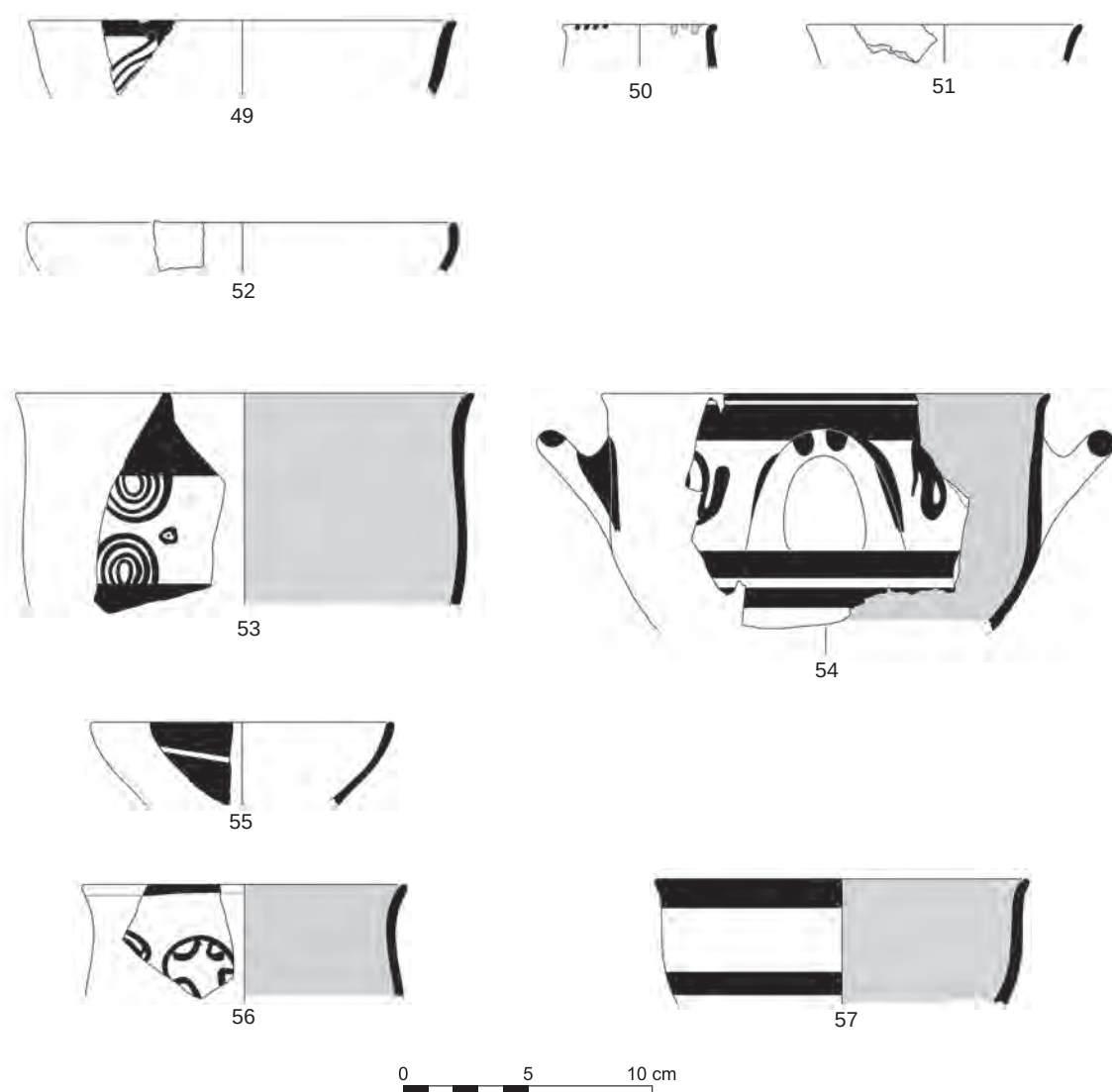


Fig. 12 Trench Δ13β. 49–52. red layer on top of the South Stoa; 53–55. gray layer in the court and the South Stoa, spits 3–4; 56–57. spit 1. Scale 1:3 (drawings A. Poelstra Traga).

Early and later contexts, is represented by one example (Fig. 11.47).⁶⁰ Thus, with the exception of three possible fragments in the destruction debris of the West Stoa (Fig. 8.20–22), we have in this layer the first substantial evidence in the court area for the presence of the deep bowl FS 284 that comprises no less than 30% of the total painted feature sherds or 31% of the total painted rims. Finally, another new feature in this layer is represented by sherds of the handmade and burnished ware.⁶¹

A similar sequence with layers containing LH IIIB1 sherds (Fig. 12.49–52) and cut or followed by others with LH IIIB2/IIC Early material (Fig. 12.53–57) is also observed in Trench

⁶⁰ Rutter 2003, 197. For LH IIC Early 1 examples see Kaza-Papageorgiou et al. 2011, 247, fig. 13.83–87. For very rare LH IIIB2 examples of painted FS 274 see French – Stockhammer 2009, 191, fig. 5.3.

⁶¹ See also Kardamaki – Vasilogamvrou 2021. Apart from Trench Δ12β, sherds of this ware are also present in other layers of the court that contain deep bowls and LH IIIB2/IIC Early material.

Δ13β (east part of the South Stoa). Worth noting in the layer with the later material in Δ13β is the presence of a Group B deep bowl (Fig. 12.53), a typical LH IIIB2 type in the Argolid.

At the moment, the small size of the investigated area does not provide a clear picture of the extent and nature of the post-destruction activities that took place in the area of the court. In addition, the corpus of the datable material from the destruction horizon is still small. It is, however, possible to draw some first conclusions. First, the in situ pottery and the latest sherds from the destruction debris of the West Stoa suggest LH IIIB Middle as a possible date for the destruction of the palace. Second, the destruction debris was not removed from the area of the West Stoa excavated so far and there is no evidence for any new floor on top of the debris. Third, the construction of a new wall (Wall 108) and possibly the first reoccupation activities must have taken place soon after the destruction. There is no evidence of deep bowls in the brown-reddish layer east of Wall 108. And fourth, in those areas where the LH IIIB2/IIIC Early layers (Trench Δ13β) lay partly on the floor or very close above the floor (Trench Δ12β), the LH IIIB debris must have been largely cleared away.

Ceramic Regionalism in LH IIIB at Ayios Vasileios and Beyond

Increasingly, new material sheds new light on aspects of ceramic regionalism during the 14th and 13th centuries. It is often assumed and convincingly argued that the production of Argive painted pottery is characterized by a constant use of innovative elements and modes of mass production.⁶² However, the spread of the Argive styles should not always be expected and when/where it does occur, it cannot be viewed as a uniform process. In many settlements, typical Argive products of the 14th and 13th century appear as occasional finds with no real impact on local production. At Ayios Vasileios decorated drinking sets of Argive style from the late 14th and 13th centuries are rare and a large part of the ceramic assemblages seems to consist mainly of plain and monochrome vases.⁶³

The First Part of LH IIIB

The material assigned to the destruction horizon of the palace probably belongs to the end of LH IIIB1 (LH IIIB Middle). Apart from the group of the approximately 30 plain vessels and painted dippers from the West and South Stoa, LH IIIB Middle is so far not represented by other closed contexts at Ayios Vasileios. LH IIIB1 sherds that may date from before (refuse during use) or the time of the destruction are identified in the layers on top of the floor of the court (Figs. 11.34–35, 12.49–52) and in layers with later material (Fig. 11.36–37). Thus, the narrow range of the painted shape repertoire probably reflects the rarity of excavated room assemblages from this phase. The most striking aspect is the rarity of deep bowls FS 284 in the contexts discussed above, represented by only three fragments. One possible sherd belongs to an advanced variant that appears in LH IIIB Middle but is typical for LH IIIB2 (Fig. 8.20). In the Argolid deep bowls exist from the beginning of LH IIIB and they gradually replace the painted kylikes.⁶⁴ On the other hand, some shapes and pottery types that were newly introduced in LH IIIB1, such as the plain

⁶² See Kilian 1988, 117; Dickinson et al. 1992, 518–519, for discussion.

⁶³ Pattern-painted kylikes FS 256/257 are very rare at Ayios Vasileios (Kardamaki 2017, 105, 114). The same is true for Kontopigado (Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2017, 50–52; Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2018, 30).

⁶⁴ Room 3, House with the Idols, Mycenae: painted kylix (23.2%) and deep bowls (29.5%) (Wardle 1973, 305, fig. 4). Room 22, South House, Mycenae: painted kylix (18.7%) and deep bowls (31.7%) (Mountjoy 1976, 109, tab. 1). Room 22 is considered to represent a later stage in LH IIIB1 and in the system of Schönfeld 1988, 163, tab. 4; 206–207, this is LH IIIB Middle. For the discussion of LH IIIB Middle see Kardamaki 2009, 386–392. In the LH IIIB Middle floor deposits from Mycenae the painted kylikes are absent. At Tiryns the LH IIIB Middle floor deposits also contain painted kylikes.

conical kylix FS 274 and the decorated kylix FS 258, are present and locally produced, but they seem to be rare.⁶⁵

Turning to other major Laconian sites, LH IIIB1 cannot be isolated successfully from a settlement level and as a ceramic phase. Most shapes are identified on the basis of stylistic parallels and were discovered in mixed or later contexts.⁶⁶ At the Menelaion and at Ayios Stephanos the LH IIIB1 phase was mainly identified thanks to the presence of a few decorated deep bowls and kylikes.⁶⁷ Despite the absence of closed LH IIIB1 contexts, it is clear that the typical LH IIIB1 pattern-painted kylikes are rare at both sites. Beyond Laconia, at Nichoria, there are kylikes FS 258 and deep bowls dated to a transitional LH IIIA2/IIIB1 phase, but deep bowls are rarer.⁶⁸ At Kontopigado in Attica some contexts that may date in the first half of LH IIIB contain mainly plain and monochrome open vessels, while pattern-painted kylikes are absent and decorated deep bowls are extremely rare.⁶⁹ In Tsoungiza, on the other hand, both shapes are very well represented, but the site has strong links to the Argolid.⁷⁰ From the above discussion, it is possible to suggest that in many regions some of the most common LH IIIB1 types of the Argolid were rarely adopted.⁷¹ This need not always suggest a restricted occupation or depopulation. At Ayios Vasileios there is evidence that plain and monochrome tableware continue from LH IIIA2 to LH IIIB (Fig. 7) with some new additions like the plain conical kylix and kylikes FS 258.⁷²

LH IIIB Late–LH IIIC Early

The next recognizable ceramic phase in the area under discussion is linked to a level which follows the destruction and construction of Wall 108, but is not related to any floors. This latest ceramic phase, the best evidence of which comes from Trenches Δ12β and Δ13β, is characterized by some significant changes. One of these is the introduction of the deep bowl FS 284 as the most common drinking/eating vessel in the painted tableware. Also worth mentioning is the first appearance of handmade burnished ware. This makes Ayios Vasileios the second site in Laconia after the Menelaion to yield evidence for this ware.⁷³ Fragments of LH IIIB1 painted kylikes continue to appear in this level as well (11%) but they may represent early strays.⁷⁴ The three most characteristic LH IIIB2 deep bowl variants of the Argolid, groups A and B and the rosette deep

⁶⁵ At Mycenae the plain conical kylix is also a relatively rare shape. In the deposit under the floor of Room 21, South House at Mycenae, there are 47 rims of kylix FS 274 out of 930 rims of plain kylikes (Mountjoy 1976, 111, tab. 3). See Jung 2006, figs. 4–5, for statistic tables of various plain types among LH IIIB1 and LH IIIB2 contexts and the absence of the FS 274 from some contexts at Thebes and Mycenae.

⁶⁶ See Mountjoy 2008, 337–339, 377, for Ayios Stephanos. Some sherds can be stylistically assigned to LH IIIB or Late LH IIIB and the rarity of LH IIIB deep bowls is stressed. See Catling 2009, vol. 1, 366–367, for discussion on the comparison of the pottery phases between the Argolid and the Menelaion and the difficulty in following the Argive criteria at the site.

⁶⁷ For very few Zygouries-type kylikes (FS 258A) and LH IIIB1 kylikes with circumcurrent decoration (FS 258B) among the later material in the Aetos Stone Mound see Catling 2009, vol. 1, 373–374. For possible LH IIIB1 deep bowls at the Menelaion see Catling 2009, vol. 1, 391.

⁶⁸ Shelmerdine 1992, 503–504, fig. 9-51. There are five examples of Zygouries kylikes, 45 examples of FS 258 and six rims of FS 284.

⁶⁹ Kaza-Papageorgiou–Kardamaki 2012, 168, fig. 11.27.

⁷⁰ Thomas 2005, 478–483, 488–495.

⁷¹ See also Vitale 2018, 154, 158, tab. 8.1, for the rarity of LH IIIB1 contexts at Mitrou.

⁷² In many regions the monochrome kylix FS 264 appears to continue in LH IIIB1 and LH IIIB2/IIIC Early (Thomas 2011, 195, fig. 9.1–3; Kaza-Papageorgiou et al. 2011, 212, fig. 12.69–73; Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 479). At Nichoria, in the trenches identified as LH IIIA2/IIIB1, kylikes of the LH IIIA2 style are frequent (Shelmerdine 1992). Kylikes of the LH IIIA2 style also continue at Tsoungiza (Thomas 2011, 479).

⁷³ Catling 2009, vol. 2, 297, fig. 301; Kardamaki – Vasilogamvrou 2021.

⁷⁴ For the use of LH IIIB1-style kylikes in late LH IIIB see Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 480–485 (occasionally with a monochrome interior). Also, Catling 2009, vol. 1, 374–375; Catling 2009, vol. 2, 223, fig. 227. PE 30, PE 35, suggests a late dating in LH IIIB/IIIC Early for some painted kylikes.

bowl, are largely absent or very rare.⁷⁵ Group A deep bowls and the small rosette deep bowl with the dotted rim have not been identified yet, while the large Group B deep bowl, omnipresent in the destruction deposits of Mycenae, Tiryns and Midea is represented by one fragment in Trench $\Delta 13\beta$ (Fig. 12.53) and a possible second one from the West Stoa (Fig. 8.20).⁷⁶ Another common deep bowl type with pattern-painted decoration and a medium rim band (Group C) which is also frequently attested in the LH IIIB2 destruction horizon of the Argolid⁷⁷ has not been identified in the material of Ayios Vasileios studied so far. Some examples are similar (Fig. 11.38, 45), but their exterior rim band is slightly thinner (1.3cm).

The deep bowls from the area of the court at Ayios Vasileios always have a fully coated interior and an exterior rim band that varies from a thin line (Fig. 11.42–43) to a medium band (1.3cm) (Fig. 11.38).⁷⁸ Some examples have the exterior rim banding of a stemmed bowl (Fig. 12.54).⁷⁹ In terms of their style, they resemble either some of the features of the so-called transitional LH IIIB2–LH IIIC Early Types 1 and 2 as defined by Mountjoy,⁸⁰ or deep bowl variants usually assigned to LH IIIC Early, e.g. Group A with monochrome interior.⁸¹ Mountjoy's transitional phase usually correlates with the earliest LH IIIC horizon, for example Jeremy Rutter's LH IIIC Phase 1.⁸² It postdates the destruction of Mycenae and Tiryns but should be contemporary with the final destruction of major palatial sites such as Pylos and Thebes (Archive Room).⁸³ Other major contexts dated by Mountjoy to her transitional phase come from Ayios Stephanos and the Menelaion in Laconia, and the group of pots from the NE ascent of the Athenian Acropolis. In the Argolid, the transitional phase is represented by the 'Bothros' of Iria.⁸⁴

The question arising is whether the deep bowls at Ayios Vasileios reflect the local LH IIIB2 Late equivalent or, alternatively, whether they suggest a more advanced chronological stage in LH IIIC Early for the final phase and abandonment of the site. While either scenario is difficult to confirm at the moment due to the absence of closed deposits, there are some aspects that we need to keep in mind. First, stratigraphically there is no evidence for a hiatus after the destruction of the palace in LH IIIB Middle (Wall 108). Second, recent studies suggest the redating of some contexts from transitional LH IIIB2–LH IIIC Early to LH IIIB2 Late and point out that some of the 'transitional' features tend to appear already in LH IIIB2.⁸⁵ And third, while all the deep bowls from Ayios Vasileios described above appear in the same stratigraphic units, Group A deep bowls with a monochrome interior and a thin exterior rim band that are more typical for LH IIIC Early tend to appear only in the upper parts of the relevant deposits (Figs. 11.44–45, 12.56). If the latter impression is confirmed in the future by more material and closed contexts, it could suggest that at Ayios Vasileios the deep bowls with rim band between 1–1.5cm, stemmed bowl banding and occasional Group B deep bowls still date in late LH IIIB, while the variant with an exterior thin rim line is later and dates to LH IIIC Early 1.

⁷⁵ French 1969; Wardle 1973.

⁷⁶ See Voigtländer 2003, pl. 123.Si 23, Si 29, Si 31, Si 35–Si 37 for deep bowls of Group B from the Epichosis of Tiryns. After LH IIIB2 the deep bowl B becomes very rare (Kardamaki 2009, 456, tab. 6). In the NE-Lower Town (Phase 1) there is only one fragment (Stockhammer 2008, vol. 2, pl. 19.382).

⁷⁷ Kardamaki 2009, 453–454, tabs. 1–2, pl. 23.466–475. The Group C deep bowl has an exterior rim band between 1.5 and 2.49cm, linear decoration 16.

⁷⁸ Cf. Catling 2009, vol. 2, 227, fig. 231.PE 77, PE 81, PE 84, for spirals with a solid center from the Prophitis Elias Erosion Gully (LH IIIB2/ IIIC Early).

⁷⁹ Cf. Catling 2009, vol. 1, 389; Catling 2009, vol. 2, 289, fig. 293.A 124; 291, fig. 295.A 154.

⁸⁰ Mountjoy 1997, 122, 125–127, figs. 7–10.

⁸¹ Mountjoy 1986, 150; Popham et al. 2006, 228–229, tab. 2.1. Deep bowl Type A/B according to Ph. Stockhammer in: French – Stockhammer 2009, 208. The Group A deep bowl with monochrome interior in Kardamaki 2009, 453–454, tabs. 1–2, encompasses deep bowls with a rim band between 0 and 1.49cm.

⁸² Mountjoy 1999, 39, tab. II. See Rutter 1977; Rutter 2003.

⁸³ Mountjoy 1999, 641, 647. But see Andrikou 2006 and Andrikou, this volume, for Thebes.

⁸⁴ Mountjoy 1997; Mountjoy 1999, 36, dates the destruction of Midea in this phase, but Demakopoulou 2003 recently argued for a destruction in LH IIIB2 final.

⁸⁵ Vitale 2006; Demakopoulou 2003, 82, fig. 5; French – Stockhammer 2009; Kardamaki 2009, 394, pls. 4.80; 12.171.

Regarding the existence of a LH IIIC Early phase at Ayios Vasileios, there are some other features that point in this direction, but these are very scant. One sherd comes from a painted conical kylix FS 274 with monochrome interior (Fig. 11.47),⁸⁶ while another sherd from Trench Δ13β may come from the same shape or a bowl (Fig. 12.55).⁸⁷ In the Menelaion one painted conical kylix appears in some of the latest levels of the site assigned by Hector Catling to LH IIIC Early.⁸⁸ The so-called medium band deep bowls or linear painted deep bowls with monochrome interiors are, so far, absent at Ayios Vasileios.⁸⁹ The painted cup FS 215 is represented by a single sherd (Fig. 12.57) but it has a banded exterior.⁹⁰ The absence of the medium band type in the southern Peloponnese has been discussed by Jeremy Rutter who identifies it as a more northern variety.⁹¹

The main evidence for the existence of late LH IIIB and/or early LH IIIC at Ayios Vasileios has to be based on the study of the deep bowls. As already mentioned above, one of the most advanced variants is the one with a thin rim band on the exterior (Group A with monochrome interior or Group A/B) (Figs. 11.44–45, 12.56).⁹² This type is also reported by Mountjoy as rare among the transitional group of deep bowls.⁹³ Although it is considered to be typical for LH IIIC Early, Group A with monochrome interior appears already in LH IIIB1 and LH IIIB Middle, during which phases it was still rare.⁹⁴ In the second half of LH IIIB it becomes more frequent and there are some well-stratified examples from the Argolid.⁹⁵ According to Podzuweit, at Tiryns the ratio between pattern-painted deep bowls with monochrome interior and Group A deep bowls with monochrome interior is 2:1 respectively during LH IIIB Developed and Final.⁹⁶ Although this proportion is probably overestimated since similar evidence is lacking in other LH IIIB2 Late contexts of the site, it still shows that the type was in use in the palatial centers of the Argolid prior

⁸⁶ The painted conical kylix FS 274 is also more typical for a later stage of LH IIIC Early, but in some regions it appears already in LH IIIC Early 1 (Rutter 2003). In the Argolid the type seems to be present only after LH IIIC Early 1 (see French 2011, CD-828 [from LH IIIC Early Tower]). For rare LH IIIB examples see French – Stockhammer 2009, 191, fig. 5.3, with dotted rim. Demakopoulou – Divari-Valakou 2004, 18, mention wholly or partly coated kylikes FS 274 and FS 267 from LH IIIB2 deposits in Midea. Monochrome conical kylikes rarely exist in LH IIIB2 Late levels at Kontopigado.

⁸⁷ See French – Taylour 2007, CD-277, for conical bowls FS 242 with linear decoration inside/outside (LH IIIB2). The piece from Ayios Vasileios has unusual decoration.

⁸⁸ Catling 2009, vol. 1, 240–241; Catling 2009, vol. 2, 272, fig. 276.AO 14 ('reoccupation' in Aetos South Slope). For a painted conical kylix from Ayios Stephanos see Mountjoy 1999, 284, fig. 96.197.

⁸⁹ Mountjoy 1986, 152. Linear painted deep bowls with monochrome interior are found occasionally in LH IIIB2 layers (Demakopoulou – Divari-Valakou 2004, 10, fig. 7; Andrikou 2006, 33, pls. 10.159; 13.219–220; 42.220; Podzuweit 2007, pl. 19.5). In the Menelaion there are some linear painted deep bowls with monochrome interior dated mainly to LH IIIB2 and LH IIIC Early by Catling 2009, vol. 2, 231, fig. 235.PD 49; 273, fig. 277.AO 30. In Dimini medium band deep bowls are mainly associated with the reoccupation layers, dated in LH IIIC Early (Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 523). For earlier, LH IIIB2 medium band deep bowls see Demakopoulou 2003, 84; Podzuweit 2007, pl. 19.10.

⁹⁰ Cf. Catling 2009, vol. 1, 234, fig. 238.PE 238 (Prophitis Elias Erosion Gully dated by Catling to LH IIIB/IIIC Early and LH IIIC Early).

⁹¹ See Rutter, this volume. The cup with medium rim band and monochrome interior appears in the Argolid in LH IIIB2 but it is still very rare (Kardamaki 2009, 243–244).

⁹² This is Podzuweit's pattern-painted deep bowl B with linear decoration 9.2 and 9.2.1 (Podzuweit 2007, 30, 314, Beil. 78g (decoration types 9.2–9.2.1; pl. 5.5–7). Group A/monochrome in: Popham et al. 2006, 222, fig. 2.43; 228–229, tab. 2.1. Type A/B; Andrikou 2006, 33; Vitale 2006, 181–182, 190, tab. 2; French – Stockhammer 2009, 209. Kardamaki's 'deep bowl A with monochrome interior' encompasses both thin and medium exterior rim bands (0–1.49cm) (Kardamaki 2009, 453–454, tabs. 1–2). The same is also true for some deep bowls A/B as well (Andrikou 2006, 42, pl. 21.330).

⁹³ Only one sherd of Transitional Types 1 and 2 has a thin rim band (Mountjoy 1997, 122, fig. 7.37).

⁹⁴ Mountjoy 1976, 88, fig. 6.45; Schönfeld 1988, 175, fig. 5.9; 177, fig. 6.20, dated to LH IIIB Early and Middle respectively. According to Stockhammer 2008, vol. 1, 48 n. 255, the deep bowl assigned by Guntram Schönfeld to LH IIIB Early could be LH IIIB Middle. See also Wirghova, this volume.

⁹⁵ Gierak 1998, pl. 81.492–493; Demakopoulou 2003, 82, fig. 5.1; Podzuweit 2007, pl. 5.5 (LH IIIB Developed, Tiryns).

⁹⁶ Podzuweit 2007, Beil. 5 (Podzuweit's 'Dekor 9.2' applies for deep bowl A with monochrome interior).

to the destruction.⁹⁷ Regarding its further development in the Argolid, the type becomes common after LH IIIC Early.⁹⁸

Evidence from other Laconian sites suggest a wide distribution of the Group A deep bowl with monochrome interior. At Ayios Stephanos the relevant layers contain pottery that has been dated to transitional LH IIIB2–LH IIIC Early but mainly to LH IIIC Early.⁹⁹ At the Menelaion the Group A deep bowl with monochrome interior carries mainly a medium or a thin rim band on the exterior.¹⁰⁰ It is, however, important to note that at both Laconian sites Group A deep bowls with monochrome interior appear next to other deep bowl variants and most notably the canonical Group A. The latter is rarer at Ayios Stephanos but relatively well represented at the Menelaion. According to Catling's analysis on selected deposits from the Menelaion, the percentages of Group A deep bowls among all deep bowl types vary from 6% to 41%.¹⁰¹ This contrasts strongly with the situation at Ayios Vasileios, where the canonical Group A deep bowl is very rare. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the Menelaion has also yielded evidence for the rare – outside the Argolis – rosette deep bowl, to be precise, a variant of the type that omits the dotted rim.¹⁰²

Beyond Laconia and the Argolid, excavations at Kontopigado (Attica) brought to light various deposits dating from LH IIIB Late to LH IIIC Early 1. Next to the local variants of the deep bowls,¹⁰³ we find the canonical Group A, rare examples of Group B, and also Group A with monochrome interior.¹⁰⁴ Attested in both LH IIIB as well as LH IIIC Early 1 contexts of Kontopigado is the type with the exterior stemmed bowl rim banding.¹⁰⁵ However, the most common deep bowl type in almost all contexts studied so far is the monochrome one comprising more than 60% of the deep bowl rims.¹⁰⁶ This probably represents a local development continuing from LH IIIA2,¹⁰⁷ and has no parallels at Ayios Vasileios where monochrome deep bowls are extremely rare.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Group A deep bowls with monochrome interior are either absent or extremely rare in LH IIIB deposits of the site.¹⁰⁹ In Dimini, the destruction deposits of Megaron B and the abandonment deposit of Megaron A have been dated to LH IIIB2 Late and LH IIIC Early respectively.¹¹⁰

⁹⁷ In the Western Staircase of Tiryns (LH IIIB2 Late) only one rim possibly belongs to this type (Kardamaki 2009, pl. 2.39).

⁹⁸ Podzuweit 2007, Beil. 5. In the Western Staircase of Tiryns the percentage of the deep bowl A with monochrome interior among deep bowl rims in Zone 2 (LH IIIB2 Late) and Zone 1 (LH IIIC Early 1) is 2.7% and 2% respectively. For the type in the lowest LH IIIC levels of Phase 1 in the NE-Lower Town of Tiryns (LH IIIC Early 1–IIIC Early 2) see Stockhammer 2008, vol. 2, pls. 15.293; 16.301, 306; 17.322; 18.348, 351. In the LH IIIC Early 1 houses of Mycenae deep bowls A with monochrome interior are missing, but this may be accidental since the type appears in the terrace fill below the houses (French 2011, CD-825 Graph 2).

⁹⁹ Mountjoy 2008, 318, fig. 6.12.3155–3156, 3165–3166, 3174, 3177–3178, 3180 (the majority with no or very thin exterior rim band). Medium exterior rim bands or other linear decoration occur as well (Mountjoy 2008, 378, fig. 6.39.3697). Several transitional-type deep bowls come from the same deposits that date in LH IIIC Early (Mountjoy 1999, 280, fig. 94.164; 281, fig. 95.170–171; Mountjoy 2008, 377).

¹⁰⁰ Catling 2009, vol. 1, 389. See, for example, Catling 2009, vol. 2, 226, fig. 230.PE 58–PE 67. Deep bowls with no exterior rim band occur mainly at the Aetos Stone Mound but are rarer than other linear decoration.

¹⁰¹ Catling 2009, vol. 1, 388. In some deposits such as in the NE Wash levels they are more frequent.

¹⁰² Catling 2009, vol. 2, 290, fig. 294.A 148–A 151.

¹⁰³ Kardamaki – Kaza-Papageorgiou 2018, 119, fig. 6.9; 122, fig. 6.18.

¹⁰⁴ Kaza-Papageorgiou et al. 2011, 236, fig. 7.13–25; Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2012, 178, fig. 16.46. For deep bowls A with a monochrome interior from Thorikos see Mountjoy 1995, 207, fig. 6.63–64.

¹⁰⁵ Kardamaki – Kaza-Papageorgiou 2018, 120, fig. 6.11; 122, fig. 6.16. Neither demonstrating the typical flaring profile.

¹⁰⁶ Kaza-Papageorgiou et al. 2011, 234, fig. 6; 264, tab. 2; Kardamaki – Kaza-Papageorgiou 2018, 121, fig. 6.14.

¹⁰⁷ Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2018, 28, fig. 13.153; 29, fig. 14.173–174. Large deep bowls similar to the type usually called truncated stemmed bowl.

¹⁰⁸ At the Menelaion monochrome deep bowls are present, but their exact number is not given. Cf. Catling 2009, vol. 1, 388 n. 511; Catling 2009, vol. 2, 231, fig. 235.PE 188.

¹⁰⁹ Kardamaki – Kaza-Papageorgiou 2018, 118–120.

¹¹⁰ Adrimi-Sismani, 2014, 868, 870. But see Vitale et al., this volume. The main difference between the LH IIIB2 and LH IIIC Early assemblages in Dimini is the presence of handmade burnished and Gray Ware in the contexts of the latter phase.

The Group A deep bowl with monochrome interior is perhaps the most common variant, while several examples have flaring or even bell-shaped profiles¹¹¹ and reserved bases on the interior.¹¹² Furthermore, the Group A deep bowl with monochrome interior is represented in the destruction deposits of Thebes but is clearly rarer than Group A deep bowls.¹¹³ This type also occurs in LH IIIB2 Late contexts of Mitrou.¹¹⁴ At Nichoria Group A deep bowls with a monochrome interior were found in the latest Mycenaean deposits of the site that date to LH IIIB2.¹¹⁵

In summary, Group A deep bowls with a monochrome interior do appear in LH IIIB1. In LH IIIB2 they become more frequent, based on the evidence from Tiryns, Mycenae and Midea, but at these sites they never outnumber the canonical Group A deep bowls. Some other regions, on the other hand, show a stronger preference for Group A deep bowls with a monochrome interior (Laconia, Thessaly). Ultimately, however, the available stratigraphy does not allow a conclusive decision on whether the frequent use of Group A deep bowls with a monochrome interior in some regions beyond the Argolid correlates with LH IIIB2 or late LH IIIB2 or whether it suggests occupation in LH IIIC Early.¹¹⁶

The Destruction of Ayios Vasileios in the Wider Context

The goal of the present paper was to establish the chronology of the destruction of the palace and the Linear B archive. Based on the present evidence this event most probably took place towards the end of LH IIIB1. In ceramic terms this is most comparable to LH IIIB Middle in the Argolid, a phase that, according to the chronological system of Tiryns, still belongs to the first part of LH IIIB¹¹⁷ while at Mycenae it bridges LH IIIB1 with LH IIIB2.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the interpretation of the stratigraphy represents a crucial aspect. Although there is evidence suggesting that the destruction was followed immediately by reoccupation, the character of the site in late LH IIIB is still poorly understood due to the small size of the excavated area. Additional evidence comes from the North Cemetery¹¹⁹ and Building A to the northeast of the court¹²⁰ but the overall picture remains patchy.

This chronological assessment suggests that the palace of Ayios Vasileios was burnt down some decades before the final destructions of the late 13th–early 12th century BCE. While the latter destruction horizon is well defined, although it is considered to have extended over one or two decades,¹²¹ earlier, LH IIIB events are more difficult to understand due to subsequent overbuilding. Still there seems to be sufficient evidence to suggest that the destruction of Ayios Vasileios does not represent an isolated phenomenon.

¹¹¹ Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 464. There are also canonical Group A deep bowls, Group A variants and probably rosette deep bowls (Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 431, 465). Most bell-shaped deep bowls are illustrated from the reoccupation level of Megaron A (Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 508–509).

¹¹² For the discussion of the reserved circle on the interior of vessels see Kardamaki 2009, 228 n. 444. The feature is already applied in LH IIIA2 (Mountjoy 2008, 308, fig. 6.6.3069, Ayios Stephanos).

¹¹³ Andrikou 2006, 29, tab. 5; 31, pl. 13.217.

¹¹⁴ Vitale 2018, 165, fig. 8.9g.

¹¹⁵ Shelmerdine 1992, fig. 9-61.P3811, P3814. At Nichoria LH IIIB2 is preceded by LH IIIA2/IIIB1 (Shelmerdine 1992, 503).

¹¹⁶ In Dimini the floors of the megara are built on top of LH IIIA2 building and destruction remains (Adrimi-Sismani 2014, 129–130). At Ayios Stephanos and the Menelaion there is no clear LH IIIB2 level. Catling 2009, vol. 1, 252, comments that it is doubtful whether deep bowls with monochrome interiors can be used as a chronological indicator in Laconia. But see Hachtmann – Voutsaki, this volume, for a deposit dated exclusively in LH IIIC Early.

¹¹⁷ Podzuweit 2007, Beil. 80.

¹¹⁸ French – Taylour 2007.

¹¹⁹ See Hachtmann – Voutsaki, this volume.

¹²⁰ Vasilogamvrou 2018, 142–147.

¹²¹ J. B. Rutter in: Deger-Jalkotzy – Zavadil 2003, 255.

In the Argolid there is evidence for a destruction followed by rebuilding during a phase in which LH IIIB2 styles were not fully established – the so-called LH IIIB Middle horizon. At Tiryns the walls of some rooms in the Lower Citadel collapsed.¹²² At Mycenae destruction horizons are documented both inside and outside the Citadel, i.e. in the Cult Centre and the Ivory Houses.¹²³ It is not clear whether the enlargement of the wall happened before or directly after a presumed LH IIIB Middle earthquake but it seems that some rooms or buildings of the Cult Area ceased to be used during LH IIIB2.¹²⁴ Regarding the area of the palace, there seems to be some damage assigned to an earthquake followed by fire.¹²⁵ Further to the north, the so-called ‘Potter’s Shop’ at Zygouries was destroyed by an intensive fire during which some pots were burnt and deformed, giving the impression of kiln wasters – a feature also clearly observed at Ayios Vasileios. This destruction was dated by Patrick Thomas late in LH IIIB1.¹²⁶ At Thebes, middle LH IIIB destruction is supported by several finds. One relevant context is represented by the jewelry workshop at 29 Pindar St. that is dated to the middle of the 13th century.¹²⁷ This event was, however, neither widespread nor did it mean the end of the palatial system that continued up to the end of the 13th century,¹²⁸ although Eleni Andrikou convincingly comments that the LH IIIB Middle debris could have been removed during subsequent rebuilding.

Finally, in other Laconian sites beyond Ayios Vasileios the evidence regarding the first part of LH IIIB is still scarce. While pottery of the LH IIIB1 style is, for example, present, neither at the Menelaion nor at Ayios Stephanos is there any level exclusively assigned to this subphase. At Ayios Stephanos LH IIIB1 is considered to be a phase of very restricted occupation – if the site was not even completely deserted.¹²⁹ At the Menelaion, remodeling in the walls of Mansion 2 was assigned to LH IIIB (Mansion 3). Moreover, Catling excavated a burnt deposit in Mansion 2 that he dated to LH IIIB.¹³⁰ By combining evidence from the so-called pottery dump in the surrounding area of Mansion 2/3 that was convincingly connected with the occupation in the plateau, Catling suggested that the abandonment of the building must have taken place in final LH IIIB. It is interesting to note the absence of advanced deep bowl types from the pottery dump and the wash deposits around the mansions – contrary to other areas close to the Menelaion hills – that could support a destruction in the 13th century for Mansion 2/3, although a more precise dating within LH IIIB is difficult to suggest.¹³¹

¹²² Kilian 1988, 133, fig. 27; Damm-Meinhardt 2015, 19. Klaus Kilian correlated this destruction at Tiryns with the destruction of the House of the Oil Merchant at Mycenae.

¹²³ Wardle 2015, 591, dates the event at the end of LH IIIB1.

¹²⁴ For an outline of development in the Citadel House Area see French – Taylour 2007, 4, tab. 1; 10–12. For the Ivory Houses see French 1967, 150, 182–183. Both the so-called Citadel House Area Phase VII Destruction and the destruction of the Ivory Houses are placed in LH IIIB Middle.

¹²⁵ French 2002, 59–61, 63. For example, the Pillar Basement was constructed in LH IIIA2, and under the final floor of LH IIIB there was another floor destroyed by fire.

¹²⁶ Blegen 1928, 37; Thomas 1992, 277–283, 338, 508–509. The date of construction of Building B in LH IIIB1 seems to be secure.

¹²⁷ Demakopoulou 1974, 170–171; Demakopoulou 1987, 433.

¹²⁸ See Andrikou 2006, 58. The dating of the destruction of Building B in the Kordatzis property in Oedipus St. in the later part of LH IIIB1 is convincingly questioned by Andrikou 2006, 57, who considers it to be LH IIIB2. On the other hand, the pottery from close to the ivory hoard seems to be rather LH IIIB1 (see Symeonoglou 1973, pls. 57–58).

¹²⁹ There is some evidence for the fire destruction of one building that was dated to LH IIIC Early. The skulls of four adults were deposited in a pit and the find was related to a hostile attack and evidence for a massacre (Janko 2008, 605).

¹³⁰ Catling 2009, vol. 1, 18–19; Catling 2009, vol. 2, 138, fig. 142.X 3–X 4, X 7.

¹³¹ Most well-preserved deep bowls belong to Group A (Catling 2009, vol. 2, 162, fig. 166.WN 62; 174, fig. 178.WS 25; 181, fig. 185.PD 46–PD 47; 182, fig. 186.PD 53). There are few rims from deep bowls with monochrome interiors and medium rim bands on the exterior (Catling 2009, vol. 2, 169, fig. 173.WE 48–WE 49). There is one linear-painted deep bowl with the exterior rim banding of a stemmed bowl (Catling 2009, vol. 2, 182, fig. 186.PD 49).

Discussion and Conclusions

The present evidence suggests that the fire destruction of the palace at Ayios Vasileios took place in LH IIIB Middle. This event was followed by a reoccupation that may have lasted throughout the later parts of LH IIIB and continued to the early part of LH IIIC Early. No layer is identified that can be exclusively assigned to LH IIIB2 in terms of the Argive sequence. The post-destruction rebuilding in the area of the court seems to have been hasty, but in other areas of the palace there is evidence for a more substantial occupation.¹³² The pottery from Ayios Vasileios shows local preferences, a tendency that is mainly expressed by the group of pattern-painted vessels. Most characteristic in this respect is the apparent late adoption of the deep bowl that occurred in a substantial way after the destruction and much later than in the Argolid. But regional preferences are also observed within Laconia, with the Menelaion showing a greater variety in the decoration of deep bowls.¹³³

On a wider scale, Ayios Vasileios may provide some new evidence related to the history and development of the Mycenaean palaces. One of the crucial questions raised by our study is whether destruction events with a supraregional impact took place at least one more time before the final collapse of the palatial system at the end of LH IIIB2 and LH IIIC Early 1 and if so, whether such events are in any way interconnected.¹³⁴ Although the archaeological remains from the other major Laconian sites do not allow a detailed reconstruction of the LH IIIB occupation, the correlation between the destruction of Ayios Vasileios and the LH IIIB Middle destructions at Mycenae and Tiryns seems possible. Destructions connected with the first part of LH IIIB are known from elsewhere (see above). In Thebes, the jewelry workshop in Pindar and Oedipus Sts. and another house in Pelops St. on the southeastern and eastern part of Kadmeia Hill respectively show evidence for fire destruction and have been dated to the end of LH IIIB1.¹³⁵ Regarding the House of Kadmos, the possibility cannot be ruled out that it was destroyed during a later part of LH IIIB1, but this issue is still not resolved.¹³⁶ In a recently published paper Salvatore Vitale suggests a change in the political landscape of Boiotia and east Locris, with Thebes taking over control in Mitrou after a possible destruction at Glas and Orchomenos in early LH IIIB2.¹³⁷ Although the exact dating of the destruction of Orchomenos is difficult to support on the basis of the published material, an earlier destruction of Glas than for Thebes seems likely and strengthens the hypothesis that the mid-13th century was a time of unrest in many regions of Mycenaean Greece.¹³⁸

However, what differentiates Ayios Vasileios from the other palaces that probably experienced some kind of violent interruption in LH IIIB Middle is its later development. Not only was the monumental West Stoa not repaired, suggesting the abandonment of a whole sector but – at least so far – there is no evidence for the existence of written tablets at the site during the later parts of the 13th century. This could not contrast more with the situation at Mycenae and Tiryns. It is well known and has been clearly demonstrated that LH IIIB Middle represents a turning point in

¹³² See Vasilogamvrou 2018 for the altar and the group of the bull figures found on a surface created on levelled areas of Building A.

¹³³ Deep bowls without a solidly painted interior (Group A) are much better attested at the Menelaion than at Ayios Vasileios.

¹³⁴ At Ayios Vasileios there are several deposits that date to LH IIIA2 and may come from the cleaning of rooms after a destruction (Kardamaki 2017). Also, Building A was destroyed in LH IIIA (Vasilogamvrou 2018).

¹³⁵ Andrikou 2006, 58.

¹³⁶ The destruction of the House of Kadmos falls in early LH IIIB1 but a later dating is also stated as a possibility (Dakouri-Hild 2001). The destruction deposit contains plain angular cups FS 222 like the ones in the West Stoa of Ayios Vasileios and a conical kylix FS 274 (cf. Raison 1968). The conical kylix FS 274 is absent in the Terraces below the Ivory Houses that, according to Schönfeld 1988, 163, tab. 4; 185, date to LH IIIB Early and the beginning of LH IIIB Middle (Terrace under the House of the Oil Merchant). In Tsoungiza Deposit EU, which dates to LH IIIB1 Early, the plain conical kylix is very rare (Thomas 2005, 512).

¹³⁷ Vitale 2018, 155.

¹³⁸ See Shelmerdine, this volume, for Iklaina and its incorporation into the Pylian state.

the history of the Mycenaean palaces of the Argolid. After a destruction which was put down to an earthquake and in some cases to a human act¹³⁹ the palaces were rebuilt and refurbished following a program that exceeded everything else known before.¹⁴⁰ LH IIIB2 was also a period of cautiousness. There are several indications for the latter. Magazines with transport commodities like the House of the Oil Merchant must have been transferred into the secured and controlled environment of the citadel, as argued by Joseph Maran.¹⁴¹ Moreover, the new Cyclopean walls represented the latest word in defensive architecture in the Aegean. Besides their high symbolic value, their rebuilding and expansion must have also been directed by careful planning of defensive strategies.¹⁴²

A final point may be of relevance here. In the later part of the 13th century, Tiryns was involved in a wide exchange network, as demonstrated by the large numbers of ceramic containers from Crete and various parts of the eastern Mediterranean discovered at the site.¹⁴³ LH IIIB2 also coincides with the increase of Kytheran imports at Tiryns such as stirrup jars and pithoi.¹⁴⁴ In fact, after Crete, Kythera is the second most common area of provenance for the LH IIIB2 stirrup jars recovered at Tiryns. While it needs to be stressed that the less extensive LH IIIB1 material record from Tiryns due to later rebuilding does not allow secure conclusions for the frequency of Kytheran stirrup jars during the first half of the 13th century at the site, at Mycenae at least it is possible to say that Kytheran stirrup jars are absent from the magazines of the Oil Merchant.¹⁴⁵ Kythera as a region was strongly connected to Laconia from LH I onwards. This is not only suggested because of the geographic proximity between the two regions but is obvious from various aspects of material culture. Kytheran pottery was frequently imported to the Menelaion and Ayios Vasileios from LH IIB onwards, including not only large transport containers but also common wares such as cooking tripods and utensils.¹⁴⁶ Based on the presence of Kytheran pithoi at Kommos and Pylos, Rutter argued that the former must have played an important role in the movement of goods between Crete and Pylos and more precisely of oil that would have been very important for the perfume industry of the palace.¹⁴⁷ In this respect, it is interesting to note that the range of LH IIIB2 Kytheran containers from Tiryns encompasses a larger variety of shapes, i.e. large stirrup jars and not only pithoi. Thus, it is not inconceivable that after the destruction of Ayios Vasileios, Tiryns and the Argolid gained more access to this part of the Aegean that would have been an important connection to Crete.

The overview given above raises more questions than it provides answers. Our present impression is that Ayios Vasileios did not resume its function after LH IIIB Middle, although the palatial system of administration was still fully operating as we know from Pylos and Thebes. If this is true, the destruction of Ayios Vasileios could reflect a crisis that would take a more general and radical form approximately two generations later.¹⁴⁸

¹³⁹ For the House of the Oil Merchant see Wace 1951, 255–256, who ascribes the destruction of the building to looting and violent fire that caused some of the vases to become vitrified. According to Alan Wace, the stirrup jars were deliberately unstoppered and overturned so that their contents could be used as fuel.

¹⁴⁰ Maran 2015. Regarding Mycenae see Wardle 2015. It is not clear whether the construction of the Lion Gate and the enlargement of the west wall at Mycenae took place before or after the LH IIIB Middle destructions.

¹⁴¹ See Maran 2005, 418, for the Argolid. This hypothesis is confirmed by the large number of Cretan and other foreign containers discovered in the LH IIIB2 dumps of the Tirynthian palace (Kardamaki et al. 2016).

¹⁴² Iakovidis 1973; Maran 2010, 247–250.

¹⁴³ Kilian 1988; Maran 2005.

¹⁴⁴ Kardamaki et al. 2016, 150, 157. See Wirghová, this volume for the presence of Kytheran wares also in LH IIIB Early and Middle contexts of the Lower Citadel.

¹⁴⁵ Haskell et al. 2011, tab. 27 nos. MYC 17–MYC 31, MYC 39, MYC 72–MYC 74, MYC 89–MYC 99, MYC 103.

¹⁴⁶ Kardamaki 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Rutter 2005, 40.

¹⁴⁸ With regard to the final LH IIIB, the theory of natural events as the main catalyst and ‘prime mover’ for the collapse of the palaces seems to be largely compromised by recent research (Maran 2010, 255–257; Jung 2016; Jung 2017; Hinzen et al. 2018; Maran, this volume).

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